

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division**  
Variance and Site Plan Review  
BZZ-2848

**Date:** May 8, 2006

**Applicant:** St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church

**Address of Property:** 4201 Sheridan Avenue South

**Project Name:** St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church

**Contact Person and Phone:** Jonathan Strand with Bentz/Thompson/Rietow, Inc., (612) 332-1234

**Planning Staff and Phone:** Hilary Dvorak, (612) 673-2639

**Date Application Deemed Complete:** April 6, 2006

**End of 60-Day Decision Period:** June 5, 2006

**End of 120-Day Decision Period:** Not applicable

**Ward:** 13      **Neighborhood Organization:** Linden Hills Neighborhood Council

**Existing Zoning:** R1, Single-family District and the SH Shoreland Overlay District

**Proposed Zoning:** Not applicable

**Zoning Plate Number:** 29

**Legal Description:** Not applicable

**Proposed Use:** addition to an existing church

**Concurrent Review:**

**Variance:** to reduce the front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South from the established 58 feet to 13 feet to allow for an addition to the existing church

**Site plan review**

**Applicable zoning code provisions:** Chapter 525, Article IX, Variances, specifically Section 525.520(1) “to vary the yard requirements, including permitting obstructions into required yards not allowed by the applicable regulations” and Chapter 530, Site Plan Review.

**Background:** St. John the Baptist Episcopal Church is located at 4201 Sheridan Avenue South. The church was constructed in 1916. Since its original construction two additions have been added to the building. Now, the applicant is proposing to construct a 2,000 square foot addition to the front of the

building. The purpose of the addition is to provide for an accessible at-grade entrance into the building and an elevator that can access the basement of the building. In addition, administrative offices and Sunday school classrooms will be added to the building.

The church is located on a reverse corner lot, meaning that it has two front yards as the two adjacent homes each face opposite streets. The addition is proposed to be constructed in the front yard along Sheridan Avenue South. The adjacent home is setback 58 feet from the front property line. Given that the addition is proposed to be located 13 feet from the front property line a setback variance is required. In addition, the size and location of the addition require site plan review.

**VARIANCE** - to reduce the front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South from the established 58 feet to 13 feet to allow for an addition to the existing church

**Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for the Variance:**

**1. The property cannot be put to a reasonable use under the conditions allowed and strict adherence to the regulations of this zoning ordinance would cause undue hardship.**

**Front yard setback:** The applicant is seeking a variance to reduce the front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South from the established 58 feet to 13 feet to allow for an addition to the existing church. The applicant has indicated that although the proposed addition will be constructed closer to the street than the adjacent house that the existing church already extends into the required front yard and is actually located closer to the front property line than the proposed addition would be. The church is located seven feet from the front property line.

**2. The circumstances are unique to the parcel of land for which the variance is sought and have not been created by any persons presently having an interest in the property. Economic considerations alone shall not constitute an undue hardship if reasonable use for the property exists under the terms of the ordinance.**

**Front yard setback:** The placement of the existing church on the property is a unique condition of this parcel of land and was not created by the applicant.

**3. The granting of the variance will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not alter the essential character of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity.**

**Front yard setback:** The intent of having yard controls is to provide for the orderly development and use of land and to minimize conflicts between adjacent land uses by regulating the dimension and use of yards in order to provide adequate light, air, open space and separation of uses. In this case the adjacent home is located 58 feet from the front property line. Although the addition is proposed to be located 13 feet from the front property line it would be located further back than the existing building. Also, the addition would be located 25 feet from the interior lot line which is shared with the adjacent home to the south.

**4. The proposed variance will not substantially increase the congestion of the public streets, or increase the danger of fire, or be detrimental to the public welfare or endanger the public safety.**

**Front yard setback:** The Planning Division believes that the granting of the variance would likely have little impact on congestion of area streets or fire safety, nor would the proposed variance be detrimental to welfare or public safety.

### **SITE PLAN REVIEW**

#### **Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:**

- A. The site plan conforms to all applicable standards of Chapter 530, Site Plan Review. (See Section A Below for Evaluation.)**
- B. The site plan conforms to all applicable regulations of the zoning ordinance and is consistent with applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable small area plans adopted by the city council. (See Section B Below for Evaluation.)**

#### **Section A: Conformance with Chapter 530 of Zoning Code**

##### **BUILDING PLACEMENT AND FACADE:**

- Placement of the building shall reinforce the street wall, maximize natural surveillance and visibility, and facilitate pedestrian access and circulation.**
- First floor of the building shall be located not more than eight (8) feet from the front lot line (except in C3S District or where a greater yard is required by the zoning ordinance). If located on corner lot, the building wall abutting each street shall be subject to this requirement.**
- The area between the building and the lot line shall include amenities.**
- The building shall be oriented so that at least one (1) principal entrance faces the public street. In the case of a corner lot, the principal entrance shall face the front lot line.**
- Except in the C3S District, on-site accessory parking facilities shall be located to the rear or interior of the site, within the principal building served, or entirely below grade.**
- For new construction, the building walls shall provide architectural detail and shall contain windows as required by Chapter 530 in order to create visual interest and to increase security of adjacent outdoor spaces by maximizing natural surveillance and visibility.**
- In larger buildings, architectural elements, including recesses or projections, windows and entries, shall be emphasized to divide the building into smaller identifiable sections.**
- Blank, uninterrupted walls that do not include windows, entries, recesses or projections, or other architectural elements, shall not exceed twenty five (25) feet in length.**
- Exterior materials shall be durable, including but not limited to masonry, brick, stone, stucco, wood, metal, and glass.**
- The exterior materials and appearance of the rear and side walls of any building shall be similar to and compatible with the front of the building.**

- The use of plain face concrete block as an exterior material shall be prohibited fronting along a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or adjacent to a residence or office residence district.
- Entrances and windows:
  - Residential uses:
    - Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as porches and roofs or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Twenty (20) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:
      - a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
      - b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.
  - Nonresidential uses:
    - Principal entrances shall be clearly defined and emphasized through the use of architectural features such as roofs or other details that express the importance of the entrance. Multiple entrances shall be encouraged. Thirty (30) percent of the walls on the first floor and ten (10) percent of the walls on each floor above the first that face a public street, public sidewalk, public pathway, or on-site parking lot, shall be windows as follows:
      - a. Windows shall be vertical in proportion.
      - b. Windows shall be distributed in a more or less even manner.
      - c. The bottom of any window used to satisfy the ground floor window requirement may not be more than four (4) feet above the adjacent grade.
      - d. First floor or ground floor windows shall have clear or lightly tinted glass with a visible light transmittance ratio of 0.6 or higher.
      - e. First floor or ground floor windows shall allow views into and out of the building at eye level. Shelving, mechanical equipment or other similar fixtures shall not block views into and out of the building in the area between four (4) and seven (7) feet above the adjacent grade. However, window area in excess of the minimum required area shall not be required to allow views into and out of the building.
  - Industrial uses in Table 550-1, Principal Industrial Uses in the Industrial Districts, may provide less than thirty (30) percent windows on the walls that face an on-site parking lot, provided the parking lot is not located between the building and a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway.
- Minimum window area shall be measured as indicated in section 530.120 of the zoning code.
- The form and pitch of roof lines shall be similar to surrounding buildings.
- Parking Garages: The exterior design shall ensure that sloped floors do not dominate the appearance of the walls and that vehicles are screened from view. At least thirty (30) percent of the first floor building wall that faces a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway shall be occupied by active uses, or shall be designed with architectural detail or windows, including display windows, that create visual interest.

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

- This development reinforces the street wall, facilitates pedestrian access and maximizes natural

surveillance. The building is being located close to the property line along Sheridan Avenue South, there is an entrance and exit at street level and there are large windows along the walls of the addition where people can see in and out of the building.

- The site is located on a reverse corner lot which requires that both walls abutting the streets be located within eight feet of the property line. However, the R1 zoning district requires a 25-foot front yard setback. In this case the adjacent home is located 58 feet from the front property line so therefore the front yard setback requirement is 58 feet. The applicant had applied for a variance to reduce the front yard setback from 58 feet to 13 feet.
- The area in between the addition and the property line will be landscaped.
- There are several entrances leading into the church. Many of the entrances face a street. As part of the addition, an accessible at-grade entrance is being added to the Sheridan Avenue South side of the building.
- The church has no on-site parking.
- The exterior materials of the existing building include stone, wood and stucco. The exterior materials of the addition are proposed to be either stucco or fiber-cement “stucco” panels with fiber-cement trim. Regardless of which exterior finish the applicant chooses to use for the addition both would be compatible with the existing building.
- The exterior materials and appearance of the addition similar to and compatible with the existing building.
- There are no blank, uninterrupted walls over 25 feet in length that are void of windows, entries, recesses or projections, or other architectural elements on the proposed addition.
- At least 30 percent of the first floor building wall addition facing Sheridan Avenue South is required to be windows. The windows used to satisfy this requirement may not be more than four feet above the adjacent grade. The analysis of the project’s compliance with these requirements follows:
  - Sheridan Avenue South: the percentage of windows on the first floor of the building is 9 percent. However, all of the windows are located five feet above the adjacent grade. The Planning Division is recommending that the City Planning Commission grant alternative compliance to allow less than the full 30 percent windows on the building and to allow the windows to be located more than four feet above the adjacent grade. Given the existing finished floor level of the building and the need to match that with the addition the majority of the wall located between two and ten feet falls at a level that would not be appropriate for windows.
- The windows in the building are vertical in nature and are evenly distributed along the building walls.
- The roof line of the building is proposed to be pitched, similar to the roof line of the existing building.

**ACCESS AND CIRCULATION:**

- **Clear and well-lighted walkways of at least four (4) feet in width shall connect building entrances to the adjacent public sidewalk and to any parking facilities located on the site.**
- **Transit shelters shall be well lighted, weather protected and shall be placed in locations that promote security.**
- **Vehicular access and circulation shall be designed to minimize conflicts with pedestrian traffic and surrounding residential uses.**
- **Traffic shall be directed to minimize impact upon residential properties and shall be subject to section 530.150 (b) related to alley access.**

- **Site plans shall minimize the use of impervious surfaces.**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

- All of the entrances that face a public street or sidewalk are directly connected to the public sidewalk via a walkway.
- There is an existing transit stop located in front of the church along Sheridan Avenue South. No changes to the transit stop are proposed as part of this development.
- The church has no on-site parking.
- The maximum impervious surface requirement in the R1 zoning district is 75 percent. Approximately 13,808 square feet of the site, or 61 percent, is covered by the building, walkways and patios.

**LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING:**

- **The composition and location of landscaped areas shall complement the scale of the development and its surroundings.**
- **Not less than twenty (20) percent of the site not occupied by buildings, including all required landscaped yards, shall be landscaped as specified in section 530.160 (a).**
- **Required screening shall be six (6) feet in height, unless otherwise specified, except in required front yards where such screening shall be three (3) feet in height.**
- **Except as otherwise provided, required screening shall be at least ninety-five (95) percent opaque throughout the year. Screening shall be satisfied by one or a combination of the following:**
  - A decorative fence.
  - A masonry wall.
  - A hedge.
- **Parking and loading facilities located along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway shall comply with section 530.170 (b), including providing landscape yards along a public street, public sidewalk or public pathway and abutting or across an alley from a residence or office residence district, or any permitted or conditional residential use.**
- **The corners of parking lots where rows of parking spaces leave areas unavailable for parking or vehicular circulation shall be landscaped as specified for a required landscaped yard. Such spaces may include architectural features such as benches, kiosks or bicycle parking.**
- **In parking lots of ten (10) spaces or more, no parking space shall be located more than fifty (50) feet from the center of an on-site deciduous tree. Tree islands located within the interior of a parking lot shall have a minimum width of seven (7) feet in any direction.**
- **All other areas not governed by sections 530.160 and 530.170 and not occupied by buildings, parking and loading facilities or driveways, shall be covered with turf grass, native grasses or other perennial flowering plants, vines, mulch, shrubs or trees.**
- **Installation and maintenance of all landscape materials shall comply with the standards outlined in section 530.210.**
- **The city planning commission may approve the substitution or reduction of landscaped plant materials, landscaped area or other landscaping or screening standards, subject to section 530.80, as provided in section 530.220.**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

- The zoning code requires that at least 20 percent of the site not occupied by the building be landscaped. The lot area of the site is 22,492 square feet. The footprint of the building is 10,886 square feet. When you subtract the footprint from the lot size the resulting number is 11,626 square feet. Twenty percent of this number is 2,325 square feet. The applicant has approximately 8,684 square feet of open space on the site, or 75 percent of the site not occupied by the building.
- The zoning code requires at least 1 canopy tree for each 500 square feet of required green space and at least 1 shrub for each 100 square feet of required green space be planted on the site. The tree and shrub requirement for this site is 5 and 23 respectfully. In addition to the existing trees and shrubs on the site the applicant is proposing to install an additional 12 trees and 158 shrubs on the site.

**ADDITIONAL STANDARDS:**

- **All parking lots and driveways shall be designed with wheel stops or discontinuous curbing to provide on-site retention and filtration of stormwater. Where on-site retention and filtration is not practical, the parking lot shall be defined by six (6) inch by six (6) inch continuous concrete curb.**
- **Lighting shall comply with the requirements of Chapter 535 and Chapter 541. A lighting diagram may be required.**
- **Parking and loading facilities and all other areas upon which vehicles may be located shall be screened to avoid headlights shining onto residential properties.**
- **To the extent practical, site plans shall minimize the blocking of views of important elements of the city.**
- **To the extent practical, buildings shall be located and arranged to minimize shadowing on public spaces and adjacent properties.**
- **To the extent practical, buildings shall be located and arranged to minimize the generation of wind currents at ground level.**
- **Site plans shall include crime prevention design elements as specified in section 530.260 related to:**
  - **Natural surveillance and visibility**
  - **Lighting levels**
  - **Territorial reinforcement and space delineation**
  - **Natural access control**
- **To the extent practical, site plans shall include the rehabilitation and integration of locally designated historic structures or structures that have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated. Where rehabilitation is not feasible, the development shall include the reuse of significant features of historic buildings.**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

- Stormwater runoff will be directed to three rainwater gardens located on the site. Two of them will be located between the church and Sheridan Avenue South and the other will be located on the east side of the church.
- The applicant has indicated that light fixtures will be located near the new entrance leading into the church. The lighting plan will need to comply with the requirements of Chapter 535.
- The addition should not block views of important elements in the city.
- The addition should have minimal light and air effects on the surrounding area.
- The addition should have minimal wind effects on the surrounding area.
- The site plan complies with crime prevention design elements as there are windows along the building wall addition that will allow views into and out of the building, there will be lights located near the entrance and the proposed rainwater gardens, the additional landscaping and the walkway will lead people directly to the building.
- This site is neither historically designated nor located in a historic district.

**Section B: Conformance with All Applicable Zoning Code Provisions and Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Applicable Small Area Plans Adopted by the City Council**

**ZONING CODE:**

- **Use:** Churches are a permitted use in the R1 zoning district.

**Off-Street Parking and Loading:** The parking requirement for a church is based on the size of the main auditorium and any areas that have visual or audible access to the main auditorium. The proposed addition will not impact the size of the main auditorium not allow visual or audible access to the main auditorium therefore there is no change to the parking requirement for the church. Please note that the church has no on-site parking

- **Maximum Floor Area:** The maximum FAR for a church in the R1 zoning district is 0.5. The lot in question is 22,492 square feet in area. The applicant proposes a total of 11,246 square feet of gross floor area, an FAR of 0.5.
- **Building Height:** Building height in the R1 zoning district is limited to 2.5 stories or 35 feet, whichever is less. The addition is proposed to be 1.5 stories. The tallest portion of the church is measured at the nave which is two stories in height.
- **Minimum Lot Area:** The minimum lot area for a church in the R1 zoning district is 12,000 square feet. The lot area of the site is 22,492 square feet.
- **Yard Requirements:** This development is located in the R1 zoning district. The front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South is 58 feet and the front yard setback along West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street is 25 feet. The east and south interior side yard setbacks are 6+2x, where x equals the number of stories above the first floor. The resulting setback along these property lines are eight feet. The applicant has applied for a variance to reduce the front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South.

- **Specific Development Standards:** There are no specific development standards for churches.
- **Hours of Operation:** Churches are not subject to hours of operation.

**Signs:** Signs are subject to the requirements of Chapter 543 of the Zoning Code. There are two existing signs on the property that the applicant intends on keeping even after the addition is constructed.

- **Refuse storage:** There is an existing trash enclosure located along the south side of the building that will not be impacted by the proposed addition.

**MINNEAPOLIS PLAN:**

The site is located in a predominately single-family residential neighborhood. According to the principles and polices outlined in *The Minneapolis Plan*, the following apply to this proposal:

- Maintain and strengthen the character of the city’s various residential areas (Policy 9.8).
- Infill development standards must reflect the setbacks, orientation, pattern, materials, height and scale of surrounding dwellings (Implementation Step for Policy 9.8)

The Planning Division believes that the proposed development is in conformance with the policies of *The Minneapolis Plan*. The development is traditional in its siting on the property, has windows and an entrance along the street and the proposed materials will blend in with the existing materials of the building.

**ALTERNATIVE COMPLIANCE:**

- **The Planning Commission or zoning administrator may approve alternatives to any site plan review requirement upon finding any of the following:**
- **The alternative meets the intent of the site plan chapter and the site plan includes amenities or improvements that address any adverse effects of the alternative. Site amenities may include but are not limited to additional open space, additional landscaping and screening, green roof, decorative pavers, ornamental metal fencing, architectural enhancements, transit facilities, bicycle facilities, preservation of natural resources, restoration of previously damaged natural environment, rehabilitation of existing structures that have been locally designated or have been determined to be eligible to be locally designated as historic structures, and design which is similar in form, scale and materials to existing structures on the site and to surrounding development.**
- **Strict adherence to the requirements is impractical because of site location or conditions and the proposed alternative meets the intent of this chapter.**
- **The proposed alternative is consistent with applicable development plans or development objectives adopted by the city council and meets the intent of this chapter.**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT RESPONSE:**

- The Planning Division is recommending that the City Planning Commission grant alternative compliance to allow less than the full 30 percent windows on the building and to allow the windows to be located more than four feet above the adjacent grade. Given the existing finished floor level of the building and the need to match that with the addition the majority of the wall located between two and ten feet falls at a level that would not be appropriate for windows.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the variance:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the variance application to reduce the front yard setback along Sheridan Avenue South from the established 58 feet to 13 feet to allow for an addition to the existing church located at 4201 Sheridan Avenue South.

**Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the site plan review:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the site plan review for the property located at 4201 Sheridan Avenue South subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval of the final site, elevation and detailed landscaping plans by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division.
2. All site improvements shall be completed by May 8, 2007, unless extended by the Zoning Administrator, or the permit may be revoked for non-compliance.

**Attachments:**

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division  
BZZ-2848

1. Statement of proposed use
2. Variance findings
3. Letter to Council Member Hodges
4. E-mails to the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council
5. Zoning Map
6. Site plan, floor plans and elevations
7. Photographs of the site and surrounding area