

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 2402 Fourth Avenue South
DATE OF APPLICATION: May 19, 2002
APPLICANT: Dream Home Development
DATE OF HEARING: June 11, 2002
HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District
CATEGORY: non-contributing
CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness and Historic Variance
STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Amy Lucas
DATE: May 30, 2002

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

The property has been a vacant lot since 1994 when the Cupola House was moved from the district to Pillsbury Avenue. The lot sits near the corner of Fourth Avenue and 24th Street; the adjacent corner lot is occupied by an obtrusive pedestrian ramp crossing Highway 35W. A two story, multi-family dwelling was constructed in April of 2002 on the site. The house has a gable roof, sliding vinyl casement windows and cream colored vinyl siding with white trim. The front door is paneled and has one sidelight. The façade has two picture windows and one small square window over the door. The side facing the ramp (north) has sliding windows and one picture window.

B. BACKGROUND:

The owner/applicant purchased the vacant lot last year in order to construct housing. There was no Inspections Department “hold” on the property denoting the historic district designation; therefore Inspections permitted the project. The owner was not aware of the historic district, district guidelines or required HPC review and began construction. Staff for the Whittier Alliance alerted Planning Department staff of the construction. The Inspections Department halted work until required HPC review could occur.

Construction of the house was almost completed when work was halted. The applicant has been willing to work with HPC staff and has offered to alter the building to meet the district guidelines when costs permit.

C. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant is requesting HPC approval of the multi-family dwelling as proposed and constructed with two staff recommended changes to the façade.

The applicant originally proposed a front porch, but did not construct the porch after discovering variances and a Board of Adjustment hearing was required. HPC staff and the owner met to discuss possible alternatives to the property. The applicant is willing to proceed with the originally proposed front porch through a historic variance request to the HPC. (See attached drawings) Staff recommended

that the open porch extend only four feet towards the sidewalk to give façade definition, but not become obtrusive down the historic street wall.

The applicant is also willing to replace the small sliding window on the façade with a double-hung vinyl window that is more vertical than the current window. The replacement window sill will be lowered to align with the adjacent picture window sill level.

The costs for window replacement of the sides are excessive. The applicant will bring the cost differences for new windows to the public hearing. At this time, the applicant is proposing to retain the current sliding windows on the sides of the building.

D. GUIDELINE CITATION:

599.350. Required findings for certificate of appropriateness. (a) *In general.* Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, the commission shall make findings that the alteration will not materially impair the integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection and is consistent with the applicable design guidelines adopted by the commission, or if design guidelines have not been adopted, is consistent with the recommendations contained in The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, except as otherwise provided in this section.

599.520. Required findings for historic variance. Before recommending approval of a historic variance, the commission shall make findings that the variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and that the variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

Wasburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Guidelines recommend:

Design Considerations (for additions, alterations, and new construction)

1. Dimensions of height, width, and depth of additions and new construction shall take into consideration the directionality of adjacent and nearby structures.
2. Scale of additions, alterations, and new construction shall be consistent with the existing pattern in the neighborhood.
3. Setbacks - Background: The distance a building is set back from the front lot line varies greatly in Washburn-Fair Oaks from rowhouses built up to the sidewalk to greater than average setbacks.

New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall be constructed at the legal setbacks for both front and side yards.

4. Spacing between buildings shall be consistent with existing codes.
5. Building plan - there is no uniform plan for the buildings in either district, so this area is open for discussion.
6. Materials - generally new materials shall be compatible with the existing.

- a. Brick. New brick should match existing brick in terms of brick size, texture, and color as well as the existing mortar color, bonding pattern, and the width and type of joint.
- b. Stone. Where stone exists it should be retained, but in additions or auxiliary buildings alternate materials will be considered that would provide a harmonious appearance, especially in terms of color.
- c. Clapboard. New clapboard to an existing clapboard structure should match the directionality and dimensions of the original siding. Where a synthetic or aluminum siding is used, it should match direction, dimensions, and texture of original covering. Details such as corner pilasters, sunbursts, etc. should not be covered and, if removed, should be replaced.
- d. Stucco. If stucco is in good condition or if it is the original material, it should be maintained. However, if the original material was clapboard, restoration to this material is encouraged (but not demanded).
- e. General facade guideline. Avoid fake brick or stone, asphalt or asbestos siding.
- f. Windows. If existing windows need to be replaced, use wooden, a suitable colored or anodized metal or other materials that blend with and not detract from the building.

It is recognized that cost may encourage the use of bare aluminum windows. In such cases the use of enamel paint to minimize the shiny quality of aluminum is suggested.

7. Roof design. The original roof design should be maintained, but the insertion of dormers may be allowed depending on the building's design and the location of the proposed dormer.

Where unusual roof styles exist they should be retained, but the roofs of additions should be a complementary type. For example, a gambrel roofed house may have a gabled roof addition.

8. Projections.
 - a. Porches and porticoes. Open porches and porticoes should remain open. Architectural details such as columns, moldings, cornice projects should be retained on open and closed porches and porticoes.
 - b. Entryways, doorways. Moldings and other details should be retained or original design replaced.
9. Facade design. The fenestration, doorway openings, and ornamentation if intrinsic to the building design should be retained or replaced to evoke the original.

If the facade of a building has been altered to the point where restoration rather than renovation is necessary to evoke original design, renovation is preferred.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend:
Under District/Neighborhood:

-Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings, and streetscape, and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the district or neighborhood. Such features can include streets, alleys, paving, walkways, street lights, signs, benches, parks and gardens, and trees.

-Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, and streetscape and landscape features such as a town square comprised of row houses and stores surrounding a communal park or open space.

-Protecting and maintaining the historic masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and streetscape features, through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplication of protective coating systems; and protecting and maintaining landscape features, including plant material.

-Protecting buildings, paving, iron fencing, etc. against arson and vandalism before rehabilitation work begins by erecting protective fencing and installing alarm systems that are keyed into local protection agencies.

-Evaluating the overall condition of building, streetscape and landscape materials to determine whether more than protection and maintenance are required, that is, if repairs to features will be necessary.

-Repairing features of the building, streetscape, or landscape by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include the replacement in kind - or with a compatible substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes such as porch balustrades, paving materials, or streetlight standards.

-Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape that is too deteriorated to repair - when the overall form and detailing are still evident - using the physical evidence to guide the new work. This could include a storefront, a walkway, or a garden. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

Design for Missing Historic Features

-Designing and constructing a new feature of the building streetscape, or landscape when the historic feature is completely missing, such as row house steps, a porch, streetlight, or terrace. It may be a restoration based on historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

-Designing required new parking so that it is as unobtrusive as possible, i.e., on side streets or at the rear of buildings. "Shared" parking should also be planned so that several business' can utilize one parking area as opposed to introducing random, multiple lots.

-Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the district or neighborhood in terms of size, scale, design, material, color, and texture.

-Removing nonsignificant buildings, additions, or streetscape and landscape features which detract from the historic character of the district or the neighborhood.

E. FINDINGS:

New construction:

1. The building is a non-contributing structure to the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District.
2. The district is severely diminished along the edge of Fourth Avenue facing the highway and sound wall. In fact, the Cupola House was originally moved from this location because a more historically compatible location was found.
3. This multi-family dwelling does not materially impair the historic district.
4. Construction/infill on the lot is an improvement over the vacant lot. The infill matches the size, scale and setback of the neighboring apartment building.
5. The construction meets the historic district guidelines for dimensions, scale, setbacks, spacing, siding materials and roof design.
6. The proposed windows are vinyl and the guidelines state “if existing windows need to be replaced, use wooden, a suitable colored or anodized metal or other materials that blend with and not detract from the building.” The vinyl material does not detract from the historic district.
7. The sliding window type has not been previously approved in historic districts before and is not discussed in the historic district guidelines. The applicant is willing to replace the sliding window on the façade but replacement of the side windows is cost prohibitive. One elevation (south) facing the neighboring apartment building is not visible from the street and the elevation (north) facing the pedestrian ramp is compromised with the obtrusive element. Replacement would not only require the cost of new windows and installation, but also the removal and installation of the vinyl siding.
8. The two recommended changes to the façade to add a front porch and alter one window will make the building design more compatible in the historic district.

Historic variance:

1. The R4 Multiple-Family District requires a front yard setback of 15 feet or the established front yard of the closest residential building, whichever is greater. MCO 546.160. The property immediately south of the applicant’s corner building has an established front yard of 27 feet.
2. The zoning code allows open porches to project up to 6 feet into the required front yard of a single or two family dwelling. Porches may extend the entire width of the dwelling. MCO 535.280.
3. The applicant’s existing three-unit building has a front yard setback of 27 feet. The addition of a small front porch is a reasonable use of the property but is not allowed by the official controls. Therefore, strict adherence to the zoning regulations would cause undue hardship.
4. The existing building is located within the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District and is subject to the district’s design guidelines. Therefore, the circumstances upon which the request for a variance is based are unique to the property and have not been created by the applicant.

5. The open porch will extend not more than 4 feet into the required front yard, and will be not more than 10 feet wide. It may not be enclosed with windows, screens or walls.
6. The addition of a small open porch to the front of the existing building will make the design and appearance of the building more compatible with other properties in the historic district. Therefore, granting of the variance will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance, and will not alter the essential character of the area or be injurious to other property.

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and approve the C of A with the following conditions:

1. The front porch should not extend more than four feet from the front of the building.
2. The front porch must be constructed in wood and the wood must be painted white to match the vinyl trim accents.
3. The single window above the front door must be changed to a vinyl, double-hung window and the opening must be enlarged to align with the adjacent window measurements.
4. Staff must approve plans of the front porch before construction begins.
5. HPC allows the applicant to complete the interior work on the building immediately.

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and forward the historic variance to City Council for final approval with the following conditions:

1. The front yard may be reduced from 27 feet to 23 feet to allow the addition of an open front porch not more than 10 feet wide.
2. The front porch shall not be enclosed with windows, screens or walls, but must include handrails not more than 3 feet high and not more than 50 percent opaque.
3. Staff must approve plan of the front porch before construction begins.

NOTE: Additional supporting documents are available for viewing in the office of the City Clerk. For more information, please contact the Committee Coordinator.