

Dear Friend,

Your urgent attention is needed--the Linden Hills neighborhood is under threat. Developers are seeking permission from the City of Minneapolis Zoning & Planning Committee to demolish Brenda Ueland's house at 2620 West 44th Street. They also plan to tear down the houses on either side of it, as well as some of the last remaining shade trees on the street, and to build up to 40 luxury condominiums in their place. If the developers have their way Linden Hills will lose an historic resource of national significance, its connection to Brenda Ueland will be severed, and the scale and fabric of the neighborhood will be forever altered.

This is not the first time Linden Hills has been threatened by developers. In 1984 Brenda Ueland herself wrote to defend her beloved neighborhood and the house directly across the street from her home.

From Brenda's 1984 letter:

"A group of men want to build a parking ramp at 2621 West 44th Street. This is across the street from my house... Now first I want to tell you about our street, West 44th Street. It comes down a hill from the endearing and comforting Divine Science Church, (now Lake Harriet Community Church). But then it wanders and bends somewhat. I mean it is not a straight crashing highway where cars zoom and rush to get straight downtown. It bends and charmingly and gently leads into Lake Harriet... We love our street and everybody who lives on it, and we will not have it uglified... Not all of our houses are expensive or in the least pretentious, but we are fond of all of them and especially of the people who live in them who are ALL grandly first-rate enough to see and care about the beauty of the place they live in. And about Lake Harriet, as perfect as a legend in a fairy tale!"

--Brenda Ueland, 2620 West 44th Street, Linden Hills

Although the City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) recently voted to deny the demolition permit for Brenda's house, the developer has appealed. Senior City Planner Aaron Hanauer's recommendation to deny the permit was bolstered by testimony from a half-dozen neighbors and witnesses, including Jo Ellen Haugo and Peter Sussman from the Linden Hills History Study Group, and written testimony from Minnesota memoirist Patricia Hampl and other fans of Brenda. But the threat is by no means diminished. We have been told that HPC recommendations are often overturned by Zoning & Planning and by the City Council.

The developer's appeal will be heard on March 16 at 9:30 a.m. at the Zoning & Planning Committee meeting, which is a public hearing. Following that meeting the committee will make a recommendation to the full City Council. According to Hanauer it's vital that advocates for the preservation of Brenda's house be at the Z&P meeting on March 16, (Room 317, City Hall, 350 South 5th Street).

Some will say, "But I'm all for density." So are we. We love the walking streets of great cities, like Little Italy in New York City, or the Left Bank in Paris. But adding up to 40 condominiums to West 44th Street is not the kind of density promised by the "new urbanism." Adding so many new residences to Linden Hills means adding at least as many cars to the neighborhood's already congested streets.

According to experienced neighborhood preservationist Madeline Douglass, "The builders who bought Brenda's house outbid other interested buyers... they've torn down and replaced other houses in Linden Hills... Linden Hills has been the focus of a very aggressive group of investors who consider Brenda's house just another acquisition to add to their profits...."

We hope you will join us by speaking out against the demolition of Brenda Ueland's house. If you care about preserving Brenda Ueland's legacy, or the character of the Linden Hills neighborhood, or the few remaining shade trees, or the few remaining on-street parking places on West 44th Street, please join us at the meeting on March 16.

In the meantime please help us reach our elected representatives and express your concern that the integrity of the neighborhood be given a higher priority than the profits of developers. If the Brenda Ueland house with its long association with one of Minnesota's most beloved writers, activists, and women's advocates is destroyed, it will leave a hole in the heart of Linden Hills.

A list with contact numbers is provided below. If you write a letter, please send us a copy.

Many thanks for your interest and concern,

Sincerely,

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Zoning & Planning Committee

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