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MILELE A. COGGS

6th District Alderwoman

Respect and Appreciate the Past by Ushering in the Future: Allow Sydney Hih to be Demolished

Statement of Alderwoman Milele A. Cogg

June 26, 2012

As the Common Council member who has the privilege and the honor of representing the 6th Aldermanic District which encompasses a portion of the Park East where the Sydney Hih complex (Senn Building, et. al.) is located, I am urging my colleagues on the Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee to vote “aye” today on lifting the interim historic designation that was granted by the Historic Preservation Commission.

I trust the sound judgment of the Department of Neighborhood Services, which has said that the building is in poor condition and should be razed to protect the safety and wellbeing of the citizens of Milwaukee. I have personally observed this deteriorating structure and am concerned about the crumbling structure's potential to injure citizens.

I have great respect for the history of Sydney Hih and for what it means to many in the community. However, I believe the time has come for the Council to do what is best for the future of the area, and for the City of Milwaukee. The Sydney Hih is a public safety risk, and an eyesore that stands in the way of the highest and best use for development of that land, which is part of the Park East development corridor. Each of the other corners have had major investment and sizable developments (i.e. The Aloft Hotel, The Moderne, and Molly Cool's), and this corner is likely to attract the same. History does not only exist within a structure's four walls; this city can continue to pay homage to the eclectic history of Sydney Hih while dealing with the reality of the dilapidated structure.

Finally, my decision has been made easier by what I have been told would be major ongoing financial contributions by the city just to keep the Sydney Hih standing in its current condition, let alone to bring it up to code. With extremely limited resources and some very difficult budgetary decisions coming this year and in future years, I simply cannot justify the millions of dollars that have been estimated as a major spending outlay to maintain an empty, deteriorating, mothballed building.

The Sydney Hih is a part of Milwaukee's history that will live on in the hearts and minds of many, but the buildings need to come down. We can respect and appreciate the past while ushering in the future.

