



CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Heritage Preservation Commission

HPC Agenda Item #2
 July 8, 2014
 BZH-28130

HERITAGE PRESERVATION APPLICATION SUMMARY

Property Location: 2400 Stevens Avenue
Project Name: Porch Rehabilitation and Wall Removal
Prepared By: [John Smoley](#), Ph.D., City Planner, (612) 673-2830
Applicant: Minneapolis International Hostel
Project Contact: Kristi Oman, 612-871-4545
Ward: 10
Neighborhood: Whittier
Request: To rehabilitate two porches and receive approval for the previously conducted removal of the retaining wall

Required Applications:

Certificate of Appropriateness	To rehabilitate two porches and receive approval for the previously conducted removal of the retaining wall
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HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

Current Name	Minneapolis International Hostel
Historic Name	King-Sweatt House
Historic Address	2400 Stevens Avenue
Original Construction Date	1909
Original Architect	William Channing Whitney
Original Builder	R.J. Cheney
Historic Use	Single-family Residence
Current Use	Hostel
Proposed Use	Hostel

Date Application Deemed Complete	April 7, 2014	Date Extension Letter Sent	June 4, 2014
End of 60-Day Decision Period	June 6, 2014	End of 120-Day Decision Period	August 5, 2014

CLASSIFICATION

Local Historic District	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District
Period of Significance	Turn-of-the-century
Criteria of Significance	Significant architecture
Date of Local Designation	1976
Date of National Register Listing	1978
Applicable Design Guidelines	Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District Design Guidelines

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND.

The King-Sweatt residence at 2100 Stevens Avenue is a 2.5 story brick building designed in the Colonial Revival style. Originally used as a residence, the building now houses a youth hostel. This building is located at the southwest corner of Stevens Avenue and 24th Street East, just across the street from the Minneapolis Institute of Arts in the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District.

The Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District is locally significant for its depiction of turn-of-the-century residential architecture ranging from opulent mansions to modest homes. The subject property is a contributing resource in this district as an excellent example of Colonial Revival architecture in a residence.

APPLICANT’S PROPOSAL. The applicant wishes to rehabilitate two porches and receive approval for the previously conducted removal of the knee-high red brick retaining wall with a limestone capstone that ran along both street sides. The proposal requires a Certificate of Appropriateness.

PUBLIC COMMENTS. Staff has received no comments on the proposal.

ANALYSIS

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application to rehabilitate two porches and receive approval for the previously conducted removal of the retaining wall based on the following findings:

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.*

Regardless of what changes are made to the subject property, it will maintain its historical significance, but proposed changes may affect its integrity (i.e. the property’s ability to communicate its historical significance), as discussed in finding #3 below.

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

The exterior portions of the residence communicate the building’s significance. The applicant intends to repair both porches, replacing in-kind any rotted wood components. Both wood porches are heavily deteriorated. The proposed repair of the porches with matching materials will benefit the property and will, ideally, prompt similar work elsewhere on the property, since other wood components on the exterior of the building show signs of deterioration.

The unpermitted removal of the retaining wall is not a good model for future work. Photos in staff's files show bricks and limestone caps on the wall that appear to match those on the residence. Nevertheless, staff has not found definitive evidence that the retaining wall was a contributing resource on the property, but staff has found evidence of the retaining wall's gradual demise.

Photos (Attachment C) indicate that the retaining wall stretched along the entire length of the property at least as late as 1966. By around 1980 the wall had been clipped along Stevens Avenue at the southern property line. The wall remained in this configuration until shortly before 1993, when the remainder of the wall along Stevens Avenue immediately south of the walkway into the home was removed, with the possible exception of one pillar. The remainder of the retaining wall stayed in place until sometime between 2007 (per Google street view) and 2009, when additional portions of the wall along both street frontages began to be removed. By August 2011 the wall was gone.

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 porch repair is needed. Existing wood components show signs of heavy deterioration, and the side porch was damaged by a tree that fell. While unpermitted work like the removal of the retaining wall from both street sides is far from ideal, the property still retains integrity without the wall.

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 Commission has adopted design guidelines for this district, but they do not deal with retaining walls. The proposed repair of the porch with matching materials is in keeping with the design guidelines.

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 applicant is conducting a rehabilitation of the subject property, repairing two porches and seeking approval for the previously-conducted removal of a retaining wall.

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* recommend repairing entrances and porches by reinforcing the historic materials, to include the limited replacement in kind of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of repeated features where there are surviving prototypes such as balustrades, cornices, entablatures, columns, sidelights, and stairs. The applicant proposes to repair both porches using new wood components of matching size. Both wood porches are heavily deteriorated.

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* do not recommend removing or radically changing buildings and their features or site features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the property so that, as a result, the character is diminished. The removal of the retaining wall would fit this characterization, but staff has not been able to find definitive evidence that the retaining wall dates to the district's period of significance.

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.*

Comprehensive plan policy 8.1 states that the City will, “Preserve, maintain, and designate landmarks, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.” The proposed work will help preserve and reuse one historic building. Action 8.1.1 of the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* indicates that the City shall protect historic resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance. The project will help restore the appearance of the historic home’s porches, as discussed in finding # 5 above.

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 project requests approval of the previously destroyed retaining wall. The applicant has stated that the destruction was necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, due to the loitering and illegal activity the wall generated. Staff has not found evidence of this, but there are 171 police reports on file for this address over the past 15 years.

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. *The description and statement of significance in the original nomination upon which designation of the landmark or historic district was based.*

The proposed repair of rotted wood porch components with matching materials indicates a sound understanding of the property’s significance.

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

The proposal does not trigger Site Plan Review required by Zoning Code Chapter 530.

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 application complies with the rehabilitation guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as discussed in finding #5 above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Certificate of Appropriateness:

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 rehabilitate two porches and receive approval for the previously conducted removal of the retaining wall at 2400 Stevens Avenue in the Washburn-Fair Oaks Historic District, 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 July 8, 2016.
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 with such conditions and guarantees shall constitute a violation of this Certificate of Appropriateness and may result in termination of the approval.
3. CPED Staff shall review and approve the final plans and elevations prior to building permit issuance.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Vicinity map
- B. Plans
- C. Photos
- D. Retaining Wall Changes from 1966-2011