

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Historic Variance
BZH-27434

Date: September 10, 2013

Applicant: Van Dusen Mansion & Event Center Inc.

Address of Property: 1900 LaSalle Avenue

Project Name: Van Dusen Mansion

Contact Person and Phone: Matt Anderson, 612-871-2707

CPED Staff and Phone: Janelle Widmeier, 612-673-3156

Date Application Deemed Complete: August 20, 2013

Appeal Period Expiration: Not applicable

Ward: 6 **Neighborhood Organization:** Stevens Square Community Organization

Proposal: Use of the 3 existing on-site structures for a reception/meeting hall

Concurrent Review:

- Historic variance to allow a reception/meeting hall to be located in the OR2 High Density Office Residence Zoning District.
- Historic variance to reduce the minimum parking requirement for a reception/meeting hall.

CLASSIFICATION:	
Local Historic District	Not applicable
Period of Significance	1893-1928
Criteria of Significance	Architecture, Social History, Industry
Date of Local Designation	1995
Date of National Register Designation	1995
Applicable Design Guidelines	Secretary of Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
BZH-27434

PROPERTY INFORMATION	
Current name	The Van Dusen Mansion
Historic Name	George W. Van Dusen Mansion
Current Address	1900 LaSalle Avenue, 101 Groveland Avenue
Historic Address	1900 LaSalle Avenue, 101 Groveland Avenue
Original Construction Date	1891 mansion and carriage house 1961 office building (the event center/banquet/reception hall)
Original Contractor	Unknown
Original Architect	Orff and Joralemon
Historic Use	Private residence
Current Use	Reception/meeting hall
Proposed Use	Reception/meeting hall

HISTORIC BACKGROUND:

Built at the time Minneapolis was heralded as "the flour milling capital of the world," the Van Dusen Mansion remains a symbol of the corporate success of one of Minnesota's leading grain processing and distribution businesses. The flourishing grain, railroad, and lumber industries of the late nineteenth-century brought Minneapolis entrepreneurs, like George W. Van Dusen, the immense prosperity reflected in their estates. Van Dusen acquired his fortune by developing a network of line elevators to store grain alongside railroad lines. Van Dusen's strategy was, in fact, so successful that by 1928 the firm had a capacity of 6.7 million bushels, one of the largest in the Midwest. In 1891 Van Dusen, an otherwise low-profile businessman, commissioned the architects Orff and Joralemon to build a massive 12,000 square-foot residence and carriage house on the southwestern edge of Minneapolis. While its general massing and form are indebted to the Richardsonian Romanesque tradition, French Renaissance motifs, including steep roofs and a soaring slender turret capped with a copper finial enliven the upper stories. The interior is an eclectic mixture of French, Gothic, Tudor, Romanesque and Elizabethan styles featuring ten fireplaces, a grand staircase, chandeliers, large skylights, carved wood, parquet floors, and mosaic work in the entryway. Since the Van Dusen family's occupancy in the 1940s, the mansion has housed the College of Commerce, the College of Medical Technology, the Horst Institute, and the Hamline Law School - a succession illustrative of the pattern of reuse of many large residences in the central city. The building has retained its original design integrity (with the exception of a one-story steel, glass and concrete addition to the south façade), in large part due to private/public restoration efforts in 1995.

Since the property was designated in 1995, it has been used for offices, a bed and breakfast with an accessory events center, and an events center (reception/meeting hall) as a principal use. The former uses are allowed within the existing zoning designation of the property, but the latter is not allowed.

SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL:

The applicant is proposing to legalize the use of the property for a reception/meeting hall. Three structures exist on the property: the mansion, a carriage house, and the event center (also referred to a banquet or reception hall in the plans). In the events center building, the upper floor would be used for banqueting and the lower level used for storage. The mansion has a total of 4 levels. The main and basement floors would be used for reception and waiting areas. The second floor would be used for offices for the event center. The third floor would be used for storage. In the carriage house, both floors would be used for the reception hall. The property is zoned OR2 High Density Office Residence District, where a reception/meeting hall use is prohibited. A historic variance to allow a reception/meeting hall to be located in the OR2 District is requested.

Reception/meeting halls are subject to a minimum parking requirement found in Chapter 541, Off-Street Parking and Loading of the zoning code. Specifically, reception/meeting halls are required to provide parking equal to 30 percent of the capacity of persons. With approximately 6,856 square feet of total floor area that will be used for public reception areas, the minimum parking requirement is 137 spaces. For historic landmarks, the zoning code only requires that a non-residential use provide parking equal to 75 percent of the minimum off-street parking requirement. This reduces the minimum requirement to 103 spaces. There is no on-site parking. The applicant has off-site parking leases with two nearby property owners: Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis and Minnesota Council of Churches (122 West Franklin Avenue). The lease with Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis includes multiple properties (1820, 1824, 1900, 1913, 1926, and 1934 Nicollet Avenue and 1929 LaSalle Avenue) with up to 151 spaces available for parking. The Minnesota Council of Churches parking lot contains over 100 spaces. With both leases, the Van Dusen prearranges the number of spaces needed on a monthly basis with the lessors. The zoning code allows required parking to be provided on-site or in off-site locations up to 500 feet away provided the off-site parking locations serve a use allowed in the zoning district where such parking is located. A reception/meeting hall is first allowed in the C2 Neighborhood Commercial Corridor District. Of the off-site locations that the Van Dusen leases spaces from, only 21 of them are located in the C2 district at 1820-1824 Nicollet Avenue. As this is insufficient to meet the minimum parking requirement for this use, the applicant is requesting a historic variance to reduce the parking requirement.

Compliance with applicable building codes and obtaining a building permit is also required in addition to needing approval of the historic variances. The applicant will need to work with the Construction Code Services Office to identify any code issues and to process the necessary permit(s). The applicant has indicated that no new construction is proposed. If any exterior alterations are needed in order to comply with building code requirements, a certificate of appropriateness application will likely be required. This application would need to be reviewed by the Heritage Preservation Commission.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this report, staff has received no public comment on the project. Staff will forward comments, if any are received, at the Heritage Preservation Commission meeting.

HISTORIC VARIANCE: to allow a reception/meeting hall to be located in the OR2 High Density Office Residence Zoning District.

Before recommending approval of a Historic Variance, the Commission shall make the following findings:

1. The variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area.

The applicant's proposal is compatible with the preservation of the property. It retains the historic integrity of the mansion and carriage house. Also, the proposed use would not prevent the structures from conveying their originally intended function and use.

The uses closest to the Van Dusen property are accessory parking lots for a multiple-family residential use and offices. The Semple Mansion, which is also used as a reception/meeting hall, is located on the same block as the subject site. Other surrounding uses in the immediate area include a variety of commercial and residential uses. As described in the historic variance findings below, the use has access to adequate parking. The use will also need to comply with all business license operating requirements. The proposed use would be compatible with the surrounding uses.

2. The variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

The subject property is zoned OR2 High Density Office Residence District, where a reception/meeting hall use is prohibited. The first zoning district where a reception/meeting hall is allowed is the C2 Neighborhood Corridor Commercial District. Rezoning this property to allow the proposed use would not be consistent with the adopted policies of the comprehensive plan, *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. The comprehensive plan generally directs the zoning districts where reception/meeting halls are allowed to be located within or directly adjacent to the activity center and commercial corridor designated land use features. The subject site is not within an activity center nor adjacent to a commercial corridor.

The existing zoning district would also allow the existing structures to be used for a variety of residential and nonresidential uses, such as multiple-family residential, congregate living, institutional uses, including schools and a place of assembly (e.g. church), offices, a medical clinic, and a child care center. Although the existing zoning would allow other uses, interior alterations are more likely to occur in adapting the historic buildings to those uses.

HISTORIC VARIANCE: to reduce the minimum parking requirement for a reception/meeting hall.

Before recommending approval of a Historic Variance, the Commission shall make the following findings:

1. The variance is compatible with the preservation of the property and with other properties in the area.

The applicant's proposal is compatible with the preservation of the property. A minimum of 103 spaces are required for the proposed use. No on-site parking exists. The size of the property and existing placement of the structures does not allow for on-site parking to be added. Granting the variance will retain the historic integrity of the mansion and carriage house.

The uses closest to the Van Dusen property are accessory parking lots for a multiple-family residential use and offices. The Semple Mansion, which is also used as a reception/meeting hall, is located on the same block as the subject site. Other surrounding uses in the immediate area include a variety of commercial and residential uses. The applicant has off-site parking leases with two nearby property owners. The lease with Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis includes multiple properties with up to 151 spaces available for parking. The Minnesota Council of Churches parking lot contains over 100 spaces. With both leases, the Van Dusen prearranges the number of spaces needed on a monthly basis with the lessors. With the parking leases that provide access to well over 100 off-site parking spaces in close proximity to the subject site, granting the variance will not be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity.

2. The variance is necessary to alleviate undue hardship due to special conditions or circumstances unique to the property and not created by the applicant.

The applicant has off-site parking leases with two nearby property owners. Most of the properties where parking is made available in the leases are located within 500 feet of the subject property. However, most of those properties are not located in zoning districts where reception/meeting halls are allowed by the zoning code. Rezoning all of these properties would not be appropriate and is not consistent with the policies of the comprehensive plan. However, shared parking is encouraged by the comprehensive plan. The zoning code also supports shared parking in the immediate area. Nonresidential uses located within the Nicollet Franklin Area PO Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District are allowed to utilize off-site parking that is accessory to institutional or public uses even if they are located in a residence or office residence district. The subject property is just outside of the boundaries of this overlay district, but all of the Plymouth Congregational Church of Minneapolis parking areas identified in the lease are located within it. Although the proposal for leasing off-site parking is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the zoning ordinances, there are not viable options for complying with the off-site parking standards required by the zoning code. These circumstances are unique to the property and have not been created by the applicant.

This parking variance is also not created by the applicant's proposal for adaptive reuse of the building. Any feasible reuse of the buildings on the site will require similar parking solutions that protect the historic integrity of the mansion and carriage house. The mansion was last used as a

bed and breakfast with an accessory event center. A nonresidential reuse of the building would generally have a higher parking demand than the previous use. Therefore, it is likely that any nonresidential reuse would require a variance from the parking requirements of the Minneapolis Zoning Code.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Historic Variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission and City Council adopt the above findings and **approve** the historic variance to allow a reception/meeting hall to be located in the OR2 High Density Office Residence Zoning District for the property located at 1900 LaSalle Avenue, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approvals for this historic variance shall expire if they are not acted upon within two years of approval, unless extended by the Planning Director.
2. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this historic variance 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.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Historic Variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission and City Council adopt the above findings and **approve** the historic variance to reduce the minimum parking requirement for a reception/meeting hall for the property located at 1900 LaSalle Avenue, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approvals for this historic variance shall expire if they are not acted upon within two years of approval, unless extended by the Planning Director.
2. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this historic variance 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.

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
BZH-27434

Attachments:

- Applicant's statement of proposed use
- Architect's memo with photos
- Zoning map
- Site and floor plans
- Additional photos (Please note that in some of the interior photos, uses or captions for rooms shown may differ from what is indicated on the floor plans. The information provided on the floor plans is what is proposed.)