

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division
Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-27502

Date: December 11, 2012

Applicant: Alan Hupp, 952-334-2250

Address of Property: 628 University Avenue Southeast

Project Name: 628 University Avenue Southeast Demolition of a Historic Resource

Contact Person and Phone: Alan Hupp, 952-334-2250

Planning Staff and Phone: John Smoley, 612-673-2830

Date Application Deemed Complete: November 15, 2012

Publication Date: December 4, 2012

Public Hearing: December 11, 2012

Appeal Period Expiration: December 21, 2012

Ward: 3

Neighborhood Organization: Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association

Concurrent Review: N/A

Attachments:

1. Staff Report
2. Vicinity map
3. Aerial views and maps of 628 University Avenue Southeast
4. 628 University Avenue Southeast, 1984
5. 628 University Avenue Southeast, Summer 2012
6. 628 University Avenue Southeast, Fall 2012
7. Determination of eligibility study prepared by Landscape Research
8. Structural condition assessment from Meyer Borgman Johnson
9. Cost estimate for foundation replacement and structural retrofit from Doran Companies
10. Assessment of economic feasibility of rehabilitation from Alan Hupp
11. Future project plans

A. BACKGROUND

The applicant seeks to demolish the building at 628 University Avenue Southeast, once known as Stryker Seminary. The property was previously identified as a historic resource in a 1984 National Register of Historic Places evaluation completed by Paul Clifford Larson and in the survey that led to the property's inclusion in the "800 list" of properties recommended for historic designation (see Attachment 7, page 16 for a summary). On August 8, 2012, the Planning Director made a preliminary determination that the property appeared to be a historic resource through a Historic Review Letter requested by the applicant. On November 15, 2012 the applicant submitted a Demolition of a Historic Resource application.

B. DESCRIPTION

The subject property is a two-story L-shaped building facing University Avenue. A low-pitch hipped roof atop the building features center gables at the front and rear of the building. A slightly recessed, offset, pedimented entryway with narrow sidelights disrupts the front façade's symmetrical arrangement of three units, each with two windows per floor. Walls are clad in narrow horizontal vinyl siding. Fenestration consists of double- or single-hung 2/2 true divided light wood frame windows covered by aluminum storm windows. A nonhistoric two-story deck sits at the inside of the 'L.' Two narrow first floor additions sprout from the western side of the building.

C. PROPOSED CHANGES

The applicant is proposing to demolish the building at 628 University Avenue Southeast to construct a five-story student and/or market-rate housing development, possibly including some retail space, with a first floor garage. The proposed development would also require a Site Plan Review application reviewed by the City Planning Commission.

D. HISTORIC RESOURCE DETERMINATION

Section 599.110 of the Heritage Preservation Regulations defines a historic resource as, "A property that is believed to have historical, cultural, architectural, archaeological or engineering significance and to meet at least one of the criteria for designation as a landmark or historic district as provided in this chapter."

In-depth analysis of the significance and integrity of the property through the Demolition of a Historic resource application process has revealed that the property does not meet the definition of a historic resource since it does not meet any of the Heritage Preservation Regulations' significance criteria.

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

The property's use as a finishing school for women from 1884-1889 is not historically significant within the context of the city's educational and women's history.

The determination of eligibility study prepared by Landscape Research (Attachment 7) notes the building's purchase by Reverend Peter Stryker in 1884. That same year, his daughters, Anna and Margaret, opened one room as the East Side School (later known as the Stryker Seminary). The school flourished sufficiently to permit the installation of steam heat, the hiring of several other teachers, and the movement to a larger building, designed by master architect Edward Stebbins for Peter Stryker, at 2286 Doswell Avenue West in St. Paul in 1889. The school remained in operation at this new location until 1905, over three times the length of time the school operated at 628 University Avenue Southeast, but the Doswell Avenue Building is no longer extant. In neither location did the school reflect or influence events significant within the context of Minneapolis' educational (both public and private) or women's history.

The 2005 *Minneapolis Public Schools Historic Context Study*, prepared by Landscape Research, created a context for which to assess the significance of extant public school buildings within the city of Minneapolis. The study recommended the schools' planning and design characteristics and their relationship to the development of the Minneapolis public school plan be foremost in significance assessments. While the study did not consider private schools, and no context study for private schools has been written, it is useful to consider the subject property in light of these benchmarks established for other educational institutions.

The building in question was not initially planned as an institutional building. It was designed as a residence and converted to a school. Its design has proven highly malleable over time, unlike most of its public school contemporaries. The 2005 study notes a remarkable integrity of association amongst the fifty remaining schools constructed between 1883 and 1962. Only seven of these had been converted for uses besides schools, as of 2005, whereas the subject property saw only five years of use as a school, over a century of use as a residence, and many years as a commercial establishment, all of which required numerous alterations.

The school in question was less significant than other private schools of the time. In his *History of the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota*, Isaac Atwater details numerous private schools in Minneapolis, and notes the presence of many unnamed others. His description includes complimentary but brief remarks on Stryker Seminary, in comparison to other schools. In terms of school officials, Stryker was clearly less prominent. The majority of Stryker's leadership was comprised of Stryker family members, whereas other private women's schools like Bennett Seminary (incorporated in 1869 and also known as The Minneapolis Female Seminary) boasted board members like Minneapolis' first mayor Dorillus Morrison, U.S. Senator William D. Washburn, and state Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Vanderburgh.

Due to its connection to Stryker Seminary, the property does embody some of the educational alternatives inherent in private schools, but two other private schools with far more telling architecture and integrity have also been designated as landmarks: Augsburg Old Main and McPhail School of Music. These schools continue to educate a large number of students, whereas the Stryker Seminary only educated a small number of students from 1884-1889. Even when the Strykers moved their school to bigger quarters in St. Paul, they anticipated a full school of twenty students, according to a very brief announcement in the August 23, 1889 issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. A Tribune article dated May 28, 1896 reported on a commencement with only two graduates that year.

The building's association with women's history in Minneapolis is also worthy of consideration, given its all-female focus, but women's education in co-educational schools existed from Minneapolis' earliest days, and thirteen Minneapolis Landmarks already provide tangible evidence of the influence of historically significant women: the Frank and Karen Brooberg Residence, the Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged, the Maternity Hospital, the Lena O. Smith House, the Woman's Club of Minneapolis, the Young-Quinlan Department Store, the Young-Quinlan Residence, the Handicraft Guild Building, the Franklin Branch Library, the Hosmer Branch Library, the Old East Lake Library, the Linden Hills Branch Library, and the Roosevelt Branch Library. The latter five are associated with librarian Gratia Countryman.

The age of the subject property is certainly noteworthy. The context study notes the age of the oldest extant Minneapolis school as 1883, one year prior to the establishment of the Stryker Seminary. Yet two other schools dating back to the 1880s have already been designated as landmarks: Madison School (1887) and Frederika Bremer Intermediate School (1888).

Criterion #2: The property is associated with the lives of significant persons or groups.

The property is not associated with significant persons or groups. The Strykers were citizens whose activities did not merit much recognition in the *Minneapolis Tribune* and related publications. Reverend Stryker served as pastor of the Andrew Presbyterian Church at 401 8th Avenue Southeast. A very brief announcement of his final sermon appeared in the August 23, 1889 issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune*. Other mentions of the family occurred rarely and were usually summaries of commencement activities at the school.

Criterion #3: The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity.

The subject property is not associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity. Minneapolis has been historically known for many things, most prominently its milling, implement manufacturing, and retail corporations. The Marcy Holmes neighborhood has traditionally functioned as a riverfront industrial area, an early residential haven for Minneapolis'/St. Anthony's elite, and, later, as a housing area for University of Minnesota faculty and students. The subject property is not significant within any of those contexts. Additionally, the *Master Plan for the Marcy Holmes Neighborhood* does not identify the subject property as one of the nine properties for which the neighborhood supports designation studies.

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

The property does not embody the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type, style, or method of construction. While previous studies have deemed the subject property as a rare example of the amalgamation of the Italianate and Greek Revival styles, the subject property no longer bears these traits beyond the low-pitch hipped roof and one door surround over the main entrance, whose offset location on an otherwise symmetrical façade highlights the building's design malleability.

Criterion #5: The property exemplifies a landscape design or development pattern distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or quality of design or detail.

No landscaping beyond grass and common shrubs, exists on the subject parcel. Historical maps and building permits indicate the size and shape of the yard has changed over time as the building's footprint and parking features have expanded and contracted. If anything, the yard exemplifies the property's changing functions, not its association with Stryker Seminary.

Criterion #6: The property exemplifies works of master builders, engineers, designers, artists, craftsmen or architects.

The building was likely built between 1860 and 1865. No architect of record or builder has been found. Building permit records reveal that later additions were not designed by architects, and most of those additions have since been removed.

Criterion #7: The property has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The subject property has not yielded information important in prehistory or history. Records available at the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office indicate that no archaeological sites have been identified on the subject property nor have any archaeological surveys been conducted on or near the property in question.

The subject property is not likely to yield information important in prehistory. Sites in close proximity (generally five hundred feet or less) to bodies of water have a higher than average potential to include archaeological evidence of precontact human habitation, since bodies of water generally serve as sources of water, food, and transportation. The subject property is not within five hundred feet of a current or historic body of water.

The subject property is not likely to yield information important in history. Building permit records do not indicate the presence of buildings onsite prior to the construction of the present building in the 1860s but city records indicate the lot was not connected to the municipal sewer system until 1901. There is, therefore, a chance that the lot may contain privy vaults bearing archaeological evidence. Other archaeological sources of information such as sheet refuse (general surface trash scatters that accumulate over time), trash pits, and builder's trenches may still be present on the lot. Generally, this sort of evidence is found in the backyards of residences. The southernmost portion of the rear yard of this property has been impacted by a driveway. A detached building (previously demolished) constructed in the southwest corner of the lot after the period of significance further disturbed soils onsite. While the remaining yard does have the potential to reveal data about past uses and inhabitants, a relatively small portion of the yard remains.

E. HISTORIC RESOURCE DEMOLITION FINDINGS

Staff has concluded that the property is not a historic resource and demolition is warranted pursuant to Heritage Preservation Regulations section 599.480(a). However, if contrary to this staff conclusion, the Heritage Preservation Commission were to determine that the property is

a historic resource, then section 599.480(b) of the Heritage Preservation Regulations states that, before approving the demolition of a property determined to be an historic resource, 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 up to one hundred-eighty (180) days to allow parties interested in preserving the historic resource a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

F. UNSAFE OR DANGEROUS CONDITION

The applicant does not contend that the demolition of the subject property is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition. They do feel such a condition exists, however. The applicant has submitted a structural condition assessment (Attachment 8) from Meyer Borgman Johnson, whose eight recommendations, characterized as a “significant structural retrofit,” could correct the building’s structural deficiencies. The applicant has also submitted a cost estimate (Attachment 9) for an even more substantial retrofit from Doran Companies.

G. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES TO DEMOLITION

Although the property does not meet the definition of a historic resource, reasonable alternatives to demolition exist. The existing and proposed uses of the site, multi-family housing, are the same. The possibility of retail uses onsite also appears reasonable, since the building served as a mixed-use building for many years during the mid-twentieth century. Understandably, the building would likely require upgrades for such a use, since building code requirements for stores as well as apartments have since evolved. While such upgrades appear to be reasonable alternatives, the applicant is proposing to demolish the building because they desire greater density onsite.

H. SIGNIFICANCE

The subject property does not meet any of the Heritage Preservation Regulations’ significance criteria, as discussed above (see “Historic Resource Determination”).

I. INTEGRITY

The building at 628 University Avenue Southeast does not retain integrity.

Location: The building remains in its original location, indicating the building possesses integrity of location.

Design: The building’s integrity of design is debatable. The original design is unknown, but historical maps of the building (Attachment 3) consistently depict an L-shaped building with west side additions at the corner of Seventh Street Southeast (formerly known as Walnut Street) and University Avenue Southeast (formerly known as Third

Street Southeast). Early maps from the 1860s (Attachment 3) depict a less substantial structure than the one currently on the lot, but the purpose of these maps was not the detailed depiction of individual structures. Fortunately, building permits became required in 1884, the year the school was established, enabling the establishment of a chronology of major alterations to the property since that time. Additions were placed on the front, rear, and side of the building in 1916 and 1929, but street side additions were removed in a 1976 remodel (Attachment 3). Like the 1860s-era maps, the Sanborn Fire Insurance maps that document changes between 1912 and 1951 do conflict with building permit records at times, but the limestone foundation that supports all but a single-story west side addition does appear to date back to the 1880s (Attachment 3-6).

Setting: The property's integrity of setting is no longer intact. This corner of University Avenue Southeast and Seventh Avenue Southeast is dominated by multi-story masonry apartment buildings constructed during the twentieth century, well after the Stryker Seminary moved in 1889 (Attachment 3).

Materials: Building permit records and visual evidence indicate that few original building materials remain on the outside of the building. Corbels were removed between summer and fall of 2012 (Attachment 5-6). Eaves have been covered in aluminum coil (Attachment 4-6). Additionally, vinyl siding, gutters, roofing materials, the front steps (with handrails), the rear deck, and storm windows on the building are clearly nonhistoric (Attachment 4-6). The limestone foundation that supports all but a single-story west side addition on the current building does appear to date back to the 1880s (Attachment 4-6).

Workmanship: The vast majority of the items that exemplify the work of craftsmen are gone, most notably wood corbels removed sometime within the past year, based upon photos submitted by the applicant (Attachment 5-6). The limestone foundation that supports all but a single-story west side addition on the current building does appear to date back to the 1880s, but the wall itself is unremarkable, has been altered in a number of locations (Attachment 6), and has failed structurally, according to the analysis submitted by the applicant.

Feeling: Numerous exterior alterations have compromised the architectural design of the building. Vinyl siding, aluminum eaves, and aluminum storm windows mask the buildings mid-nineteenth century origins. An appropriate restoration might be able to recover the building's integrity of feeling, but early design details are difficult to discern, as discussed above in the section on integrity of design.

Association: The building has not been associated with the Stryker Seminary in over a century, and retains no strong connection to any other organization.

J. ECONOMIC VALUE OR USEFULNESS OF THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

The applicant has not demonstrated that the building in question has no economic value or usefulness. The applicant has submitted an assessment of economic feasibility of

rehabilitation (Attachment 10) that indicates his belief that rehabilitation is economically infeasible, but this analysis:

- a) adds costs that will be incurred whether new construction or rehabilitation is pursued;
- b) cites costs for structural changes that exceed what is recommended by their structural engineer, Meyer Borgman Johnson; and
- c) does not compare the costs of rehabilitation with the cost of the proposed new construction.

The applicant's rehabilitation estimate (Attachment 10) includes property acquisition costs and design costs: two costs which would be incurred regardless of whether the existing building was rehabilitated or a new building was built. Indeed, design costs should be less for the proposed rehabilitation than for the proposed new construction.

Additionally, the applicant's assessment (Attachment 10) is based upon a rehabilitation estimate (Attachment 9) that goes far beyond the "significant structural retrofit" (Attachment 8) recommended by Meyer Borgman Johnson, to include replacement of the historic foundation, one of the few historic building materials still evident from the exterior of the building.

The applicant has not submitted cost figures for the proposed construction of the five-story student and/or market-rate housing development, which would include a first floor/basement parking garage. The sheer density of the development, proposed to have twenty-five apartments and fifty-three bedrooms, will undoubtedly bring in greater income for the developer, but will also require a far greater outlay.

K. PUBLIC COMMENT

Staff has received no comment letters as of the date of publication of this staff report.

L. FINDINGS

1. The property does not meet the Heritage Preservation Regulations' definition of a historic resource.
2. The applicant does not contend that the demolition of the subject property is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition.
3. Reasonable alternatives to demolition exist.
4. The subject property does not appear to meet any of the Heritage Preservation Regulations' significance criteria.
5. The building does not retain integrity.
6. The applicant has not demonstrated that the building in question has no economic value or usefulness.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

CPED recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** staff findings and **approve** the demolition of the property at 628 University Avenue Southeast.

ADVISORIES

1. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of two years from the date of the decision. Upon written request and for good cause, the planning director may grant up to a one year extension if the request is made in writing no later than December 11, 2014.