

Sites Worth Saving

MINNESOTA'S 10 MOST ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES 2011



Preservation Alliance of Minnesota ❖ www.mnpreservation.org

The Pillsbury A Mill on the Mississippi River's east bank near downtown Minneapolis was once the largest flour mill in the world. Completed in 1881, it could produce ten times the barrels of other large flour mills, and at its peak turned out 17,500 barrels per day. The most powerful direct-drive waterwheels ever built—each capable of generating 1,200 horsepower (895 kW)—harnessed the force of St. Anthony Falls and enabled the mill's awesome capacity. Over time, the complex was developed with several other milling and warehouse buildings, a large block of grain elevators, and an extensive tunnel system containing the drop shafts and races that fueled the mill with waterpower. The overall 7.9-acre site is approximately three square blocks, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated a Minneapolis historic site. The "A" Mill building itself is a National Historic Landmark.



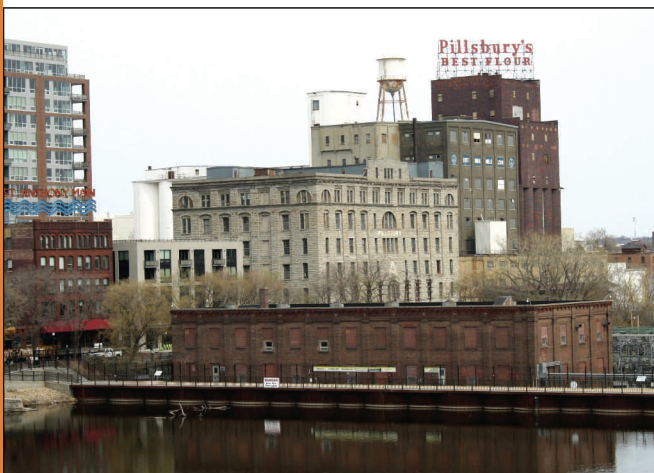
In 2003, production at the mill ceased, and a local developer acquired the building and surrounding site for a mixed-use complex that would couple historic rehabilitation with new construction. The first phase was completed, but the project faltered as the real estate market declined, and the historic buildings remained vacant. Ultimately, the developer lost the property to foreclosure, but not before the City of Minneapolis obtained grant funding to study the historic tunnel infrastructure and its capacity for green energy production.

As of April 2011, two new local developers have purchase agreements to acquire individual parcels of the property for separate apartment projects. The plans do not include any commercial space, and it is unknown if the mill's hydropower infrastructure will be reused. This project would benefit from a master plan to coordinate the two developments, take into account the housing and commercial needs of the area, and incorporate the site's tremendous potential for sustainable energy production. Without such a plan, this significant historic site may once again fall victim to idealistic planning or economic forces beyond its control.

Action Steps

1. Contact local decision makers and urge them to coordinate the two developments and protect the historic integrity of the A Mill and site throughout the planning and zoning and approval process.
2. Support the Marcy-Holmes neighborhood group's efforts to ensure an effective planning and approval process.
3. Attend governmental meetings to monitor and influence the decision-making process. Urge creative use of the historic features including hydrothermal and/or electrical use of the tunnels, race mills, and shafts.

MINNEAPOLIS



PILLSBURY A MILL COMPLEX



PRESERVE PROTECT PROMOTE