

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-27743

Proposal: Moving of the residential structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue

Applicant: Brock Rasmussen of Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD)

Address of Property: 2541 Stevens Avenue

Project Name: MCAD and Whittier Neighborhood House Relocation Project

Contact Person and Phone: Brock Rasmussen, 612-874-3700

Planning Staff: Aaron Hanauer, Senior City Planner, 612-673-2494

Date Application Deemed Complete: May 6, 2013

Public Hearing: June 4, 2013

Appeal Period Expiration: June 14, 2013

Ward: 6

Neighborhood Organization: Whittier Neighborhood Association

Concurrent Review: -Administrative site plan review applications for the relocation of the house at 2541 Stevens Avenue to 2726 Stevens Avenue.

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CLASSIFICATION:	
Local Historic District	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District, contributing resource
Period of Significance	1858-1939
Criteria of Significance	3. The property contains or is associated with distinctive elements of city or neighborhood identity. 4. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of an architectural or engineering type or style, or method of construction.
Date of local designation	1975
Date of National Register listing	1989 (Washburn Fair Oaks Mansion District)
Applicable Design Guidelines	<i>The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties</i> <i>Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Design Guidelines</i>

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	2541 Stevens Avenue
Historic Name	2541 Stevens Avenue
Current Address	2541 Stevens Avenue
Historic Address	2541 Stevens Avenue
Original Construction Date	Prior to 1887
Original Architect	Unknown
Original Builder	Unknown
Historic Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Proposed Use	Residential

BACKGROUND: The Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District is locally significant for its concentration of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential architecture and for being the home to prominent Minneapolis art institutions and buildings for nearly 100 years. The Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, which included the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Minneapolis School of Fine Arts, the predecessor to the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, built the original Minneapolis Institute of Arts Building (MIA) in 1915 and the Julia Morrison Building in 1916. The Children's Theater Company moved into the Minneapolis Art Institute building in 1965. In 1974, world-renowned architect Kenzo Tange built additions for the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Children's Theater Company, and MCAD that expanded the arts campus close to the southern boundary of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District.

The two-story house at 2541 Stevens Avenue is one of two late 19th century residential structures on the east side of the 2500 block of Stevens Avenue that remains; there were originally 14. Although severely altered in recent years, the building at 2541 Stevens Avenue contains a gable-front design that shows evidence of the Queen Anne style. The Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD) purchased 2541 Stevens Avenue in 2011.

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL: MCAD, in an agreement with the Whittier Alliance Neighborhood Organization, is proposing to relocate the single-family residence at 2541 Stevens Avenue to 2726 Stevens Avenue. MCAD is also proposing to move the residential building at 2543 Stevens Avenue to 2728 Stevens Avenue (BZH 27742). In their place, MCAD is proposing a landscaping project that will help identify the campus' south and southwest edges, help reinforce the campus' south entry point on 26th Street East, and help the College plan for future expansion plans, which may include academic and residential buildings, and open space.

The landscape design proposal that would replace the residential structures includes the addition of plantings, shrubs, and flowers along Stevens Avenue to match the 26th Street gateway garden sidewalk treatment that was completed in 2009. The applicant is also proposing to replace two street trees on Stevens Avenue that are either missing or will need to be removed to allow for the moving of the residential structure. The entire project area is proposed to be regraded to have a consistent gentle slope from the east edge to the west sidewalk edge and become a campus lawn for academic use; similar to existing MCAD campus outdoor spaces.

PUBLIC COMMENT: As of the writing of this report, staff has received one letter of support. The Whittier Alliance Board voted to support the moving of the houses at a meeting on December 10, 2012.

Findings as required by the Minneapolis Preservation Code:

The Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department has analyzed the application based on the findings required by the Minneapolis Preservation Ordinance. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:

(1) The alteration is compatible with and continues to support the criteria of significance and period of significance for which the landmark or historic district was designated.

The Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District is significant for its collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential structures, ranging from modest dwellings to mansions. The historic district

is also significant for its strong association with the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, which includes MCAD and the MIA. The Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District period of significance is 1858-1939, which captures the time in which most of the residential structures were built within the district and the time of construction of the prominent art buildings in the historic district.

The proposed moving of the house at 2541 Stevens Avenue would remove a contributing residential structure from the district, which typically has a negative impact on a historic district. However, the proposed moving of the subject property will help support one of the historic district's major art institution's long-range plans and campus vision while limiting the impact to the district's residential setting. The original designation study that led to the designation of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District, *Washburn Fair Oaks: A Study for Preservation*, rated all of the residential structures within the district for their significance to the district. The subject property was not considered to be one of those buildings that were imperative to be retained (see Finding #4 for additional analysis). Furthermore, the residential setting of 2541 Stevens Avenue has been diminished over the years with the 1974 Kenzo Tange addition and subsequent modifications on the east side of Stevens Avenue. The proposed moving of the subject building will return the house at 2541 Stevens Avenue to a residential setting within the Whittier Neighborhood. In addition, the landscaping project that MCAD is proposing in place of the house is sympathetic to the adjacent residential setting, in particular to the residential structures on the west side of Stevens Avenue.

(2) The alteration is compatible with and supports the interior and/or exterior designation in which the property was designated.

The proposed moving of the house at 2541 Stevens Avenue is compatible with and supports the designation of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. As stated previously, the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District was designated in part for its collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential structures, ranging from modest dwellings to mansions. Of particular importance to the original designation, were the residential structures that border Washburn-Fair Oaks Park. The district's association with the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts is also an important aspect of why the district was designated. *A Study for Preservation* states "Washburn-Fair Oaks is recognized for its identification with the Art Institute (including MIA, MCAD and the Children's Theater Company). The study also states "There is a continuing interest in the area both as an historic district and as a design district. The construction of the Fine Arts Park brings even more attention to Washburn-Fair Oaks."

The applicant's proposed moving of the house helps support one of the district's original art institutions, while limiting the impact to the district's residential setting, and not adversely impacting one of the district's most important residential structures as called out in the original designation study (see Finding #4 for additional information). In addition, the applicant's proposed moving of a house instead of demolishing it will help retain a late 19th century residential dwelling within the Whittier Neighborhood and City of Minneapolis.

(3) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued integrity of the landmark or historic district for which the district was designated.

The proposed alteration will ensure continued integrity of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. The *Washburn Fair Oaks: A Study for Preservation* report, written in 1975, recognized the importance of both the residential structures and the art institutional uses to the historic district. "Due to the recognition of the Art Institute (which includes MCAD) as a metropolitan landmark, the Washburn-Fair Oaks area is

also identified as "the Art Institute area." Much of the interest in the area is both as a "design district" and as a "heritage preservation district" is generated by the location of the Institute within the Washburn-Fair Oaks area."

The proposed house-moving project will help one of the historic district's long time art institutions define its campus boundaries and plan for the future while having a minimal impact on the historic district's residential setting and not adversely impacting one of the district's most important residential structures as called out by the original designation study. In addition, the proposed moving of the house will help retain a late 19th century house within the neighborhood.

(4) The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the applicable design guidelines adopted by the commission.

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Ordinance defines demolition as "the act of moving or razing a building including the removal or enclosure of sixty (60) percent or more of the structure". The Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District guidelines state that before the demolition of a building is allowed, findings must be made regarding:

1. The architectural and historic merit of the building;
2. The effect of the building's demolition on surrounding buildings;
3. The effect of any new construction to the rest of building (in partial demolition) and to surrounding building;
4. The possible economic value or usefulness of building (as it now exists or if altered or modified) compared to the value or usefulness of proposed structure.

CPED finds that the proposed moving of the residential structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue will not impair the significance and integrity of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District as evidenced by the consistency with the district's findings for demolishing/moving a building.

1. ***The architectural and historic merit of the building.*** The Washburn Fair Oaks designation study rated all of the residential structures within the district. The designation study placed all of the residential structures into one of four categories: Category I (exceptional quality), Category II (high quality), Category III (contributive or potentially contributive), and Category IV (non-contributive). Included in the designation study's analysis was providing a category for each structure based on the building's architectural value, association with a significant person, and being a notable work of a master builder.

The subject building was classified as a Category III (contributive or potentially contributive) building to the neighborhood based on a residential environmental field survey (1965) and a housing condition survey (1965) . Category III buildings "have less architectural value, but do lend some continuity in style, mass, material (kind and color) and design." The evaluation portion of the designation study states that the relationship of a structure's site to its environment and rating the structure's condition were especially useful in determining which building should rank in the lower categories. The subject building was designed in a modest Queen Anne architectural style, which is consistent with the neighboring houses in terms of style and massing however, better examples of this architectural style exist within the historic district. In addition,

the residential setting of the east side of Stevens Avenue was severely impacted with the 1974 MCAD addition (which was after the field surveys were completed for the designation study).

In a cursory review of the building's history, an association with a significant person was not identified nor an association with a master builder or architect. Based on the building's architectural and historic merit, the moving of the building will have a limited impact on the historic district.

- 2. *The effect of the building's demolition on surrounding buildings:*** The effect of moving the building to a new location will have a minimal impact on the surrounding residential buildings, in particular the west side of Stevens Avenue on the 2500 block, which retains most of its historic fabric.

The subject building is one of only two late 19th century residential structures that remain on the east side of the 2500 block of Stevens Avenue; there were originally 14. By the time the 1974 Kenzo Tange addition and adjacent surface parking areas on Stevens Avenue were complete, 11 of the 14 residential properties had been removed. The west side of the 2500 block of Stevens Avenue will be able to retain its residential setting without the presence of 2541 Stevens Avenue. A block to the north, a similar situation exists. The west side of the 2400 block of Stevens Avenue has remained well intact even when the Minneapolis Institute of Arts expanded on the east side of Stevens Avenue.

- 3. *The effect of any new construction to the rest of building (in partial demolition) and to surrounding building:*** The house located at 2541 Stevens Avenue is proposed to be replaced with landscaping that reinforces MCAD's campus. The proposed landscaping project which includes trees, shrubs, and flowers will also be complimentary to the nearby urban residential streetscape.
- 4. *The possible economic value or usefulness of building (as it now exists or if altered or modified) compared to the value or usefulness of proposed structure:*** MCAD states that they do not have a programmatic use that is well served by the single family structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue and that maintenance of these structures diverts funds that could otherwise be used to further the College's mission. The applicant also states that the long-term expansion of the College is crucial for MCAD to meet evolving educational needs. The expanded campus space that will be installed will reinforce the character of MCAD within the historic district, be a campus amenity, and a precursor to a new gateway and main entry for the campus (as part of MCAD's long range plan). MCAD, with the proposed moving of the structure, rather than demolition, allows the building to have an economic value and usefulness within the Whittier Neighborhood and City of Minneapolis.

(5) The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the recommendations contained in The Secretary of the *Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.*

The Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District is unique in that it contains both a historic residential district and historic art institutional campuses. The applicant's proposal to move a house at the southwest end of the campus will help one of the historic art institutions meet their long range plan and vision for their

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campus while having as minimal of an impact as possible on the residential portion of the historic district. The applicant's proposal to move 2541 Stevens Avenue is in part, consistent with the following Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

MCAD has confined its campus expansion to the east side of Stevens Avenue, which helps retain the strong residential block face on the west side of Stevens Avenue. The residential building that is proposed to be moved is identified in the original designation study as a Category III structure. Category III structures are considered to have less architectural value than other buildings in the district. In addition, the proposed landscaping project will assist with the campus blending in with the neighboring residential structures as best as possible.

(6) The certificate of appropriateness conforms to all applicable regulations of this preservation ordinance and is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable preservation policies in small area plans adopted by the city council.

The certificate of appropriateness application is consistent with the following policies of the comprehensive plan:

- Preservation Policy 8.1 Preserve, maintain, and designate districts, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture. (Implementation Step 8.1.1) Protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance.
- Policy 8.7: Create a regulatory framework and consider implementing incentives to support the ethic of "reduce, reuse, and recycle" and revitalization for buildings and neighborhoods. (Implementation Step 8.7.4) Encourage relocation of historic resources as a last means of preservation for endangered properties.

(7) Destruction of any property. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves the destruction, in whole or in part, of any landmark, property in an historic district or nominated property under interim protection, the commission shall make findings that the destruction is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the destruction. 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 property a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Ordinance defines demolition as “the act of moving or razing a building including the removal or enclosure of sixty (60) percent or more of the structure. The applicant is proposing to move the residential building at 2541 Stevens Avenue outside of the historic district but within the Whittier Neighborhood. The applicant does not contend that the moving of the structure is due to it being in an unsafe or dangerous condition. However, the applicant has made the case that no reasonable alternatives exist. The moving of the structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue would help MCAD meet their long range plan for the campus with the least disturbance to the overall Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. The building at 2541 Stevens Avenue was identified by the original designation study as a Category III structure. Category III structures are considered to “have less architectural value, but do lend some continuity in style, mass, material (kind and color) and design”. (Category I or Category II). In addition, the residential setting of the subject property was compromised by the historic art campus expansion in 1974. After the completion of the MCAD addition in 1974 and adjacent surface parking installed along Stevens Avenue, 11 of the 14 residential structures on the east side of the 2500 block of Stevens Avenue were removed. It is worth noting that the demolition of the residential structures on the east side of Stevens Avenue, as part of the 1974 MCAD addition, were completed after the designation study’s field surveys in which the buildings were rated for their contribution to the setting of the area.

MCAD states that they do not have a programmatic use that is well served by the single family structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue and that maintenance of this structure diverts funds that could otherwise be used to further the College’s mission. The applicant’s willingness to move the residential structure instead of demolishing it will help retain a 19th century residential structure within the Whittier Neighborhood and City of Minneapolis.

Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings that alterations are proposed in a manner that demonstrates that the Applicant has made adequate consideration of the following documents and regulations:

(8) Adequate consideration of the description and statement of significance in the original nomination upon which designation of the landmark or historic district was based.

The applicant has demonstrated adequate consideration for the statement of significance in the original nomination upon which the historic district was based (*Washburn Fair Oaks: A Study for Preservation*).

(9) Where applicable, Adequate consideration of Title 20 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Zoning Code, Chapter 530, Site Plan Review.

The moving of the residential structure at 2541 Stevens Avenue to 2726 Stevens Avenue will require an administrative site plan review application for single and two-family dwellings. The applicant is aware of this requirement and plans to submit the application if the Certificate of Appropriateness is approved.

(10) The typology of treatments delineated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the associated guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, reconstructing, and restoring historic buildings.

The project will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves alterations to a property within an historic district, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:

(11) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued significance and integrity of all contributing properties in the historic district based on the period of significance for which the district was designated.

The proposed alterations are compatible with and will ensure continued significance and integrity of all contributing buildings in the historic district based on the period of significance for which the district was designated. Please see Findings 1 through 6 for analysis.

(12) Granting the certificate of appropriateness will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district.

The proposed alterations will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not negatively alter the essential character of the Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District. Please see Findings 1, 2, and 6 for analysis.

(13) The certificate of appropriateness will not be injurious to the significance and integrity of other resources in the historic district and will not impede the normal and orderly preservation of surrounding resources as allowed by regulations in the preservation ordinance.

Approving the Certificate of Appropriateness will not be injurious to the significance and integrity of the other resources in the historic district. Allowing the building at 2541 Stevens Avenue to be moved does not automatically allow for other residential structures within the district to be moved or demolished. Of particular note are the Double Houses at 202-204 26th Street East and 206-210 26th Street East. These residential structures are shown as being retained in MCAD's 100 year master plan. They are also identified as a potential National Register site by the SHPO in the *Report of the Assessment of Potential Effect of the Proposed Reconstruction of I-35W on Historic Properties* (1994).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the findings above and **approve** the certificate of appropriateness to allow for the moving of the residential building at 2541 Stevens Avenue to 2726 Stevens Avenue, subject to the following conditions:

1. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of two years from the date of the decision unless required permits are obtained and the action approval is substantially begun and proceeds in a continuous basis toward completion. 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 June 4, 2015.
2. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this certificate of appropriateness shall remain in effect as long as all of the conditions and guarantees of such approvals are observed. Failure to comply

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with such conditions and guarantees shall constitute a violation of this certificate of appropriateness and may result in termination of the approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Washburn Fair Oaks Historic District Map
2. Zoning and future land use map
3. Cover letter
4. Project narrative and statement to certificate of appropriateness findings
5. Site plan and project information
6. Historic report: 2541 and 2543 Stevens Avenue
7. Whittier Neighborhood letter of support
8. Neighborhood and city council notification of application
9. Proposed moving company (Prima Land) profile