

December 18, 2020

**Honorable City Planning Commission
Cincinnati, Ohio**

SUBJECT: A report and recommendation on a proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of The South Crescent Arms Apartments (Redding Apartments) at 3700 Reading Road in Avondale.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Location: 3700 Reading Road at the northeast corner of S. Fred Shuttlesworth Circle
Petitioners: City Studios
Petitioner's Address: 1148 Main Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45202
Property Owner: Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)
Property Owner's Address: 1627 Western Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45214

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A- Location Map
Attachment B- Historic Designation Report
Attachment C- Historic Conservation Guidelines

BACKGROUND:

The petitioner is requesting a Local Historic Landmark designation for The South Crescent Arms Apartments (Redding Apartments) at 3700 Reading Road in Avondale. The building is owned by Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) and is now called the Redding Apartments. This designation will make the building potentially eligible for historic tax credits to renovate the building.

According to Chapter 1435-07-1 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code (Historic Preservation), certain findings must be made before a Local Historic District can be designated by City Council. The proposed building must be found to have historic or architectural significance by having one or more of the following criteria below:

1. Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.

The applicant for this local historic landmark designation is nominating this landmark under Criterion 1 for its significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history and Criterion 3 for architectural significance. The proposed local historic landmark, The Redding Apartments, is a significant Cincinnati resource as defined by Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Zoning Code because it meets two of the criteria listed above.

On November 23, 2020, the Historic Conservation Board (HCB) voted unanimously to recommend the local historic landmark designation of The Redding Apartments under Criterion 1 (historical significance) and 3 (architectural significance) in Avondale to City Planning Commission and City Council.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE:

The South Crescent Arms Apartments (now Redding Apartments) was built in 1950 and is historically significant as a pioneering elevator high-rise apartment in the context of Cincinnati and the neighborhood of Avondale in the post-World War II (WWII) period. With its semi-circular driveway and integrated bi-level parking garage, it is an example of an auto-oriented apartment building, which was new at the time. As a building subtype, elevator high-rise apartment buildings represent the culmination of the automobile's impact on the development of multi-family housing and the urban apartment construction boom in the mid-20th century. With its cubic massing, traditional face brick, flat roof and uniform fenestration, the building is architecturally significant as a transition from Art Deco to the Modern aesthetic.

The building is historically significant for its association under Criterion 1, as it is representative of post-WWII high-rise elevator apartment buildings as well as for the increase in development of Avondale. The building is also significant under Criterion 3 for its association with the architect George H. Godley and as an example of an early auto-oriented high-rise apartment building that represents a transitional style from Art Deco to the Modern Movement. The Designation Report in Attachment C details the historic and architectural significance of the building.

ANALYSIS:

In making a determination, the City Planning Commission shall consider all of the following factors:

- (1) The relationship of the proposed designation to the comprehensive plans of the city and of the community in which the proposed Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site is located; and

The designation of The Redding Apartments as a local historic landmark is consistent with Plan Cincinnati (2012). In the Sustain Initiative Area, a Goal recommends to "preserve our natural and built environment" and "preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures" (pages 193-194).

- (2) The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding areas and economic development plans of the city; and

Designating The Redding Apartments will assist in the renovation of the building by providing necessary historic tax credits. The revitalization of the building and will have a positive impact on the community and economic development plans of the city.

- (3) Such other planning and historic preservation considerations as may be relevant to the proposed designation.

This designation will assist in the redevelopment of this building and the area of Avondale on this prominent corner.

The Local Historic Landmark designation of The Redding Apartments in Avondale meets the requirements of Chapter 1435 of the Cincinnati Municipal Code (Historic Preservation). The documentation in the designation report (Attachment B) provides conclusive evidence that all required findings may be made for the proposed designation. This designation will help the renovation of The Redding Apartment and hopefully encourage more rehabilitation in this area of Avondale.

The Historic Conservation Board recommended approval and CMHA supports the historic designation.

Per Chapter 1435- 07-2-C. - Adoption of Conservation Guidelines.

“At the time of designation of a Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site, Council has the duty to adopt conservation guidelines for each Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site. Conservation guidelines shall promote the conservation, development and use of the Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site and its special historic, architectural, community or aesthetic interest or value. Insofar as practicable, conservation guidelines shall promote redevelopment and revitalization of Historic Structures and compatible new development within the Historic District. The guidelines shall not limit new construction within a Historic District to a single period or architectural style but may seek to preserve the integrity of existing Historic Structures. Conservation guidelines shall take into account the impact of the designation of a Historic Landmark, Historic District or Historic Site on the residents of the affected area, the effect of the designation on the economic and social characteristics of the affected area, the projected impact of the designation on the budget of the city.”

The proposed guidelines are attached to this staff report as Attachment C. The Historic Conservation Board and staff of the Department of City Planning have determined that the proposed guidelines are acceptable to meet the goal of preserving the architecture of this Historic Landmark.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

A joint virtual public staff conference with the Historic Conservation Office and the Department of City Planning was held on November 4, 2020. Notices were sent to property owners within a 400’ radius of the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation and the Avondale Community Council. A representative of the Community Council contacted staff and had planned to participate but they were not in attendance. A representative of the Cincinnati Christian Adult Center was in attendance to learn about the proposal. All other attendees were the applicants and City staff. There has been no opposition to this proposed designation to-date.

CONSISTENCY WITH PLANS:

The designation of The Redding Apartments as a Local Historic Landmark in Avondale is consistent with *Plan Cincinnati* (2012). Specifically, within the Sustain Initiative Area, a Goal recommends to “preserve our natural and built environment” and “preserve our built history with new development incentives and regulatory measures” (pages 193-194). It is also consistent with the Live Initiative Area, Goal 3 recommends to “Provide a full spectrum of housing options, and improve housing quality and affordability” (page 164).

It is also consistent with *Avondale’s Quality of Live Movement Plan (2020)*. Specifically withinin Goal 12, it states that “Avondale with a diverse quality housing stock which meets the needs of existing seniors, owners and renters and attracts new residents” (pages 27, 56).

RECOMMENDATION:

The staff of the Department of City Planning recommends that the City Planning Commission take the following actions:

1. **APPROVE** the proposed Local Historic Landmark designation of The South Crescent Arms Apartments (Redding Apartments) at 3700 Reading Road in Avondale, as described in the “South Crescent Arms Apartments/AKA The Redding Historic Designation Report dated October 8, 2020” as seen in Attachment B;
2. **APPROVE** the attached map amendment designating the Local Historic Landmark as seen in Attachment A; and
3. **APPROVE** the “South Crescent Arms/AKA The Redding Apartments Historic Conservation Guidelines dated October 8, 2020” as seen in Attachment C.

Respectfully submitted:

Approved:



Caroline Hardy Kellam, Senior City Planner
Department of City Planning



Katherine Keough-Jurs, AICP, Director
Department of City Planning