

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

FILE NAME: 1019 University Avenue S.E. (BZH 25781)

APPLICANT: Crowe Construction Management (651) 203-1166 on behalf of property owner, Mark Freund

DATE OF APPLICATION: March 11, 2009

PUBLICATION DATE: April 7, 2009

DATE OF HEARING: April 14, 2009

APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRATION: April 24, 2009

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Aaron Hanauer, Senior Planner

REQUEST: Certificate of Appropriateness for Proposed Demolition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The property owner, Mark Freund, has submitted plans to construct a new 24-unit building at 1013 and 1019 University Avenue S.E. As part of this project, the applicant has submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness application for the demolition of 1019 University Avenue S.E. Based on the review, staff is recommending that the Heritage Preservation Commission deny the Certificate of Appropriateness application.

A. SITE DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

District/Area Information of Subject Property	
Historic District	University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District
District Significance	Architecture and social significance
Neighborhood	Marcy Holmes
Date of Local Designation	2003
Date of National Designation	N/A
Period of Significance	1907-1936
Property Information	
Address	1019 University Avenue S.E.
Historic Name	Pi Beta Phi Sorority House
Classification	- Contributing - Eligible for individual landmark designation
Construction Date	1916
Original Builder/Contractor	Carlsted Brothers
Original Architect	Ethel Bartholomew and Marion Alice Parker
Architectural Style	Prairie-School
Historical Use	Chapter House
Current Use	Boarding House

B. DESCRIPTION

B1. District

The University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House District consists of 33 properties and two parts: Fraternity Row and Off the Row. The district was designated based on local criterion 1 and 4.

Criteria 1: The property is associated with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history.

Criteria 4: The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.

Fraternity Row is made up of 19 fraternity chapter houses that are located between 1515 University and 1901 University Avenue S.E. that were built between 1907 and 1930 (see Appendix C3.5). There are three noncontributing properties within *Fraternity Row*.

Off the Row consists of 11 non-contiguous fraternities and sororities dating from 1911-1936; 10 of these properties are located west of *Fraternity Row* (see Appendix C3.5). The Pi Beta Sorority House is part of the *Off the Row* portion of the historic district.

B2. 1019 University Avenue S.E.

The structure at 1019 University Avenue S.E. is stucco, two-stories, and rests on a concrete foundation. The low-pitched hip roof has asphalt shingles, wide eaves, and a prominent stucco-clad chimney at the roof peak (Appendix B20 and B21). The front elevation contains a projecting bay with eight single-pane casement windows and fixed transoms. The west elevation entry is under an Elmslie-inspired sawnwood arched hood wood ornament with short returns (see Appendix B20 and C7-C8). At the second story, seven windows are placed directly under the soffit of the wide eaves (Appendix C1 and C3).

The properties that are adjacent to Pi Beta Sorority House are modest residential structures that were built prior to the construction of the Pi Beta Sorority House (see appendix B41, C11, and C12)

The Pi Beta Sorority at 1019 University Avenue S.E. is an important Minneapolis building with at least five honors or distinctions:

1. It is contributing structure to the Greek Letter Chapter House District which is designated for its social significance (Criteria 1) and architecture (Criteria 4);
2. It is eligible for individual designation based on its social significance and architecture. It is also potentially eligible for individually designation with its association with a master architect.
3. The Pi Beta Sorority House, built in 1916, is one of the earliest examples of a chapter house built by a sorority at the University of Minnesota (see Appendix C22 and C23);
4. The Pi Beta Sorority House is a well-conserved and rare example of a Prairie-School Greek chapter house;
5. The Pi Beta Sorority House exemplifies the architectural work of Marion Alice Parker and Ethel Bartholomew. Ms. Parker and Ms. Bartholomew were two of the first women architects to practice in Minnesota and the Pi Beta Sorority House is the earliest known property extant that Ms. Parker is the accredited architect. The City of Minneapolis does not have another designated property by either of these women.

C. PROPOSED WORK

The Applicant submitted plans to tear down the residential structures at 1013 and 1019 University Avenue, join the lots, and construct a new 24-unit building on these properties (see Appendix B40-B50).

D. NECESSITY OF DEMOLITION

The Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Title 23, Heritage Preservation, Chapter 599 Heritage Preservation Regulations states that before approving the demolition of a property within a historic district, the commission shall make findings that the demolition is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the demolition. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

D1. Unsafe or Dangerous Condition:

The demolition is not necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property. The applicant has not claimed that the subject property is unsafe or in a dangerous condition nor provided a structural analysis (see Appendix B).

D2a. Reasonable Alternatives to Demolition (Applicant):

The applicant does not state that demolition is the only option for 1019 University Avenue S.E. Mr. Freund, however, does state that the building is functionally obsolete due in large part to the small bedroom sizes (see Attachment B7, B11, and B17). Furthermore, the applicant has submitted an estimate from Crowe Construction that indicates the cost to gut and rehab the structure will exceed \$435,000 (Attachment B27). However, for this estimate, the applicant does not provide plan details (see Appendix B).

D2a. Reasonable Alternatives to Demolition (CPED):

CPED believes that reasonable alternatives to demolition exist for the Pi Beta Sorority House at 1019 University Avenue S.E, which is zoned R5/multiple-family district.

One option would be to renovate and/or restore the property in its current configuration. The property owner has provided reasons why he feels this will not work (see Appendix B7 and B8).

A second option would be to complete an interior remodel that returns the interior to a chapter house or co-housing configuration with shared living spaces on the first floor. In 1972, the sorority house was converted into a 13-room unlicensed hotel that likely turned the first floor shared space into individual bedrooms (source: building permit index card). The Pi Beta Sorority House, when originally constructed, had a reception hall, living room, and formal dining room on the first floor and hosted gatherings with more than 40 plus guests (see Appendix C10-C12). A remodeling project could bring back these formal gathering areas for a chapter house or co-housing living arrangement.

A third option would be to complete an interior remodel that either increases the size of the rooms or creates separate housing units.

CPED believes at least one of these options could be explored as potentially viable and will allow for the Pi Beta Sorority House to be retained. Staff provided the applicant a list of financial, technical, research, design, and energy efficiency resources last November, however, the applicant

has not responded to how or why an interior remodeling project would not work for this property (see Appendix C20-21).

D2b. Significance:

The Pi Beta Sorority is a contributing structure to the Greek Letter Chapter House District. It was designated in 2003 for its social significance and architectural integrity (Criteria 1 and 4). The Pi Beta Sorority House is also potentially eligible for individual designation. The Greek Letter Chapter House Designation Study points out the following specific reasons of importance of the Pi Beta Sorority House (see Appendix C1 and C2):

- Built in 1916, it is one of the earliest examples of a chapter house built by a sorority at the University of Minnesota;
- It is the only Prairie School-inspired chapter house in Minneapolis;
- It was designed by pioneering female architects Marion Alice Parker and Ethel Bartholomew.

Marion Alice Parker was one of the first women architects to practice in Minnesota and one of the few women in the United States practicing progressive architecture in the early part of the 20th century (see Appendix C2).

Ethel Bartholomew was considered one of the finest women architects in the early part of the 20th century and was given particular praise for her contributions to the kitchen (see Appendix C9).

CPED believes that the Pi Beta Sorority House is the only property in Minneapolis that is designated which Marion Alice Parker is accredited as being the architect. The applicant has provided a list of 13 properties in Minneapolis that he believes Marion Alice Parker was either the draftsman or architect (see Appendix B25-B26). When staff analyzed the list, the only other property in which Ms. Parker is the accredited architect is 4933 Oliver Avenue South. This property was her personal residence and built in 1921, five years after the subject property.

D2c. Integrity:

The City of Minneapolis and the National Register recognize a property's integrity through seven aspects or qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association (see Appendix E1).

The property owner has provided his analysis of the integrity. Mr. Freund believes the property possesses only one aspect of integrity: location (see Appendix B8-B9).

The 2003 Greek Letter Chapter House Designation Study states that 1019 University Avenue's historic integrity is good (see Appendix C2).

CPED believes that the property requires some maintenance work, however, it retains all seven aspects/qualities of integrity based on the City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation ordinance and the National Register evaluation (see attachment E). The following is a staff analysis of the property's integrity.

Location: The property's retains its integrity of location. Location is the place where the historic property was constructed. The property was built at this location in 1916.

Design: The property retains its Prairie-School design integrity. Design is the composition of elements that constitute the form, plan, space, structure, and style of the property. There are at least

five building features that can be generalized in the Prairie-School architectural style (Source: A Field Guide to American Houses, Virginia and Lee McAlester, 1984). Table 1 below lists the five building features that help define the Prairie School architectural style, and the features present at 1019 University Avenue S.E (note: shading of feature indicates it is present at 1019 University Avenue S.E.).

Table 1: Prairie-Style Architecture Design Elements at 1013 University Avenue S.E.

Identifying features of Prairie-Style	1013 University Avenue S.E.
Low-pitched roof, usually hipped	Low-pitched hipped roof
Widely overhanging eaves	Widely overhanging eaves
Two stories	Two stories
One-story wings or porches	None
Eaves, cornices, and façade detailing emphasizing horizontal lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contrasting horizontal wood trim on façade - Broad, flat horizontal chimney with dark coping at the top - Small horizontal transoms over the first floor windows - horizontal row of casement windows having detailed vertical detailing is present

In addition, the Elmslie-inspired sawnwood arched hood wood ornament with short returns that is above the main entrance on the west elevation reinforces the architectural design (see Appendix B20, and C7-C8)

Setting: The property retains its integrity of setting. Setting is the physical environment of a historic property that illustrates the character of the place. The block of University Avenue, which Pi Beta Sorority House is located, contains the six structures that were built prior to 1917 (see Appendix C11). In addition, Florence Court, which was developed in the 1880's and is a local landmark, is located just to the south of the subject property. Furthermore, the designated chapter houses that are not part of *Fraternity Row* are characterized as being unpretentious houses that fit in with their neighboring surroundings, which is the case with the Pi Beta Sorority House.

Materials: The building possess integrity of materials. The applicant provides images that show that window sashes have been replaced (see Appendix B31-B38). However, most of the exterior character-defining features of the Prairie-School architectural style are present. These include: the stucco exterior, horizontal chimney, façade original window openings, Contrasting horizontal wood trim on the front elevation, the broad, flat horizontal chimney with dark coping at the top, and the Elmslie-inspired sawnwood arched hood wood ornament above the west entrance. In addition, it is likely the property retains most if not all of the façade window sashes.

Workmanship: This building retains integrity of workmanship. Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during a period of history. The Prairie-School architectural style was most prevalent from 1900-1920 (Source: McAlester). The subject property, though in need of some maintenance work, possesses the exterior characteristics that define this architectural style.

Feeling: The building's integrity of feeling remains. Feeling is the quality that a historic property has in evoking the aesthetics or historical sense of a past period of time. The structure is able to express the historical significance as a chapter house. The Pi Beta Sorority House is part of the group of chapter houses known as *Off the Row*. The *Off the Row* chapter houses are known for

being unpretentious houses that fit in with their neighboring residential surroundings which is the case with the Pi Beta Sorority House (see Appendix C16). In addition, the subject property continues to serve as a good example of the Prairie-School architectural style.

Association: The property's integrity of association remains. Association is the direct link between a property and the event or person/group for which the property is significant. The structure, which was built originally as a sorority, has had few alterations to the façade. The structure in its current location is well suited to continue to provide student housing for a chapter house or other students.

D2d. Economic Value or Usefulness of the Existing Structure:

The subject property is zoned R5 and is 6,720 square feet in area. The City of Minneapolis records indicate that the property has rights as 16-room boarding house.

Hennepin County Assessor records indicate the value of the estimated market value as of January 2, 2008 is \$486,100. The land was estimated at \$148,300 and the building was estimated at \$337,800. Mark Freund, the property owner, purchased the property in December 1999 for \$484,300.

The applicant submitted an estimate from Crowe Construction that indicates the cost to gut and rehab the structure will exceed \$435,000 (Attachment B27). However, the applicant does not provide details of this plan nor a proforma that shows the rehabilitation is not feasible (see Appendix B).

The Pi Beta Sorority House does have economic value and usefulness in its current function. The property has not been proven to be structurally deficient and can continue to provide housing for a chapter house, other university students or non-students.

E. COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The following City of Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan policies do not support the proposed demolition of 1019 University Avenue S.E.

Policy 1.7: "Minneapolis will recognize and celebrate its history." This policy is supported by the following implementation step "encourage new developments to retain historic structures, incorporating them into new development rather than demolishing them."

Policy 4.14: "Minneapolis will maintain the quality and unique character of the city's housing stock, thus maintaining the character of the vast majority of residential blocks in the city." This policy is supported by the following implementation step "encourage adaptive re-use, retrofit and renovation projects that make the city's housing stock competitive on the regional market."

F. PUBLIC COMMENTS

CPED notified property owners within 350 feet of the Certificate of Appropriateness applications on March 27, 2009. The applicant submitted two letters from the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association (see Appendix B15-16). The Marcy Holmes Neighborhood also submitted one letter to CPED (see Appendix D1). The most recent letter from the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood dated February 25, 2009 states, "The MNHA board and land use committee support the demolition provided the HPC agrees that the destruction of the historical properties in this case in the only appropriate measure (see Appendix B11)."

G. FINDINGS

District Background:

1. The Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District is a locally designated based on Criteria 1: Association with significant events or with periods that exemplify broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history, and Criteria 4: Embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
2. The district's period of significance is 1907-1936.
3. The University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House District consists of 33 properties and two parts: *Fraternity Row* and *Off the Row*. *Off the Row* consists of 11 non-contiguous fraternities and sororities dating from 1911-1936; 10 of these properties are located west of *Fraternity Row*. The Pi Beta Sorority House is part of the *Off the Row* portion of the historic district.

Proposed Work:

4. The Applicant submitted plans to tear down the residential structures at 1013 and 1019 University Avenue, join the lots, and construct a new 24-unit building on these properties.

Unsafe or Dangerous Condition:

5. The applicant has not demonstrated that demolition is required to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property.

Reasonable Alternatives to Demolition

6. The applicant has not demonstrated that demolition is the only feasible alternative.
7. The applicant states that no reasonable alternatives to the destruction of 1019 University Avenue S.E. exist because the property is functionally obsolete due to the current room sizes. If true, the applicant hasn't demonstrated that other alternatives have been explored in depth.
8. CPED believes that reasonable alternatives to demolition exist for the Pi Beta Sorority House.

Significance

9. The Pi Beta Sorority is a contributing structure to the Greek Letter Chapter House District. It was designated in 2003 for its social and architectural significance (Criteria 1 and 4).
10. The Pi Beta Sorority House is potentially eligible for individual designation based on its social significance, architecture, and possible association with a master architect;
11. The Pi Beta Phi Sorority House was built in 1916 in the Prairie-School architectural style.
12. The Pi Beta Sorority House is significant as one of the earliest examples of a chapter house built by a sorority at the University of Minnesota.
13. The Pi Beta Sorority House is notable as a well-conserved, and rare example of a Prairie-School Greek chapter house.
14. The Pi Beta Sorority House was designed by two of the first women architects to practice in Minnesota, Marion Alice Parka and Ethel Bartholomew.
15. The Pi Beta Sorority House is the only property in Minneapolis that is historically designated in which Marion Alice Parker is accredited as being the architect. Marion Alice Parker is significant for her contributions to the Prairie architectural style and for being one of the first female architects to practice in Minnesota.

Integrity

16. The property owner has provided an analysis of the integrity. Mr. Freund believes the property possesses only one aspect of integrity, location.

17. The Greek Letter Chapter House Designation Study states that 1019 University Avenue's historic integrity is good. CPED believes that the property has not lost any of its historic integrity.
18. CPED believes that the property is in need of some maintenance work, but retains all seven aspects/qualities of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Economic Value or Usefulness of the Existing Structure

19. The City of Minneapolis records indicate that the property has rights as a 16-room boarding house.
20. Hennepin County Assessor records indicate the value of the estimated market value as of January 2, 2008 is \$486,100. The land was estimated at \$148,300 and the building was estimated at \$337,800. Mark Freund, the property owner, purchased the property in December 1999 for \$484,300.
21. The Applicant submitted an estimate from Crowe Construction that indicates the cost to gut and rehab the structure will exceed \$435,000. However, the applicant does not provide details of this plan nor a proforma that shows the rehabilitation is not feasible.
22. The Pi Beta Sorority House does have economic value and usefulness in its current function. The property is not structurally deficient and can continue to provide housing for a chapter house, other university students or non-students.

Comprehensive Plan

23. Policy 1.7 and 4.14 do not support the demolition of 1019 University Avenue S.E.

H. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **deny** the demolition application of the property at 1019 University Avenue S.E.

I. ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District

Appendix B: Application

Appendix C: CPED Supplied Information (Designation Study Excerpts, Property Images, Maps, AIA Guide to the Twin Cities Excerpt, Historic Newspaper Information)

Appendix D: Public Comments

Appendix E: National Register Bulletin Guidelines for Evaluating Integrity