

**Heritage Resource Management Plan
for the Newport Village Hall
600 Seventh Avenue
Newport, Minnesota**



Newport Heritage Preservation Commission

Heritage Resource Management Plan for the Newport Village Hall

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PART I INTRODUCTION

Built in 1913, the Newport Village Hall served as the municipal building for over seven decades until it was replaced by the present City Hall at 596 Seventh Avenue. The historic property remains in public ownership, but since 1982 it has been leased to the Greater East Area Model Railroad Club, a private, non-profit organization. It is a modest, one-story building of wood frame construction with a simple rectangular plan and a gable roof. It rests on a rock-faced concrete block foundation and has horizontal wood lap siding. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The hall was enlarged with an addition on the back in 1924.

This heritage resource management plan provides property-specific guidance for decisions relating to the preservation, protection, and use of the subject property by the City of Newport and its preservation partners. It is intended solely for use by city officials and others responsible for management of the property.

The conceptual basis for heritage resource management at the Newport Village Hall is predicated upon the following assumptions:

1. The Newport Village Hall is a historically significant, nonrenewable heritage resource, the preservation of which is the responsibility of city government.
2. The historic property will be protected, maintained, preserved, and rehabilitated by the city in a manner that is consistent with its historical, architectural, and cultural values.

3. Property management decisions will be guided by the goals and policies set forth in the historic preservation element of the city's comprehensive plan.
4. Strategies for adaptive use of the property will emphasize conservancy and public accessibility.
5. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties will provide the basis for evaluating the appropriateness of projects that will have an impact on the appearance, condition, historic significance, and integrity of the property.

The management plan consists of four parts. Part I consists of a brief description of the property extracted from heritage resource survey and other planning documents. Part II summarizes critical administrative and planning data pertaining to the Village Hall, including a statement of general preservation objectives and priorities. Part III presents an outcome-based plan of treatment based on best management practices. Part IV is a "punch list" or action plan for implementation.

The plan looks at all aspects of heritage resource management, including building maintenance, rehabilitation, and interpretation. It is not a static document. City officials should periodically review the management plan to ensure that the planning assumptions and performance goals remain valid.

PART II ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Name

The historic name of the subject property, i.e., the name that best reflects its historical significance, is the Newport Village Hall. It was also commonly referred to as the Old Town Hall.

The Village Hall has been assigned number WA-NPC-022 in the statewide inventory of historic resources maintained by the State Historic Preservation Office, Minnesota Historical Society.

Location

The subject property is located at 600 Seventh Avenue in the City of Newport. It occupies Lot 11 of Block 2, St. Paul Park Division No. 6 (PIN 554552250).

Owner and Tenant

The Village Hall is owned by the City of Newport, 596 Seventh Avenue, Newport, MN 55055. It is leased to the Greater East Area Model Railroad Club (the Newport Club), P.O. Box 61, St. Paul Park, MN 55071, a non-profit educational corporation formed to build and operate a model railroad based on a Midwestern prototype for the enjoyment of its members and the general public.

Historic Use

The Village Hall historically functioned as a government building that housed the municipal offices and council meeting room. During its period of historical significance (1913-1974), it also provided space for

various civic, social, and recreational functions and was used as a meeting room, polling place, theater, and exhibition hall.

Current Use

The property's current function is recreational. The Greater East Area Model Railroad Club (founded in 1981) has used the building for its clubhouse and model railroad exhibition space since 1982.

Heritage Landmark status

The subject property has been determined eligible for designation as a Newport Heritage Landmark by the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC).

As a matter of policy, all City of Newport projects are subject to design review by the HPC for their effects on significant heritage preservation resources. Compliance with the city's heritage preservation codes and comprehensive plan is mandatory.

Historical Significance

The Newport Village Hall meets established criteria for historical significance on the basis of its association with events that have made an important contribution to the broad patterns of local history. Specifically, it is locally significant in the areas of government and social history. The subject property attained the significance qualifying it for Heritage Landmark designation when it was constructed in 1913; the period of significance lasted until circa 1974, when its governmental functions were relocated to the present municipal building.

Preservation Vision

The Newport Village Hall will be preserved in place and rehabilitated for the benefit of the visiting public. The City of Newport will partner with the Greater East Area Model Railroad Club (commonly known as the Newport Club) to preserve, protect, rehabilitate, and maintain the historic Village Hall. The City will continue to own the property and will be primarily responsible for heritage resource management. The Newport Club will occupy and actively use the historic building for the foreseeable future, and the club's model railway exhibit will be open for public visitation year-round, with regular hours. Subject to the terms and conditions of its operating agreement with the City of Newport, the Newport Club will utilize the historic property to provide space for exhibits and programs focusing on railway transportation heritage. Key elements of the long-term preservation vision include, but are not limited to:

- Provide a compatible use for the property that requires minimal alteration of the building exterior;
- Implement appropriate measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of the building;
- Rehabilitate the building exterior to allow an efficient contemporary use while preserving those features which are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values; and
- Develop a master plan for the City Hall site to guide redevelopment of the City Hall, the historic Village Hall and Train Tower properties, and any adjacent properties that the city may acquire.

The preservation treatment concept does not encompass restoration of interior features or details.

General Standards for Preservation Treatments

All work will be carried out in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.¹

Functional Constraints

The overall dimensions of the historic building are quite small, approximately 25 feet wide and 60 feet deep. The most important physical constraint on development of the property for public use is the limited size of the lot on which it is located. It will need to share off-street parking with the City Hall and the historic Train Tower. Its proximity to the Newport City Hall limits the number of off-street parking spaces available for visitors when the municipal building is used for public meetings and other assembly functions.

Accessibility Issues

In its current condition, the historic building does not meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for barrier-free access to the interior of the hall. ADA compliant parking spaces are provided, however, in the city hall parking lot.

¹The current standards for preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction were developed by the Department of the Interior in 1992 and codified in 1995 (Title 36 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 68); see Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Recycling Historic Buildings* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995). The City of Newport has adopted the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as its authoritative guide for design review.

Historical Documentation

The primary sources of documentary data for this property are the minute books of the Newport village council, back issues of the *Community Life* newspaper, and aerial photographs of Newport flown between 1937 and 1955.

No original architectural plans, drawings, or original construction documents are known to exist. Pre-1970s photographs of the building are rare.

Archaeological Resources

Due to the high degree of site disturbance, it is unlikely that significant prehistoric or historic cultural deposits are preserved intact anywhere within the property boundaries. However, artifacts associated with the construction and subsequent use of the Village Hall may be preserved in situ within the cellar, crawl spaces, and the builder's trench along the outside of the foundation walls. Mere association with the historic building would not be enough, however, for any twentieth-century artifacts to be considered important in their own right. An archaeological survey would be justified only in the case of a major excavation that would disturb the terrain around or underneath the historic structure.

PART III

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The Environment

Provide proper site and roof drainage to prevent water from splashing against the building or foundation walls. Surface runoff should drain away from the building.

Walls

The original wood lap wall cladding should be retained.

Deteriorated wood siding should be repaired or replaced, where necessary. If replacement is unavoidable, use new wooden siding that duplicates the original in size, shape, and texture.

Roof

The original roof shape should be preserved.

Ongoing maintenance to provide a weather-tight roof covering and adequate roof drainage should be a high priority.

The original wood shingle roofing material should be restored.

Foundation

The original pressed concrete block foundation walls should be preserved without the application of any surface treatment.

When repointing the foundation walls, the old mortar should be duplicated in composition, joint size and profile, color, and texture.

Windows and Doors

All existing window and door openings should be retained. Window and door openings should not be enlarged or reduced to fit new window sash or stock doors.

The original wooden double-hung windows should be retained, whenever possible. If replacement window sash and frames need to be installed, they should duplicate the original windows in material, design, and hardware.

The combination metal storm windows and screens, which are inappropriate and detract from the building's historic character, should be replaced. The new storm windows and screens should not have vertical or horizontal divisions which conflict with the divisions of the historic double-hung sash.

Wood storm windows and storm doors are appropriate when they are visually unobtrusive and can be installed without damaging existing frames.

The existing entry doors on the west, south, and east elevations should be replaced with traditionally styled new doors that are visually compatible with the historic building and meet current building and fire safety codes.

Entrances

The front entry, open porch, and concrete stoop should be retained as the focal point of the façade. Deteriorated materials should be repaired or replaced, as needed.

The primary point of visitor entry to the interior of the building should be through the door on the south elevation (historically the secondary entry) from the City Hall parking lot. The doorway on the back of the building should be designated for egress.

Exterior Finishes

Discover the historic paint colors of the building and repaint with those colors.

Landscaping

The strip of lawn in front and the north side-yard should be retained as greenspace. The front sidewalk should be maintained to provide an access walkway from the City Hall parking lot to the building's historic main entrance.²

The long, narrow side yard on the north side of the building should be retained as open space to buffer the historic property from adjacent commercial or residential development.

The existing head-on parking spaces encroach upon the south side of the historic property and detract from its historic character. The parking spaces should be moved away from the historic building (and possibly angled) to create a narrow side-yard buffer and planting strip. The side-yard setback could also contain a wheelchair accessible walkway connecting the front, side, and rear entrances.

Interior Features and Finishes

Although complete restoration of historic interior features and finishes is not contemplated, original material such as doors, doorways, windows, moldings, flooring, plasterwork, and lighting fixtures should be identified and preserved in place, whenever possible.

² Early photographs indicate there was minimal landscaping during the property's period of historical significance.

The basic plan of the building and the size of the rooms should be retained. Floor space should be kept as open as possible to allow visitors to flow through the building.

Systems for heating, ventilating, air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection should be made as unobtrusive as possible and placed in areas where they are not visible to visitors.

New Construction

New construction, including additions and accessory structures, is not an appropriate treatment option.

Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment, such as air conditioners and overhead wires, should be placed where they cannot be seen from public spaces.

Installation of heating, air conditioning, electrical, plumbing, and fire protection systems should be carried out with the least possible alteration to the structural integrity and physical appearance of the building.

Mechanical equipment that is placed on the ground should be screened with fencing or plantings.

Energy Efficiency

Thermal insulation should be installed in the attic and other unheated spaces, with proper ventilation of all insulated spaces.

The most cost-effective, long-term energy conservation measures will probably be weather-stripping doors and windows, storm windows, and attic insulation.

Handicap Accessibility

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be complied with in such a manner that the essential character of the historic property is preserved intact.

Curb ramps and platforms with detectable warnings will be required to provide barrier-free access to the historic property from the existing public parking lot.

Investigate the feasibility of installing an ADA-compliant entrance on the south elevation that provides barrier-free access to the interior of the hall by means of an accessible wheelchair ramp.

Safety and Security

Work with the city building official, fire marshal, and others to investigate alternative life and fire safety measures that respect the building's historic integrity.

Adequate fire and smoke detection equipment should be installed inside the building. These devices should not alter important architectural features and historic spaces.

Outdoor security lighting should utilize genuine early-twentieth century lighting fixtures or accurate reproductions. Installation of light fixtures should not damage historic fabric. Architectural lighting should employ full cut-off lighting fixtures to promote safety, security, and energy conservation.

Ensure that model railroad club members are trained to respond promptly and summon additional resources in the event of an emergency situation.

Historical Interpretation

Interpretation facilities should be carefully designed to be educational, functional, durable, and safe. Floor space should be kept as open as possible to allow visitors to flow through the building.³

Barrier-free accessibility should be provided for all interpretive programming.

³ The hall currently provides space for model railroad exhibition and gatherings of hobbyists, but does not function as an historical museum or interpretive center, per se. The venue does contain spaces which could accommodate documentary or graphic exhibits, as well as small historical artifacts, relating to aspects of railroad history.



PART IV IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

To implement the Heritage Resource Management Plan for the Newport Village Hall, the City of Newport should:

- 1) Adopt the Heritage Resource Management Plan by City Council resolution as the authoritative guide to be used by City officials and citizens to plan for the preservation, protection, and use of the Newport Village Hall.
- 2) Direct the City Administrator to regularly monitor activities at the historic property and conduct annual inspections of the building to detect any signs of natural deterioration, neglect, wear and tear, or abuse.
- 3) Work with the model railroad club to develop a master plan for development of the property which takes into account the architectural character of the building, the programming needs of the Newport Club, and the City's heritage preservation policy goals.
- 4) Negotiate and approve a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or letter agreement with the Greater East Area Model Railroad Club that lays out the expectations and responsibilities of both parties, with clearly stated goals, metrics, and timelines.
- 5) Bring in a qualified preservation architect to carry out an intensive structural and materials analysis and prepare a set of as-built architectural plans.

- 6) Establish line-items for building maintenance, repairs, renovation, and capital improvements at city-owned historic properties as part of the general fund budget and appropriate such funds as the city council may deem necessary.

Because it is vital for the model railroad club to be involved in property management decisions, the Newport Club should:

- 1) Provide the City of Newport with information about the club's goals and objectives relating to use of the Village Hall.
- 2) Cooperate with the City in preparing and implementing a partnership agreement to ensure that the interests of both parties are taken into account in management decisions.
- 3) Develop a realistic budget for preserving and maintaining the historic building that takes into account the club's programming needs, its legal obligations, the interests of its members, available funding, and the nature of the heritage resource.
- 4) Arrange to have its members receive training in the care of old buildings to ensure that housekeeping and routine maintenance tasks will not endanger historic fabric.