

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
CPED – PLANNING DIVISION
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: 1022 University Avenue, Florence Court Apartments

DATE OF APPLICATION: June 18, 2008

APPLICANTS: Clark Gassen, CAG Development

PUBLICATION DATE: August 5, 2008

DATE OF HEARING: August 12, 2008

END OF APPEAL PERIOD: August 22, 2008

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: Florence Court Apartments, Individual Landmark

CATEGORY: Contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Historic variance to allow for two principal residential structures on one zoning lot

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Molly McCartney, (612) 673-5811

A. SITE DESCRIPTION & BACKGROUND:

1022 University Avenue Southeast is a multi-building site that contains six residential structures, including one large apartment building, Florence Court. Florence Court is a local historic landmark that was designated in 1983. There are five non-contributing, freestanding residential structures on the parcel that are the subjects of this report. As part of a proposed redevelopment plan, the five non-contributing, freestanding residential structures, and one detached garage, are proposed to be moved or demolished to make way for a new multi-family structure. The following report details the history of the local designation, the background of these subject structures, and an analysis of the historic variance request.

In addition to the Florence Court parcel, there are two other parcels on this block. On the northwest corner there is a service station and on the east end of the block is a contract parking lot for the University of Minnesota.

History of the local designation

The Florence Court parcel is unique in that a historically designated structure is located on the same tax parcel as other structures that do not have the same protection. When Florence Court was designated in 1983, the nomination from staff recommended that all the structures on the site be designated. At that time, the City Planning Commission reviewed designations and the CPC recommended that Heritage Preservation Commission adopt a recommendation that only the L-shaped apartment building, known as Florence Court, be designated. That recommendation was adopted by the City Council (per 599.260¹). See attached Council resolution on page 88.

The designation of Florence Court noted that the property was an example of one of the oldest apartment buildings in Minneapolis and that the inward focus of the development on a courtyard was a unique design associated with community planning. The designation of the Florence Court apartment building does include the landscape of the interior courtyard – without the courtyard, Florence Court would not

¹ In 1983, the corresponding ordinance section was Chapter 34.40

have the significance in which it was originally recognized for through historic designation. The other buildings on the site are considered non-contributing resources to this local historic landmark; however they have consistent building placement focusing inward to the courtyard in a “U” shaped pattern around the property.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES & ANALYSIS:

The proposed redevelopment includes the removal or demolition of six non-contributing structures on the site, rehabilitation of the Florence Court apartment building, a new four-story multi-family residential apartment building, and updates to the interior courtyard. \The current zoning classification of the site is R5 Multi-family Residential. The zoning code prohibits two principal residential structures from being located on one zoning lot:

535.190. Limit of one (1) principal residential structure per zoning lot. Except in the case of cluster developments and planned unit developments, not more than one (1) principal residential structure shall be located on a zoning lot, nor shall a principal residential structure be located on the same zoning lot with any other principal structure.

In this situation, the proposed new construction would be on the same lot as the existing, historically designated Florence Court apartment building. The lot size is not large enough for the proposed project to proceed as cluster development or planned unit development, which are land use applications that allow for more than one residential structure on a zoning lot.

Section 525.530 of the Minneapolis Zoning Code and section 599.490 of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Regulations authorize the historic variance “to encourage the preservation and reuse of landmarks and properties in historic districts by providing the commission with authority to recommend departure from the literal requirements of any of the applicable zoning regulations.”

The proposed historic variance is to allow two principal residential structures on one lot. The applicant, Clark Gassen of CAG Development, has applied for a historic variance to allow for the construction of a new multi-family structure at 1022 University Avenue Southeast. The applicant has also proposed to remove or demolition five other residential structures (and one detached garage) and rehabilitate the existing Florence Court apartments.

Section 599.520 of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation ordinance requires that before recommending approval of a historic variance, the commission shall make the following findings:

- A. The variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area, and
- B. The variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

The variance to allow for two structures on this lot is compatible with the preservation of this property, because it preserves the Florence Court apartment building intact, as opposed to a building addition to this historic resource. Additions to historic building can compromise structural integrity, as well as diminish the authenticity of the historic resource. In addition, the variance allows for the historic continuance of multiple structures on this lot. Because Florence Court apartments are much smaller than the entire lot, there has been additional properties located on this lot since the 1920s, which renders this property a legal non-conforming use, because the site currently does not comply with the regulation to

limit principal residential structures. Florence Court does not take up a very large portion of the lot and any new development on this site is constrained by the hardship of the large size of the property.

C. FINDINGS:

1. The Florence Court Apartment building at 1022 University Avenue Southeast is a locally historic designated resource.
2. The proposed redevelopment includes the removal or demolition of six non-contributing structures on the site, rehabilitation of the Florence Court apartment building, a new four-story multi-family residential apartment building, and updates to the interior courtyard.
3. The current zoning classification of the site is R5 Multi-family Residential. The zoning code prohibits two principal residential structures from being located on one zoning lot:
4. Florence Court is located on a parcel that includes six non-contributing structures, including five residential structures and one detached garage. The site is currently a legal, nonconforming use, because there is more than one principal residential structure.
5. The variance to allow for two structures on this lot is compatible with the preservation of this property, because it preserves the Florence Court apartment building intact, as opposed to a building addition to this historic resource. Additions to historic building can compromise structural integrity, as well as diminish the authenticity of the historic resource.
6. In addition, the variance allows for the historic continuance of multiple structures on this lot. Because Florence Court apartments are much smaller than the entire lot, there has been additional properties located on this lot since the 1920s. This site is a legal non-conforming use, because the site currently does not comply with the regulation to limit principal residential structures. Florence Court does not take up a very large portion of the lot and any new development on this site is constrained by the hardship of the large size of the property.

D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the HPC adopt staff findings and **approve** a Historic Variance to allow for two principal residential structures at 1022 University Avenue Southeast, subject to the following conditions:

1. Final drawings including plans, elevations and details shall be reviewed and approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission.

E. ATTACHMENTS

- I. Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness and Historic Variance, pages 1-7
 - A. Rehabilitation of Florence Court, pages 8-10
 - B. New Construction, page 11
 - C. Removal/Demolition of five residential structures, pages 12-19

- D. Historic variance to allow two principal residential structures
- II. Land Use study of Florence Court and Adjacent Property, prepared by Hess, Roise, and Company, pages 20-36
- III. Description of Rehabilitation Work of Florence Court, pages 37-57
- IV. Structural reports (including photographs) for No. 1018, pages 58-75
- V. Site plan, elevation drawings and renderings of proposed redevelopment
 - A. Existing site plan, page 76
 - B. Florence Court floor plans, pages 77-80
 - C. Florence Court elevation drawings, pages 81-82
 - D. Proposed site plan with new construction and landscape changes, page 83
 - E. Elevation drawings of the proposed new construction and renderings, pages 84-87
- VI. City Council Actions, July 15, 198, in regards to the local historic designation of Florence Court, page 88
- VII. National Register of Historic Places – Nomination Form for Florence Court, 89-105
- VIII. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for No. 19, No. 20, No. 25, and No. 27, 106-107
- IX. Building permit histories for No. 19, No. 20, No. 25, No. 27, and No. 1018
- X. Correspondence received, pages 108-126
- XI. Map of Florence court, page 127