

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

**NRIS Reference Number:** 09000408

**Date Listed:** 6-10-09

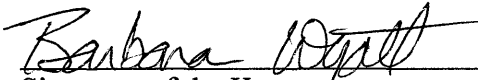
**Property Name:** Minnesota Building

**County:** Ramsey

**State:** Minnesota

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

6-10-09  
Date of Action

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**Amended Items in Nomination**

The following correction is made to the submitted nomination:

The thirteenth story of the building, built in 1930 as soon as the original building was completed, is considered a contributing component of the building and its date of construction is considered part of the period of significance (with 1929) and a significant date.

According to Susan Roth, MN SHPO, "Construction on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor was begun on the heels of the completion of the building. It is sheathed with the same limestone and repeats the window pattern. There are no plans of the top floor. However, the building's architect moved in after it was completed, and the author of the nomination thinks it is a safe assumption that Hausler oversaw the construction of the 13<sup>th</sup> floor" (e-mail from Susan Roth to Barbara Wyatt, 6-8-09).

Ms. Roth also noted that the windows were replaced in 1974.

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**Notification and Distribution**

The Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

This notice was distributed to the following:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority, without nomination attachment



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National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Minnesota Building  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 46 East Fourth Street  not for publication N/A  
city or town Saint Paul  vicinity  
state Minnesota code MN county Ramsey code 123 zip code 55101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
Britta L. Bloomberg 4/21/09  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau Minnesota Historical Society

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Barbara Wyatt Date of Action 6-10-09

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structure
		objects
1		<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE:business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC:multiple dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE:business

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco/Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation : CONCRETE

walls : STONE/Limestone, CONCRETE,  
BRICK

roof : ASPHALT

other : STONE/Granite, METAL/Iron

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see attached.

Minnesota Building  
Name of Property

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### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

1929

#### Significant Dates

1929

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

#### Cultural Affiliation

#### Architect/Builder

Hausler, Charles A.

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Northwest Architectural Archives,  
University of Minnesota

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 1/4 arce

St. Paul East, Minn. 1967, Revised 1993

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<u>1</u>   <u>5</u>	<u>4</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>2</u>   <u>1</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>6</u>	<u>4</u>   <u>9</u>   <u>7</u>   <u>6</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>0</u>   <u>5</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			
3.			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4.			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title	<u>Bethany Gladhill, Associate / Thomas R. Zahn, Principal</u>		
organization	<u>Thomas R. Zahn and Associates, LLC</u>	date	<u>12/31/2008</u>
street and number	<u>807 Holly Avenue</u>	telephone	
city or town	<u>Saint Paul</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55104</u>

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Leo M. Sand, Chief Manager, MNB Development LLC</u>		
street & number	<u>366 South 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue</u>	telephone	<u>320-202-3100</u>
city or town	<u>Waite Park</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>56387</u>

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it contains a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., Washington, DC 20240.

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The Minnesota Building, constructed in 1929, is located at the southeast corner of East Fourth Street and Cedar Street in downtown Saint Paul. The thirteen-story office structure is built of reinforced concrete and faced with polished Indiana limestone. Its styling reflects a transition from early twentieth-century commercial building Classical design to the Art Deco/Moderne architecture that gained wide popularity in downtown Saint Paul from the late 1920s through the early 1940s.

### Exterior:

The two main facades face East Fourth Street and Cedar Street, and display entrance bays flanked by commercial display window bays at the pedestrian level, and vertical window shafts separated by limestone piers between the second and thirteenth stories. The secondary facades, facing south and east internally in the block, are defined by similar window placement, but with concrete floor banding between floors, and common brick infill between windows. The secondary facades both display "MINNESOTA BLDG." painted in large block letters between the twelfth and thirteenth floor window rows.

### Pedestrian Level

At the pedestrian level, the East Fourth Street façade is symmetrical in layout with a central entry bay flanked by display window bays and pedestrian openings/tall doorways on the outer corners. On Cedar Street the building displays a secondary entrance bay flanked by three display window bays to each side. On both major facades the bulkhead is defined by polished pink and gray marble sheathing. Directly above each bay opening is a narrow band of decorative, colored tile.

The main entrance of the Minnesota Building is located on East Fourth Street. The entry is recessed and displays two sets of brass plated doors flanked by two wrought iron and glass display cases. Above the doors and iron cases is a band of cresting with a center metal plaque reading "MINNESOTA BUILDING." Above the cresting are five large transom windows. The building address number "46" is painted in gold on the center transom window. Framing the top of the recess, over the transoms and on the ceiling is decorative cream-colored terra cotta. The entry is further defined by two large brass wall lanterns. Above the entrance bay and directly under the second-story windows spanning the bay, is a low-relief stone medallion of the State of Minnesota guarded by two stylized eagles facing inward.

On either side of the entry bay are massive plate-glass display windows with transoms above, and a marble bulkhead below. At the outer corners are tall pedestrian openings, each crowned with terra cotta scrollwork. At the corner of East Fourth Street and Cedar Street is a recessed corner shop entry. Cedar Street displays a recessed secondary entrance with a set of two brass-plated and glass commercial doors framed by decorative, wrought iron and glass display cases. Similar to the East Fourth Street entry, this opening has cresting, a similar terra cotta ceiling and crown, the narrow tile banding and the State seal and eagles above. However, the bay opening

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is not as tall and only has a short horizontal transom above the entry doors. The address number "326" is painted in gold on the transom above the doors. The entry is further defined by two small wall lanterns on either side of the doors.

Three storefront bays appear on both sides of the Cedar Street entry. Each bay displays a marble bulkhead, large display windows, with narrow tile banding above. The bays to the north of the Cedar Street entry have transom windows, the bays to the south have no transoms. The most southerly bay has a recessed single storefront door framed by side plate glass display windows.

### Exterior Upper Levels

Further defining the East Fourth Street and Cedar Street entries, the side piers and the two piers above are decorated with raised stone shafts stepping and terminating with floral motifs half-way up the third story. An ornate terra cotta belt course separates the second and third stories. A simple raised edge banding occurs in stone between the eleventh and the twelfth stories. Above the twelfth story is a checkerboard patterned belt course that is interrupted by the stone piers that end in stepped finials at the thirteenth story level. The thirteenth floor is set back from the main facade and is engaged into the back of the pier finials. The building displays no projecting cornice.

A pre-cursor to the signature Moderne motif of recessing and darkening the vertical window banding, one of the Minnesota Building's most striking features is the darker stone tile flanked by scored stone in the shallow recess of the vertical window stacks between the third and the eleventh floors, emphasizing the vertical thrust of the design. While the present metal-clad upper-story windows (second through thirteenth floors) are not original, they do resemble the building's original double-hung wood windows. On the south facing, secondary facade, some windows on the ninth, tenth and eleventh floors were modified in the last quarter of the twentieth century to take advantage of the southerly views toward the Mississippi River. The building has a flat composition roof. An iron fire-escape is located on the south facing, secondary facade.

The city's skyway system services the Minnesota Building block through adjacent structures to the south and east, but does not puncture any facade, primary or secondary, of the Minnesota Building. However, on the secondary facade facing east a second story wall opening once provided passage to the former adjacent building. The opening is now exposed due to the setback design of the new adjacent Capital City Plaza parking ramp.

### Interior:

#### Entrance Lobby

The lobby is entered directly from East Fourth Street by passing through a vestibule with two revolving wood and brass doors. The

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lobby displays a terrazzo floor of cream, gold, terra cotta and azure in a zig-zag pattern. The walls are sheathed in bands of grey, tan and gold-veined marble. Rectangular blocks of red and gold marble provide color accents at the top of the light tan marble walls. Overlooking the lobby is a mezzanine level that provides a clerestory of light from the tall transoms above the East Fourth Street entrance. Crowning the lobby's marble walls is a plaster molding rendered in a zig-zag Art Deco pattern. Original bronze and glass Art Deco light fixtures hang from the lobby ceiling.

To the back of the lobby is a brass plated directory and a functioning, brass hand and numbered clock engaged in the tan and gold marble wall opposite the entry doors. Around the corner to the right is the elevator bank with its bronze decorative doors, applied gold leaf surrounds, and recessed lighting. Above the elevators are engaged brass floor indicators.

South of the elevator bank is a hallway, which has a short flight of stairs because of the incline of the site, that provides internal access to the commercial leases along Cedar Street and to the side entrance with a vestibule defined by a wood and brass internal door set. The level of material integrity on the Minnesota Building's main facades, and in the lobby area is excellent.

### Interior Upper Level Office Plan

The upper office floors have an elevator core of four elevators providing access to an internal, central L-shaped hallway. The original office floor layout had the hallway feeding a ring of anterooms that lead to the outer offices. However, over time the integrity of this plan was modified on many of the floors to meet the changing needs of the commercial tenants. This usually entailed the removal of the wall between the anteroom and the outer offices resulting in a large, more generic open office space.

The internal staircase, located off the short arm of the hallway, behind the elevator core, leads to alternating men's and women's lavatories on the half-floors at the stair landing level. Access to the fire-escape is provided on all upper floors, two through thirteen is provided through the central office along the southerly wall of the office building.

While most of the exterior and the lobby area of the Minnesota Building remain intact, many of the upper floors have been modified to support changing needs in commercial office space. The building will be rehabilitated for workforce (affordable) housing.



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The Minnesota Building (1929 by Charles Hausler), located at 46 East Fourth Street in downtown Saint Paul, is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. It is significant within this criteria as “embodying specific characteristics of a type and period” in that it was the first downtown Art Deco-styled building to be constructed in the City of Saint Paul, serving as a harbinger to a new style of architecture in the downtown area’s “business loop,” a building boom of Art Deco/Moderne buildings during the second quarter of the twentieth century.

The level of significance is local to Saint Paul, and the period of significance is 1929 (the date of the building’s construction and opening to the public). Its main period of influence could be construed to continued through 1942, the end of the heyday of the Art Deco/Moderne architectural style in Saint Paul, ending in 1942. Nationally, vestiges of Art Deco/Moderne architecture continued through the mid-1940s, particularly in movie theaters and nightclubs. The property reflects the historical patterns identified by the Minnesota historic context “Urban Centers, 1870-1940.”

The amount of change demonstrated by the new architectural style of the Minnesota Building was intensified by the virtual moratorium of new downtown construction during the early nineteen-twenties. Several significant buildings were constructed between 1910-1919, although all in traditional commercial and public architectural vocabularies and relying heavily on a classical style precedent: the Saint Paul Hotel (1910), the Saint Paul Public Library/James J. Hill Reference Library (1917, listed in the National Register 1975), the Saint Paul Athletic Club (1917), and the Hamm Building (1919, listed in the National Register 1997). However, between the Hamm Building and the Minnesota Building, virtually no multi-story office buildings — and only one commercial structure, the Hotel Lowry in 1926 — were constructed.

The Minnesota Building was soon followed by several notable examples of Art Deco/Moderne architecture in downtown St. Paul, including the Northern States Power Company Building (1930), the Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse (1931, listed in the National Register 1983), the First National Bank Building (1931), the Saint Paul Women’s City Club (1931, listed in the National Register 1982), the United States Post Office (1934), and the Tri-State Telephone Building (1936).

There is some evidence that the era of Art Deco/Moderne construction in Saint Paul was instigated by both individual and municipal planning efforts, discussed more completely later in this nomination under “Saint Paul Planning Efforts.”

**Style and Transition**

Saint Paul has been Minnesota’s capital city since the area was first federally organized as a territory in 1849. The city was most prosperous during the late 1800s and early 1900s, and much of the development of its compact downtown area occurred at this time.

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By the late 1800s, the Lowertown area was filled with brick warehouses, and central downtown Saint Paul contained several large office buildings, some of which were:

- Pioneer Building – 336 North Robert Street – 1889 by Solon Spencer Beman the first skyscraper in the city (National Register listing 1974)
- Endicott Building – 141 East Fourth Street – 1890 by Cass Gilbert and James Knox Taylor (National Register listing 1974)
- Merchant's National Bank/McColl Building – 368 Jackson Street – 1892 by Edward P. Bassford (National Register listing 1974)

After the turn of the century, most prominent Saint Paul buildings continued to be constructed in a very traditional, Beaux-Arts, Classical, or Neo-Classical architectural style. These include:

- U.S. Post Office, Courthouse and Customs House (Landmark Center) – 95 Fifth Street West - 1906 by Willoughby J. Edbrooke (National Register listing 1969)
- Saint Paul Hotel – 350 Market Street - 1910 by Charles Reed and Allen Stem
- Saint Paul Public Library/James J. Hill Reference Library – 90 West Fourth Street – 1916 by Electus D. Litchfield with Charles Soule (National Register listing 1975)
- Saint Paul Athletic Club – 340 Cedar Street - 1917 by Charles Reed and Allen Stem
- Hamm Building – 408 St. Peter Street – 1919 by Toltz, King and Day (National Register listing 1997)

In general, through World War I architecture in Saint Paul remained handsome, functional, and eminently conservative. Just after the war, in 1919, Toltz, King and Day designed the Hamm Building, known for its intricate terra-cotta façade, but this also was Neo-Classical in design. No subsequent multi-story office buildings were then constructed in downtown Saint Paul for the next nine years (until the Minnesota Building), with the only other downtown construction being the Hotel Lowry in 1926.

The panorama photo of the "Loop" area from the mid nineteen-fifties is particularly demonstrative of the wide range in early 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles found in Saint Paul's downtown Loop area. In this photo, the Art Deco/Moderne styles of the First National Bank Building, the Minnesota Building, and the Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse stand in marked contrast to their early century counterparts, the Saint Paul Athletic Club and the Commerce Building (and even more of a contrast to the Richardson Romanesque Globe Building of 1887). This photograph also shows the clear difference between the Lowry Hotel, built in 1926 in a very traditional, Neo-Classical style, and the Minnesota Building, constructed two years later, pioneering the new Art Deco/Moderne aesthetic.

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As the first major Saint Paul building to be constructed in the nineteen-twenties, the Minnesota Building made quite a statement. Although the Central Corridor study (1995) postulates, “the Minnesota Building can thus be best viewed as a transitional structure between the historicism of the nineteenth century and the modernism of the twentieth,” the fact that Hausler incorporates in this design a number of true Art Deco/Moderne elements would indicate that it is, instead, the remarkable first in a new style of architecture for the city. These elements include: tall shafts of windows divided by parapets; botanical-inspired decorations; stepped, zig-zag finials; and a lack of a true projecting cornice (the first building in Saint Paul to forego the cornice as a design feature) (Hess/Larson, p157) — all items that were to become integral to the design aesthetic of the burgeoning Art Deco/Moderne movement.

The term “Art Deco” is not actually contemporary to the style and indeed, was not coined until 1968 as the title of a book by Bevis Hillier about the movement. The name is taken from the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes*, held in Paris in 1925 (Duncan, p7). The intention of the movement was to demonstrate a modern and artistic expression unique to the machine age, with an emphasis on the future rather than the traditions of the past.

Used almost exclusively for commercial and industrial buildings (though a very few Saint Paul residential structures demonstrate the influence), Art Deco and Art Moderne were the first architectural movements to break with the previously popular Beaux Arts and Richardson Romanesque building traditions; they were often seen as “setting the stage” for modern architecture with its clean lines, treatment of window shafts, and vertical emphasis. Characteristics of the styles include:

- Smooth, sometimes rounded walls, most often of stone or stucco
- Flat roofs with parapet walls at the roofline
- Straight lines used as the main decorative features — usually horizontal, though occasionally vertical
- Use of bands or shafts of windows as a design feature, emphasizing the height and soaring sense of the building
- Machined or metallic construction materials as secondary designed features
- Intricately designed bands of detail (often interior), often with strong Egyptian or botanical influences, or elaborate zig-zags (Zig-Zag Moderne)

Renowned Art Deco scholar Alastair Duncan claims in the *Encyclopedia of Art Deco* that “Architecture is the single area in which the United States led Europe in 1920s’ Modernist decoration.” (Duncan 1988, p8). The American Art Deco/Moderne movement is often seen to stem from a reaction to the high-profile 1923 Chicago Tribune Building competition, in which an old-world, Gothic-influenced design was chosen for this important new building. This served as a rallying point for breaking from the past, and soon in New York architects were taking chances on Art Deco/Moderne designs such as the New York Telephone Building (1926 by Voorhees, Gmelin

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and Walker), the Chrysler Building (1928 by William Van Alen), Rockefeller Center (1929-34 by various architects, Raymond Hood as lead), and the Empire State Building (1930-31 by Shreve, Lamb and Harmon). Art Deco/Moderne became an almost exclusively urban design trend; Los Angeles was known for its stylized Art Deco/Moderne buildings, especially movie theaters; Miami gains fame from its South Beach Deco hotels; in Chicago, Holabird and Root became the pre-eminent Art Deco/Moderne firm. Meanwhile, contemporary sources, such as newspapers, simply referred to the style as "Modern." (*Pioneer Press*, September through December, 1929)

In Saint Paul's "twin" city of Minneapolis, there is also no true Art Deco/Moderne construction predating the Minnesota Building. The Baker Building (1926) was constructed in 1926 as part of the "Terminal Block" project constructed by a consortium of investors — including Morris Baker, who later served as a major developer of the Northern States Power Company Building in Saint Paul. The Baker Building is best seen as a transitional building incorporating some of the elements of Art Deco/Moderne style, such as shafts of windows, detailed façade treatments and finials, and open retail on the first floor. However, the building's heavy massing and reliance on an arched main entry and strong cornice still give it a more traditional tone, and it has not aged well with its pedestrian level modified extensively over time.

With the Minnesota Building paving the way, Saint Paul, in its compact downtown, grew to possess some exceptionally fine examples of Art Deco/Moderne architecture, all within the downtown core. The best later examples of this style are:

- First National Bank Building – 332 Minnesota Street – 1931 by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White
- Women's Club Building – 305 Saint Peter – 1931 by Magnus Jemne (National Register listing 1982)
- Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse – 15 West Kellogg Boulevard – 1932 by Holabird and Root (National Register listing 1983)

Other, less prominent examples of the style in downtown Saint Paul include:

- Northern States Power Building – 360 Wabasha Street – 1930 by Ellerbe Architects
- United States Post Office – 180 East Kellogg Boulevard – 1934 by Lambert, Bassindale, Holabird and Root
- Tri-State Telephone Building – 70 West Fourth Street – 1936-38 by Clarence Johnston Sr., which was originally designed as a Beaux Arts building and gained Art Deco/Moderne style as construction proceeded
- Coca-Cola Bottling Plant – 84 Wabasha (far end of bridge) – 1941 by Ernest H. Schmidt and Company (razed 2006)

The Minnesota Building, thus, is very much a representation of a very certain time, place, and set of circumstances. Without Saint Paul's rich yet traditional retinue of existing structures, without civic and business leaders planning for a downtown Loop, and even

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without the lack of construction in the early to mid nineteen-twenties, the Minnesota Building might likely have not ushered in the Art Deco/Moderne style in Saint Paul.

### Charles A. Hausler

A secondary point of interest in relation to the Minnesota Building is that of its architect, Charles A. Hausler. Hausler has two other listings in the National Register: 1) the Saint Paul Carnegie Libraries (St. Anthony Park, Arlington Hills, and Riverview), added to the Register in 1984, and 2) the Saint Mary's Church Non-Contiguous Historic District in Hague, North Dakota, as added to the Register in 1983.

Charles Hausler was an extremely important influence on the architecture of the City of Saint Paul. Born in Saint Paul's West Seventh neighborhood in 1879, he attended Mechanic Arts High School before apprenticing in Chicago with Louis Sullivan while in his late teens. He returned to Minnesota and was licensed as an architect in 1908, and was then named as Saint Paul's first City Architect in 1914. He served in that position until 1923, when he left to spend the next sixteen years in the state senate, while still continuing his architectural practice. During his tenure with the city, Hausler drafted its first uniform building code in 1921 and designed numerous municipal buildings, including fire stations, police stations, schools, park facilities, and libraries. It was as City Architect that he designed the prominent, Beaux Arts styled Carnegie libraries already listed in the National Register.

Hausler had a thriving private practice, and was particularly known for his church and school designs. He also designed many private residences, primarily in a modified Prairie style, which include homes in the Crocus Hill area of Saint Paul, Roseville, South Minneapolis, and his own home in the West Seventh neighborhood.

The Minnesota Building, designed while Hausler was still in the senate, was his largest work, and arguably his best. (Hausler papers) The building was certainly influenced by his time with the city, both in its scale and self-awareness as a prominent part of the new downtown development. It also uses construction techniques that show his inside knowledge as originator of Saint Paul's building code, including its claim of being completely "fireproof," built in all reinforced concrete with no steel frame. At the same time, the design shows a keen awareness of architectural trends of the time, and of the movement away from the Classical style that Hausler had excelled at in many of his public buildings — particularly his three Carnegie libraries and the schools and other public structures he designed as part of his duties as City Architect — and into a more modern and groundbreaking aesthetic.

### Saint Paul Planning Efforts

The Minnesota Building and its new architectural style is also demonstrative of a shift in the characterization of downtown Saint Paul.

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It was the first building to be constructed as part of the private and municipal efforts that effectively relocated the downtown Saint Paul central business district from the Lowertown area to its current location. The modern style of the buildings constructed as part of this intensive development effort made a clear distinction between Saint Paul's conservative past and its anticipated future.

In the 1850s, as Saint Paul became a city, Lowertown Saint Paul developed separately from the "Upper Town" area located east of Saint Peter Street. It contained its own steamboat landing ("Lower Landing") and emerged early on as a business, transportation, warehousing and distribution area for not only the city and the state, but for much of the upper Midwest. Uppertown contained governmental buildings, such as the first Ramsey County Courthouse and the State Capitol, as well as churches and some retail. Saint Paul grew quickly, and by the turn of the century the two areas had become one downtown core. By the first decade of the twentieth century, planning, zoning, and regulation became recognized in Minnesota and nationwide as a civic issue, and Saint Paul's first planning board was established in 1918.

Public planning for a downtown core began with the Saint Paul City Plan of 1922. Initially, the planning board met with the Saint Paul City Club (a consortium of business owners and developers) in order to envision a comprehensive improvement plan for the central business district. This plan, however, was not supported by the business community at large or the charter commission (*Planning Saint Paul, an Informal History*). As a result, the major public planning for a "Central Business District" was limited to the core elements of better traffic planning and wider streets.

Perhaps because of the differences between Lowertown and Uppertown, the 1922 plan struggled to even define downtown Saint Paul. It initially called the downtown area of Saint Paul "sharply defined by its surrounding topography: The river on its south; Phalen Creek on the east; the hills on the north and south." (*Saint Paul 1922 City Plan*, p22). It then further defined the main retail core as "bounded by Third, Jackson, Eighth and Wabasha Streets" (*Saint Paul 1922 City Plan*, p22). From this information, the plan proposed encircling a larger business loop within "a circuit of wide streets completely surrounding the business center." Both publicly and privately, this area was referred to as "the Loop," though it was not as clearly defined as similar efforts such as the Chicago Loop.

The proposed streets that defined the loop area were Third (now Kellogg), Wacouta (just east of Union Depot), Twelfth (just north of the current freeway) and Main Street (mostly eliminated during the re-routing of the Seven Corners area) (*Saint Paul 1922 City Plan*, p23). The widening of these streets was completed by 1927. With the city managing street improvements, it was left to private efforts to encourage new building investment. In the mid nineteen-twenties, another private group of investors — The Saint Paul Association (with several former members of the Saint Paul City Club) — formed in order to capitalize on low vacancy rates and create a central business district. According to the *Pioneer Press* (October 27, 1929), the "Loop" included some existing buildings, but highlighted

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several proposed new structures of both public and private construction, such as the Minnesota Building, the planned Saint Paul City Hall – Ramsey County Courthouse, the Katz Building, the Public Safety Building, the First National Bank Building, the Federal Building, and the Third Street Mall and Parking Garage. These buildings were generally concentrated in the part of Saint Paul bounded by Kellogg Boulevard, Fourth Street, St. Peter and Robert Streets, or the “heart” of downtown Saint Paul and within the central business district streetscape as developed above. The Minnesota Building was the first new building to be constructed in the Loop, and the Saint Paul Association featured prominently at the building’s inauguration in October, 1929 (*Pioneer Press*, October 27, 1929).

Though the Minnesota Building is of interest as a result of these development efforts, its primary importance is tied to its role as the first Art Deco/Moderne building in downtown Saint Paul.

The Minnesota Building was the original brainchild of a consortium of developers interested in creating a higher business density in downtown Saint Paul. Lead developers Lincoln Hold and Development Company purchased the first Minnesota Club site (42-48 East Fourth Street) in 1928 and razed it to make way for the new building. The pre-existence of the club structure on the lot likely influenced the choice of the name “Minnesota Building” for the new building. Construction began in early 1929 by the Fleisher-Greg Construction Company. Permits show that all demolition to the Minnesota Club had been completed by April, concrete was poured floor by floor from April to July, and finishes were completed and tenants moved in during September and October. The permit notes decisively on 11/1/29 “Final. Job Done.” (Building Permit)

Construction cost was estimated at \$950,000 (over \$10,700,000 in 2007 dollars) (Building Permit). Hausler designed the building mainly for office suites; most offices incorporated an anteroom off of a central hallway, leading to outer, windowed offices facing downtown over both Fourth and Cedar. The building was designed to cater to upscale offices, and became quite a prestigious location (Hausler himself moved his architectural offices there in 1930). To this end, the wide first floor hallway, that extends southerly from the main lobby off of Fourth Street, included facilities designed to serve the business tenants, including a restaurant, retail space, a concierge, telephones, and a Western Union outlet. Lower level facilities included a tailor, a barber, a beauty shop, and retail storage and locker rooms.

Hausler’s original drawings envisioned the building as thirteen floors (not twelve as constructed) plus a penthouse, with tall window shafts ending in ziggurat-inspired finials. (Hausler papers) The lobby was a particular showcase for the building, with a tan marble finish and elaborate Art Deco chandeliers. The interior design was masterfully detailed, with bright terrazzo floors, variegated marble walls, zig-zag plasterwork, and bronze lamps and hardware. This correlates with Art Deco/Moderne design principles, in which the

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bulk of design elements were placed where the building's main users (here, the office tenants and their clients) would see them the most.

Original elevation drawings show exteriors above the entrance doors topped by the Minnesota state seal and eagle medallions, and other exterior detailing including pilasters topped by a stylized floral motif flanking the central bays, a terra cotta belt course between the second and third floors, and tile detailing and string courses on upper levels, all of which were faithfully executed in construction. (Hausler papers) One major change was that the argyle pattern originally devised for the top of the building was altered to be a checkerboard pattern, likely as the scale of the building was reduced to twelve floors (a thirteenth story was added in 1930). When the thirteenth story was added, the original finials were then engaged into the exterior facade rather than protruding above the building, reducing their visual impact.

Other than the early addition of the thirteenth floor, the building remains relatively unaltered. Public spaces are extremely well-preserved. Especially distinctive features, such as the exterior detailing, the massing of the window shafts, and the open lobby area with clerestory, are substantially intact. Hausler was an apprentice in Louis Sullivan's Chicago architecture office in the late 1890s, shortly after Sullivan had dissolved his partnership with Dankmar Adler (1895). Sullivan was at the summit of his practice. During Hausler's stay in Chicago, Sullivan's firm was completing the twelve-story Bayard Building in New York (1897-98) and work was beginning on the Schlesinger and Mayer Department Store (later Carson Pirie Scott Store) (1899-1904). Hausler's early exposure to masterful design, applied ornamentation and elegant finishes had to have had some influence on his own architectural practice and his subsequent rendering of the Minnesota Building, his largest and arguably most significant architectural accomplishment.

To put all this in perspective, by the late 1920s Saint Paul's downtown central business district was on the verge of re-inventing itself by rendering some of the region's most outstanding examples of the "modern" style — a theatrical architecture that would introduce high quality building materials and finishes, applied in and adorned with Art Deco details and motifs. The Minnesota Building, with its vertical shafting in Bedford stone and its refined stylization, was the first building in the business and governmental loop to introduce the new exuberant architectural vocabulary, and served as a herald for future architectural trends in the city's municipal and commercial downtown construction.



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The Minnesota Building is located at 46 East Fourth Street, on the southwest corner of East Fourth Street and Cedar Street.

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The legal description is: City of Saint Paul; Subject To & With Party Wall Agreement In Document Number 2165105; extending Southeasterly 12 Feet; the Southwesterly 1/2 of Lot 5 & extending Southeasterly 12 Feet; Lot 6 Block 24

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary includes the property that has been historically associated with the building.

## National Register of Historic Places Photography Log

Name of Property: Minnesota Building  
 Address: 46 East Fourth Street  
 County and State: Saint Paul, Minnesota, Ramsey County 55101

All contemporary photographs taken by Thomas R. Zahn. Photographs printed with *Epson UltraChrome pigmented inks* on *Epson Enhanced Matte Paper*.

Photo #	File name	Date taken	Description
01	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding01.tif	01-05-09	Intersection of Fourth and Cedar Streets looking southeast
02	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding02.tif	11-19-06	Intersection of Fourth and Cedar Streets looking east
03	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding03.tif	11-19-06	Intersection of Fourth and Cedar Streets looking southeast
04	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding04.tif	11-19-06	Cedar Street looking up to the north
05	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding05.tif	11-19-06	East Fourth Street looking up to the southwest
06	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding06.tif	01-05-09	East Fourth Street looking southwest
07	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding07.tif	11-19-06	Cedar Street looking southeast
08	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding08.tif	11-19-06	Main entrance, looking southeast
09	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding09.tif	01-05-09	Main entrance, looking east
10	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding10.tif	11-19-06	Main entrance lamp detail, looking east
11	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding11.tif	01-05-09	Main entrance, looking up at East Fourth Street façade
12	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding12.tif	01-05-09	Cedar Street entrance looking northeast
13	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding13.tif	01-05-09	Cedar Street entrance looking northeast
14	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding14.tif	01-05-09	Cedar Street entrance looking northeast
15	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding15.tif	01-05-09	Cedar Street entrance looking up at Cedar Street façade
16	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding16.tif	11-19-06	Stonework over Cedar Street entrance
17	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding17.tif	11-19-06	Terracotta band between 2nd and 3rd stories on Fourth and Cedar facades
18	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding18.tif	11-19-06	Eagle detail over main entrance on East Fourth Street facade

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19	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding19.tif	11-19-06	Corner entrance at East Fourth and Cedar Streets
20	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding20.tif	01-05-09	Original skyway connection cut on secondary, northeast facing facade
21	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding21.tif	09-05-08	Interior main entrance and mezzanine, looking northwest
22	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding22.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby (Fourth Street) directory, clock, light looking southeast
23	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding23.tif	09-05-08	Stair off the main lobby looking southeast
24	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding24.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby directory, clock, light fixture looking south
25	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding25.tif	09-05-08	Elevator doors off the main lobby looking east
26	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding26.tif	09-05-08	Elevator doors off the main lobby looking north
27	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding27.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby elevator bronze door detail
28	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding28.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby elevator "UP" light and floor indicator detail
29	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding29.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby mezzanine level detail
30	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding30.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby light fixtures
31	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding31.tif	09-05-08	Main lobby light fixture with eagle detail
32	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding32.tif	09-05-08	Lobby Art Deco molding detail
33	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding33.tif	09-05-08	Lobby Art Deco terrazzo pattern detail
34	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding34.tif	09-06-08	Elevator lobby and stair to hallway off commercial space along Cedar Street
35	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding35.tif	09-05-08	Interior entrance from Cedar Street
36	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding36.tif	09-05-08	Commercial space at Fourth and Cedar Streets looking northwest
37	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding37.tif	11-19-06	Commercial space along Cedar Street looking south
38	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding38.tif	09-05-08	Commercial space along Cedar Street looking south

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Name of Property: Minnesota Building  
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All contemporary photographs taken by Thomas R. Zahn. Photographs printed with *Epson UltraChrome pigmented inks* on *Epson Enhanced Matte Paper*.

39	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding39.tif	09-05-08	Commercial space with entrance along Cedar Street looking south
40	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding40.tif	09-05-08	Entrance door from Cedar Street, looking southwest
41	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding41.tif	09-05-08	Elevator lobby on the 4 <sup>th</sup> floor looking north
42	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding42.tif	09-05-08	Elevator lobby and hallway on the 10 <sup>th</sup> floor looking southeast
43	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding43.tif	09-05-08	Typical upper floor hallway looking southeast
44	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding44.tif	09-05-08	Office hallway on 6 <sup>th</sup> floor, looking southwest
45	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding45.tif	09-06-08	Second floor office space with plywood over former skyway connection
46	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding46.tif	09-06-08	Typical upper story office space

Historic images are from the North West Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota

Image #	File name	Date	Description
01-H	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding01-H.tif	Circa 1928	Pre-construction drawing of main elevations with 12 stories and finials along the parapet
02-H	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding02-H.tif	Circa 1928 1930	Pre-construction drawing of the main lobby "Typical Floor Plan" of upper office level dated 1930
03-H	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding03-H.tif	Mid-1950s	Panorama of St. Paul's "Loop" area showing the transition of architectural styles from the Globe Building 1887 through to the City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse (1931-32)
04-H	MN_RamseyCounty_MinnesotaBuilding04-H.tif		Historic photograph of the main floor elevator lobby looking southeast