

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the Prince George’s County Planning Board has reviewed CNU-1892-2007 requesting certification of a two-family dwelling in the R-55 Zone in accordance with Subtitle 27 of the Prince George’s County Code; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the evidence presented at the public hearing on December 13, 2007, the Prince George’s County Planning Board finds:

A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property, known as 1018 58th Avenue, has 50 feet of frontage along the west side of 58th Avenue, approximately 425 feet north of L Street in Fairmount Heights. The property is zoned R-55. There is an existing two-family dwelling on the property and it is currently being used as a two-family dwelling. There is one dwelling on the first floor and one dwelling on the second floor and an unfinished basement.

B. **Development Data Summary**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	R-55	R-55
Use(s)	Two-family dwelling	Two-family dwelling
Acreage	0.14	0.14

C. **History:** In 1928, the property was zoned Residential ‘A’ (equivalent to the R-55 Zone). In 1949, the property was rezoned to R-55, which is the present zoning. Changes to the Zoning Ordinance from July 29, 1986, to September 20, 1988, mistakenly permitted two-family dwellings in the R-55 Zone. Council Bill 85-1988 corrected the mistake. Therefore, all two-family dwellings permitted in the R-55 Zone during that period became nonconforming uses.

D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** The 1993 Approved Master Plan and Sectional Map Amendment for Landover and Vicinity recommends medium suburban uses for the subject property. The Sectional Map Amendment retained the property in the R-55 Zone. The 2002 *General Plan* shows the property in the Developed Tier. The vision for the Developed Tier is a network of sustainable, transit-supporting, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented, medium- to high-density neighborhoods.

E. **Request:** The applicant requests certification of a two-family dwelling in the R-55 Zone. The R-55 Zone permits only 1 one-family detached dwelling on a lot. The applicant has stated that the property is being consistently used as a two-family dwelling unit.

F. **Surrounding Uses:**

The site is surrounded by the following uses:

North: Single-family homes in the R-55 Zone

East: 58th Avenue and single-family homes in the R-55 Zone

South: Single-family homes in the R-55 Zone

West: Single-family homes in the R-55 Zone

- G. **Certification Requirements:** Certification of a nonconforming use requires that certain findings be made. First, the use must either predate the pertinent zoning regulation or have been established in accordance with all regulations in effect at the time it began. Second, there must be no break in operation for more than 180 days since the use became nonconforming.

Section 27-244 sets forth the following specific requirements for certifying a nonconforming use:

- (a)(1) **In general, a nonconforming use may only continue if a use and occupancy permit identifying the use as nonconforming is issued after the Planning Board (or its authorized representative) or the District Council certifies that the use is nonconforming and not illegal.**
- (b)(1) **The applicant shall file an application for a use and occupancy permit in accordance with Division 7 of this Part.**
- (b)(2) **Along with the application and accompanying plans, the applicant shall provide the following:**
- (A) **Documentary evidence, such as tax records, business records, public utility installation or payment records, and sworn affidavits, showing the commencing date and continuous existence of the nonconforming use;**
- (B) **Evidence that the nonconforming use has not ceased to operate for more than 180 consecutive calendar days between the time the use became nonconforming and the date when the application is submitted, or that conditions of nonoperation for more than 180 consecutive calendar days were beyond the applicant's and/or owner's control, were for the purpose of correcting Code violations, or were due to the seasonal nature of the use;**

(C) Specific data showing:

- (i) The exact nature, size, and location of the building, structure, and use;**
- (2) A legal description of the property; and**
- (3) The precise location and limits of the use on the property and within any building it occupies;**

(D) A copy of a valid use and occupancy permit issued for the use prior to the date upon which it became a nonconforming use, if the applicant possesses one.

Analysis: The applicant has stated that he bought the subject property in 2001. At that time, the subject property was being used as a two-family dwelling and there were two tenants renting the property. The previous owner did not obtain certification of the two-family dwelling unit when it became a nonconforming use on September 20, 1988. When the applicant applied for a use and occupancy permit in January 2007, the Permits Division did not find any prior permits for the subject property. Therefore, in accordance with Section 27-244(f), the Planning Board must determine whether, in fact, the use was legally established prior to the date it became nonconforming and that it has been in continuous operation since that time.

The applicant submitted the following documentary evidence in support of the application:

1. A letter from Pepco dated September 14, 2006, stating that the property had two meters installed on August 30, 2004 (Exhibit 1).
2. Lease documents dated September 1, 2003, for two separate units on the subject property (Exhibit 2).
3. Notarized affidavits dated January 25, 2007, from five neighbors. The affidavits state that the subject property has always been used as a multifamily (two-family) dwelling and it has never been used as single-family dwelling. They also state that the property always had two separate meters for gas and electricity. The neighbors have been residents of the adjacent properties from 1947 to 2003 (Exhibit C).

Section 27.107.01, Definitions, of the Zoning Ordinance defines:

A two-family dwelling as either a building containing two dwelling units arranged one on top of another or two attached buildings arranged side by side.

A nonconforming building or structure is not in conformance with a requirement of the zone in which it is located provided that the requirement was adopted after the building was constructed, the building was constructed after the requirement was adopted, and a use and occupancy permit was obtained to validate permits issued in error.

A nonconforming use is defined as a use of any building, structure or land that is not in conformance with a requirement of the zone in which it is located provided that the requirement was adopted after the use was lawfully established, the use was established after the requirement was adopted, and the District Council has validated a use and occupancy permit issued in error.

The Technical Staff notes that in order for a use to be a legally nonconforming use, it must have been lawfully established. The Technical Staff reviewed the documents and determined that the information is not persuasive evidence that the use was legally constructed prior to 1949. Based on the information submitted at the time of review, staff recommended denial of the certification request. The Planning Board however, heard additional testimony from the applicant and considered sworn affidavits from long time residents of the community which stated the use was in fact a two-family dwelling prior to 1949. In addition, the use was legal from July 26, 1986 to September 20, 1988. It became nonconforming after CB-85-1988 was enacted in September of 1988. The Board found that the information submitted by the applicant is sufficient to establish that the use legally existed between 1986 and 1988 and therefore may be certified as a nonconforming use.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Subtitle 27 of the Prince George's County Code, the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission adopted the findings contained herein and APPROVES the above-noted application.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board's action must be filed with the District Council for Prince George's County, Maryland within thirty (30) days of the final notice of the Planning Board's decision.

* * * * *

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner Clark, seconded by Commissioner Squire, with Commissioners Clark, Squire, Cavitt, Vaughns and Parker voting in favor of the motion at its regular meeting held on Thursday, December 13, 2007, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 24th day of January 2008.

Oscar S. Rodriguez
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin
Planning Board Administrator

PGCPB No. 07-237
File No. CNU-1892-2007
Page 5

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