

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
SUBJECT: **Appeal of Decision of Cultural Heritage Commission to Approve
Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition of 595 South Marengo Avenue**

DATE: September 20, 1999

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the house at 595 South Marengo Avenue does not qualify for designation as a landmark nor as a structure of merit (according to the definitions in P.M.C. §2.75.110 T and §2.75.120); and
2. Based on this finding, affirm the decision of the Cultural Heritage Commission to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the house at 595 South Marengo Avenue.

BACKGROUND:

At a meeting held on August 16, 1999, the Cultural Heritage Commission approved an application for Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of the house at 595 South Marengo Avenue. Moule & Polyzoides, local architects and the developers of a proposed multi-family project on the site (591 South Marengo Avenue), filed this application for the Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition. The applicant was previously issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 585 South Marengo Avenue, the similar building immediately north of the subject property.

The commission found that the building located at 595 South Marengo Avenue did not individually qualify for designation as a landmark or as a structure of merit and it issued the Certificate of Appropriateness. By code the commission can stay a demolition *only* if it finds that the building qualifies for landmark designation or rates as a structure of merit.

The party filing the appeal, the owner of the nearby property at 611 South Marengo Avenue, cites three justifications for the appeal: 1) that the commission "failed to protect a...historical neighborhood;" 2) that the replacement project is not compatible with the existing Craftsman-style buildings; and, 3) that the staff report did not correctly identify the "historical value" of the street or nearby buildings.

In making its finding, the Cultural Heritage Commission considered to following:

1. The neighborhood has been evaluated for historic significance (recent field inspections and the 1980 *Historic Property Survey [of] South Marengo Avenue*) and was found not to qualify as a local landmark district. The building is not located within the boundaries of the South Marengo Historic District, a district listed in the National Register. The property is located in the in PD-8 zoning district, where the zoning code permits business and professional office uses within historically significant structures. This provision encourages adaptive reuse projects in bungalow courts and notable Craftsman style houses on South Marengo Avenue (roughly between Del Mar Boulevard and Glenarm Avenue). The house at 595 South Marengo Avenue would not qualify for this zoning provision because it is not architecturally significant and no longer “retains its architectural integrity.” It appears that changes have been made to the eaves and to the exterior wall surface.
2. By code, the Commission does not consider the replacement project or its appearance in the determination to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition.
3. By code, the Commission does not consider the “historical value” of the surrounding neighborhood when reviewing an application for demolition of a building over 50 years old. It only considers the individual merits of a building.

ANALYSIS:

The Commission found that the property at 595 South Marengo Avenue was not architecturally significant because it lacks architectural distinction, and it was not associated with any significant persons, groups or events (§2.75.130, Criteria for Designating Landmarks). The Commission also confirmed there is no historic district in this location, which would consist of a minimum of ten contiguous, contributing properties, as required by code for a landmark district (§17.52 LD Landmark Overlay District). Unless the Commission adopted findings that the building qualified as a structure of merit or was eligible for landmark designation, the Cultural Heritage ordinance directs: “the Certificate of Appropriateness [for demolition] shall be issued without further review...” (§2.75.210 B).

HOUSING IMPACT:

The property is in a RM-32 district, which entitles the developer to construct a ten-unit project (subject to the development standards and design review provisions of the City of Gardens ordinance). The appeal involves a single-family residence. If the Council affirms the Commission’s decision, the proposed replacement project will involve demolition of two units and new construction of ten units. Therefore the project would result in a net increase of eight housing units.

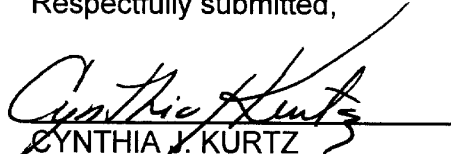
WORKLOAD IMPACT:

A decision on the appeal will not affect the staff’s workload.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Council's decision on the appeal will not have a fiscal impact.

Respectfully submitted,


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