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The Duluth Preservation Alliance Announces the 2025 **Ten Endangered Places**

Duluth, Minn— The Duluth Preservation Alliance is announcing its **2025 ten endangered places** through this [interactive story map](#) of all the properties.

The organization releases this list annually to raise awareness about the importance of protecting Duluth's cultural heritage. "Duluth buildings, even ones with protections in place, are being demolished with little regard to their significance," says Lori Melton, president of the Duluth Preservation Alliance. "Since 2020, seven historic-designated buildings have been erased from our neighborhoods, leaving empty lots and lost history in their place."

Blake Romenesko, vice president of the Duluth Preservation Alliance, leads a committee's effort to identify and research the properties. He notes that this year's list includes several buildings that, if preserved, have the potential to ease a housing crisis identified in a 2025 study commissioned for the City of Duluth. The study found that Duluth needs nearly 9,000 units in the next five years to meet its housing needs.

"Eight downtown buildings are currently vacant, which increases the probability for demolition by neglect," says Romenesko. "What if, instead of leaving them empty until

they're deemed beyond repair, we renovate them to create affordable housing that helps with Duluth's startling 1.1 % vacancy rate?"

2025 Ten Most Endangered Places

The locations are listed from west to east, and fall under one of the following categories:

Impending Demolition: *There are active plans to demolish this place.*

Future Uncertain: *Has any combination of deferred maintenance, unscrupulous ownership, long term non-use, or facing other threats.*

Under-recognized: *Presently considered safe, but has significant overlooked history and may thus be vulnerable to future threats.*

West Duluth YMCA (Memorial Park Apartments)

1920 | 605 North Central Avenue | Future Uncertain



The building, which has served most recently as the Memorial Park Apartments, was constructed as the West Duluth branch of the YMCA in 1920. It was built for \$130,000. Those funds were single-handedly donated by Duluth grain magnate Julius H. Barnes. Once completed, it boasted a gymnasium, swimming pool, cafeteria, and dormitories. Duluth architects Frederick German and Leif Jenssen created the plans.

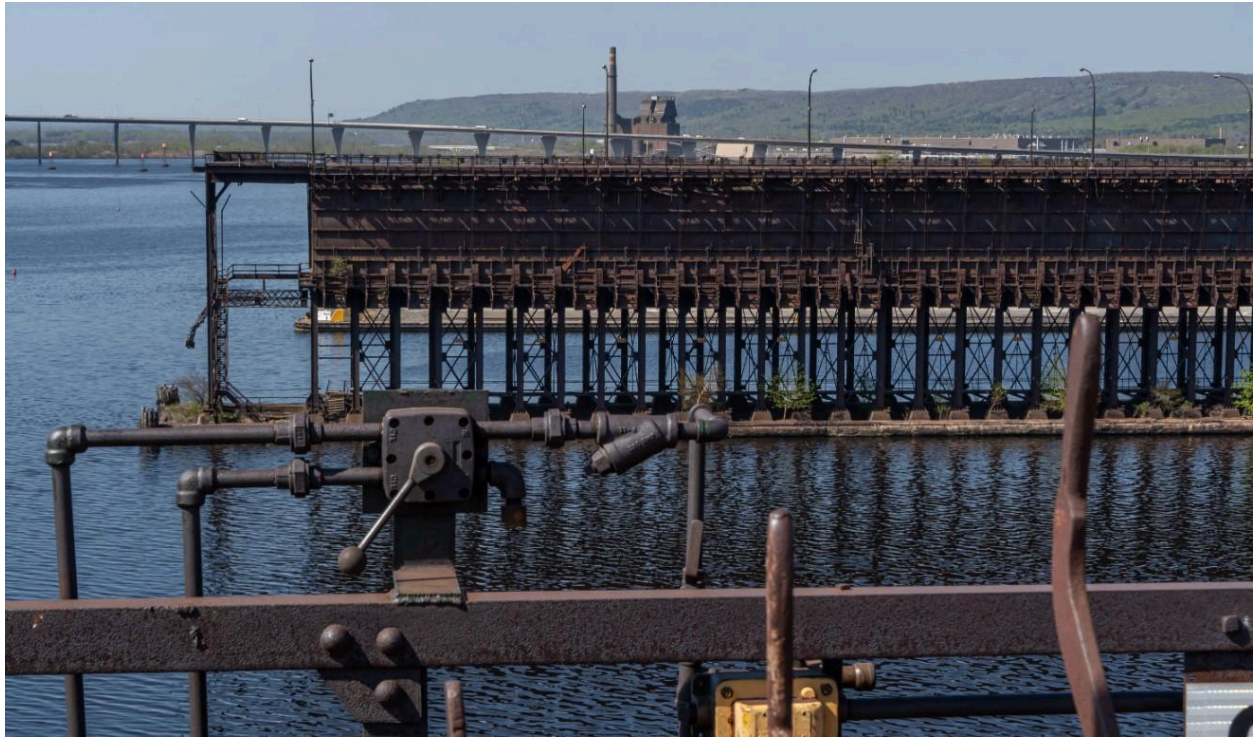
The building served as the YMCA until it was sold to the Catholic Diocese of Duluth in 1962. In the following year, it reopened as the Welsh Center, a community center primarily serving youth and young adults with social events and activities. The Welsh Center closed in 1986, and the building space was divided and used by individual businesses for several years.

In 1993, Memorial Park Apartments opened with 39 units of low-income housing. Center City Housing Corp. is constructing a new 30-unit building to replace these tenants, with

no plans for the building afterwards. Center City Housing says that they are considering demolishing the building when they are done with it.

DM&IR Ore Dock

1914 | South 34th Avenue West | Future Uncertain



When the Duluth Mesabi and Iron Range (DMIR) built Ore Dock 5 in 1914, it was the first non-wooden ore dock built in Duluth. It's constructed from steel and concrete, standing 80 feet high and measuring over 2,300 feet in length.

Dock 5 was the largest dock of its kind on the Great Lakes and could load 25,000 tons of iron ore into a vessel in about two hours. Dock No. 5 ceased active use in 1985 and has stood unused ever since.

Fraser scrapped the ore chutes from the dock in 2012. The ore dock is significant to the area, being a visual symbol of the ore industry and its role in Duluth's history. The dock played a crucial role during both world wars, supporting the transportation of iron ore to the nation's steel mills. For instance, both ore docks No. 5 and No. 6 moved a record

23.9 million tons of iron ore in 1942. The dock also has a major presence in the cultural landscape of West Duluth.

Nelson Block Buildings

Built in 1910 and 1918 | 2101 and 2105 West Superior Street | Future Uncertain



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The Salvation Army owns the two buildings at this site and operated a thrift store here until closing in 2022. The buildings have been mostly sitting empty since.

2101 West Superior Street - Built 1918

The original wood-framed building that was on this site, home of Nelson Brothers Knitting Mills, caught fire in 1918. Anton and Caroline Nelson then hired Duluth architect John J. Wangenstein to design the current two-story brick building. The storefront on Superior Street was reopened as the Morterud-Koneczny Company, a men's clothing and

furniture retailer, and the second floor was Nelson's expanded knit manufacturing space.

2105 West Superior Street - Built 1910

Duluth Evening Herald Duluth architect John J. Wangenstein designed the 1910 "Nelson Block" for the Nelson Brothers Knitting Mills. Upstairs included Nelsons' knitting factory and other small businesses including a doctor's office and a violin maker.

The Nelson Bros then had an office and retail store on the east storefront, and the west side was leased to the Star Theatre, a small ornate vaudeville stage.



The Star Theater, UMD Archives and Special Collections

Duluth Lake Port and Storage Elevator

1916 | 600 Garfield Avenue | **Impending Demolition**



This historic grain elevator was built in 1916 by the Capitol Elevator Company on the "Elevator Row" of Rice's Point. The company held the distinction of being the last independently owned elevator system in Duluth. The distinctive headhouse was known as Capitol No.6, and the annex of concrete silos behind it was No.7. Also included in the complex were older wooden elevators, now long gone. One of these elevators, No.4, famously burned down in early 1978.

The entire complex changed hands many times in acquisitions and mergers, first being sold to the International Milling Company (later International Multifoods) in 1947. By the 1980s, the elevator had seen fewer and fewer vessels loading. In 1991, the complex was sold to the Omaha-based AgProcessing Limited Partnership (AGP), which revived operation for the elevator loading international vessels for overseas destinations. In 2008, it was sold to Columbia Grain and renamed Riverland Ag Duluth Lake Port Storage.

The elevator was closed permanently in 2016 due to structural issues requiring millions in repairs; since then, the elevator dock has been used by dredging companies to store tugs and barges. The Duluth Seaway Port Authority purchased the property in late 2019, with the intention to demolish the elevator to expand its dock space. The elevator will soon be a memory.

Duluth Commercial Historic District

1872 - 1929 | Future Uncertain



In 2006, Duluth's most extensive historic district was added to the National Register of Historic Places. With 87 contributing buildings built between 1872-1929, our historic downtown was recognized for its themes of signature architecture from around the turn of the last century and the history of Duluth's commercial development.

From 2006-2020, two structures were lost. Since 2020, multiple buildings have been torn down including two in 2025. More than 10% of the historic district is lost.



1906 Hotel Astoria - Demolished in 2022. UMD Archives and Special Collections

Buildings Lost Since 2006:

- Costello Hardware | 22 E. Superior St. | Lost 2007
- Carter Hotel - 17—25 | North 2nd Ave. E. | Lost 2019
- Carlson Bakery | 319 E. Superior St. | Lost 2021
- Parker Millinery - 323 E. Superior St. - Lost 2021
- Dunlap Building* - 15-17 E. 1st St. - Lost 2022

- Sher Bros. Meats - 25 E. 1st St. - Lost 2022
- Hobart Manufacturing - 31 E. 1st St. - Lost 2022
- Hotel Astoria - 102 E. Superior St. - Lost 2022
- Pastoret Terrace - Lost 2025
- Harrold Building - Lost 2025

Duluth Canal and Lightkeepers' Residences

1873 and 1913 | 724 and 725 Lake Avenue | Under-recognized

These two residences were built to house lighthouse keepers managing the lighthouses along the Duluth Shipping Canal. While these places are currently safe, the aftermath of billionaire Kathy Cargill's demolition spree on Park Point has demonstrated how easily important properties could be lost.

Head Lighthouse Keeper Residence - 724 South Lake Ave



The Lighthouse Board built this residence to house the lighthouse keeper and his family in 1873 while stationed at the South Pier Light Station nearby. Around 16 head lighthouse keepers served that lighthouse station until it was automated in 1970. Most of these men would have lived in this house. This is believed to be the second-oldest house in Duluth.

Assistant Lighthouse Keepers Duplex - 725 South Lake Ave

Starting in 1885, an assistant keeper was added by the Lighthouse Board to help run a newly established fog signal building at the South Pier Light Station. Due to seniority or lack of space, the assistant keeper and their family had to rent nearby. A second assistant keeper was added when the South Pier rear light was built in 1889.

In 1908, the two assistants were being given \$10 and \$15 a month by the Lighthouse service for rent. To save money, the Lighthouse Board requested funds from Congress to build a residence for the two assistant keepers. Costing \$7,178, the duplex was completed across the street from the main keeper's home in early 1913.



Minnesota Point Lighthouse and Buoy Depot

End of Park Point | Lighthouse 1858, Buoy Depot 1908 | Future Uncertain



This was the first lighthouse constructed in Minnesota and is one of the oldest standing structures in Duluth, although it is quickly deteriorating. Constructed of rubble stone, red brick, and lime, the lighthouse was activated in the spring of 1858. It marked where the St. Louis River entered Lake Superior, which at the time was the only natural entry to the Duluth-Superior Harbor. The Duluth entry would later be dug in 1871.

The lighthouse was supposedly constructed on the "zero point" for Lake Superior, where British Lieutenant Henry Bayfield began surveys for the lake in the 1820s. Due to the sandy soil and the lack of concrete structures to stabilize the shore, the entry naturally moved away from the lighthouse until it was determined to be unusable.

The lighthouse was deactivated in 1885, but the structure remained for federal survey work due to its location at the head of Lake Superior.

The Buoy Depot



The nearby Lighthouse Service Buoy Depot was constructed in 1908 to house supplies for service buoys and lighthouse tenders. The Lighthouse Service used the structure until 1933, when it was transferred to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for dock use. Eventually, the Corps abandoned the site, but the depot remains in relatively good condition today; many late-night parties take place in the empty building. The caretaker's residence for the depot was demolished at a later point.

Hotel Argyle (Miketin's Boarding)

108 E. 6th Street | 1886 | Under-recognized



The Hotel Argyle was referred to as one of Duluth's more fashionable private hotels in the boomtown era of the 1880s. Its dining room was used as a restaurant, resident boarding, private dinners, and at one time hosted a New Year's Eve masquerade party. From the beginning it offered both traditional hotel rooms and longer-stay boarding options, especially for transients. Some of these travelling residents included fortune tellers and a salesman selling an "electric belt" that promoted miracle cures.

In 1892, the building reopened as the Cadillac Hotel. It was likely around this time that the building was extended, adding the western third of the building seen today. A grocery store was also operating in the left storefront by the 1890s. The 1900 United States Census recorded hotel owners, staff, and boarders residing here. These boarders were typically white collar

In the 1970s, Bosnian-born Bronhilda Jaros Miketin bought the boarding house with her husband. Miketin ran it until she died in 2011.

Continuing to be used as a boarding house, the building provides housing to those who need it most. However, pressures from nearby upscale developments could seek to push this type of housing out of the area.

A 2014 City of Duluth report of historic buildings recommended the building receive local landmark designation.

400 Block of E. 4th Street

Future Uncertain



Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue East, Duluth, Minnesota 1910

Here is one of Duluth's most under-recognized commercial districts. Within a two-block span exist 11 historic commercial and mixed-use buildings built between 1876 and 1947. These blocks are home to several businesses acting as the Central Hillside's main street. This anchor of the neighborhood has been under attack, mostly by expanding hospital interests. Oftentimes, businesses were removed to make way for parking lots. Earlier this year, Essentia Health purchased three buildings on the upper side of 400 block of East 4th Street. They have torn down one of them so far. Essentia now owns the entire block. The Duluth Preservation Alliance reached out to Essentia to understand their plans for the block and the historic Central Hillside neighborhood. They did not respond.



East 4th Street

Address - Name - Year Built

- 331 Loiselle Garage - 1926
- 413 Goering Building - 1893
- 415 Beschenbossel Building - 1909

- 421 Medical Building - 1876
- 501 Bartholdi Block - 1890
- 502 Bell Apartment - 1916
- 510-512 Commercial Building
- 505 Commercial Building - 1901
- 513 Tufia Bldg - 1891
- 516 Daugherty Building - 1912
- 520 Commercial Building - 1947

Buildings previously Inventoried that were later lost:

- 401 John's Used Furniture
- 407 European Bakery
- 419 The Barber Shop (One wall still exists since it could not be removed without damaging the adjacent building.)
- 522 Potswald Block - 1912
- 526 Commercial Building - 1920
- 417 Commercial Building - 1909

Woodland Booster Pump Station

304 N. 34th Avenue East | 1913 | Impending Demolition



Duluth's waterworks was modernized in 1898 with the Lakewood Pumping Station, bringing in fresh water from Lake Superior. The first place this water goes is Reservoir "A" (also known as the 4th Street Reservoir). Then the Woodland Pump brings water from Reservoir "A" uphill to the Woodland and upper East neighborhoods and beyond.

Designed to be fireproof, the building

is made of structural tile, concrete, and steel beams. It was built in a simple neo classic style.

In the same year, an engineer's residence designed by Duluth architect Frederick German was built at 432 34th Avenue East.

The City of Duluth is constructing a new pump station next to the old one and will demolish the latter. Their rationale is that when the new one gets to the end of its life, the process will repeat with another replacement built in the current location. It is

important to note that old buildings usually outlive new construction. A structure's carbon footprint largely comes from its construction.

About the Duluth Preservation Alliance

Vision: Protect the past and inspire the future

Mission: Being stewards of our historic places by advocating for the past. Offering education and sustainable solutions to the Duluth area community.

Values: Education + Stewardship + Vision + Community

<https://duluthpreservation.org/about-the-dpa/>

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