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PACNY Opposes Demolition; Loos Building has Historic, Architectural Significance

Samuel D. Gruber, Dr., *Syracuse University*



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PACNY OPPOSES DEMOLITION LOOS BUILDING HAS HISTORIC, ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Syracuse Herald-Journal (NY) - Monday, January 17, 2000

At 6 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall, the Syracuse City Planning Commission will hear a request to demolish the Archimedes Russell-designed Conrad Loos Building - also commonly known as the Kress and Kacey's Drugstore - at Park and Butternut streets.

The 1895 building, which has served the neighborhood for 100 years, was designated a Syracuse Protected Site by the Syracuse Common Council in July 1999.

The new owner of the building purchased the site after designation and almost immediately filed for demolition, requesting a certificate of appropriateness from the Syracuse Landmarks Preservation Board. The SLPB denied the request, citing that the architectural and historic circumstances of the building that warranted designation last year had not changed. The new owner has now appealed to the City Planning Commission, citing economic hardship as the need for demolition.

The Preservation Association of Central New York urges you to speak out in favor of saving this important North Side building. Its demolition will have long-term effects on the neighborhood, as well as seriously undermining our local historic preservation ordinance. Please come to the hearing to testify or send written comments to the commission, 201 E. Washington St., Syracuse 13202. Please send copies to PACNY and contact your common councilors.

PACNY opposes the demolition request for a number of reasons in addition to our recognition of the historic and architectural significance of the building. These include:

No real economic hardship can be shown. The owner purchased the building with the intent to make a profit from developing the site but was not suffering before or after the designation. Essentially, the applicant is betting that the city will favor his need to profit over the community's right to protect its heritage.

A city-sponsored investigation of the building by architects Crawford and Stearns demonstrated that the commercial space of the building could be refurbished for retail or service tenancy at a cost that compared favorably with any new construction on the site. The project would be eligible for historic property tax credits, and also for the postponement of higher property tax assessment under a recently passed city law.

The past and present owners have made little or no apparent effort to maintain the property to make it appealing to any other buyer and to seriously market the building, seemingly preferring the more lucrative and less labor-intensive effort of demolition and site development.

The demolition of the building would be detrimental to the historic character of the neighborhood. It would negatively impact other older buildings in the vicinity, and the proposed plans for the site pending demolition would also negatively impact the streetscape by creating a large asphalted area and another drive-in center rather than protecting and emphasizing the corner and street line in what is still to a large degree a pedestrian enclave.

Given that Butternut Street and this intersection in particular are subjects of the current Settlement Plan project sponsored by the Syracuse Onondaga County Planning Agency, and the project consultant, Andres Duany, specifically cited in his "charette" sessions the merits to the neighborhood and street of keeping this building, it would be destructive and premature, in fact, counterproductive, to sanction its demolition.

SAM GRUBER

Executive director

Preservation Association

of Central New York