



**Project Name/Address:** 702-706 Williamson Street

**Application Type:** PUBLIC HEARING Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition and PUBLIC HEARING Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction

**Legistar File ID #** [39062](#)

**Prepared By:** Amy L. Scanlon, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

**Date Prepared:** September 30, 2015

## Summary

**Project Applicant/Contact:** Thomas Miller, Kahler Slater

**Requested Action/Proposal Summary:** The Applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of an existing building and a Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction in the Third Lake Ridge historic district.

The Certificates of Appropriateness for the demolition of the existing building and new construction were approved by the Landmarks Commission on May 5, 2014. The motions from that meeting follow:

A motion was made by Rosenblum, seconded by Slattery, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of 702 Williamson Street contingent on the land use approvals for the new construction. The motion passed on a 5:1 voice vote. Gehrig voted no. Levitan does not vote.

A motion was made by Slattery, seconded by Fowler, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction at 702 Williamson Street with the recommendations in the staff report and the discussions of the Commission as conditions of approval. The Commission discussed the importance of the review of the BUILD II plan including the 54 foot prescribed height and the MNA opposition in the approval process by bodies other than the Landmarks Commission. The motion passed on a 5:1 voice vote. Rummel voted no. Levitan does not vote.

The Applicant is interested in making modifications to the previously approved new building design. The proposed new design is based on the previously approved design. Because there is not a provision to amend a Certificate of Appropriateness, because the demolition standards relate to the proposed new building, and because the previous approval of the demolition was contingent on the land use approvals for the new construction, the Landmarks Commission shall review and act upon both Certificates of Appropriateness for the revised design proposal.

Under the revised ordinance (Chapter 41), a public hearing is needed for the new construction as well as the demolition.

## Background Information

**Parcel Location:** The subject site is located in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District

**Relevant Landmarks Ordinance Sections:**

**41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.** A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (1) New construction or exterior alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
  - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
  - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
  - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
  - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a certificate of appropriateness is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources.
- (2) Demolition or Removal. In determining whether to approve a certificate of appropriateness for any demolition or removal of any landmark or structure within a historic district, the Landmarks Commission shall consider all of the following, and may give decisive weight to any or all of the following:
  - (a) Whether the structure is of such architectural or historic significance that its demolition or removal would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the City and the State.
  - (b) Whether a landmark's designation has been rescinded.
  - (c) Whether the structure, although not itself a landmark structure, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the historic district as a whole and therefore should be preserved for the benefit of the people of the City and the State.
  - (d) Whether demolition or removal of the subject property would be contrary to the policy and purpose of this ordinance and/or to the objectives of the historic preservation plan for the applicable historic district as duly adopted by the Common Council.
  - (e) Whether the structure is of such old and unusual or uncommon design, method of construction, or material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty and/or expense.
  - (f) Whether retention of the structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the City and the State by encouraging study of American history, architecture and design or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage.
  - (g) The condition of the property, provided that any deterioration of the property which is self-created or which is the result of a failure to maintain the property as required by this chapter cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness for demolition or removal.
  - (h) Whether any new structure proposed to be constructed or change in use proposed to be made is compatible with the historic resources of the historic district in which the subject property is located, or if outside a historic district, compatible with the mass and scale of buildings within two hundred (200) feet of the boundary of the landmark site.
  - (i) Prior to approving a certificate of appropriateness for demolition, the Landmarks Commission may require the applicant to provide documentation of the structure. Documentation shall be in the form required by the Commission.

41.23(6) Standards for new Structures in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use. Any new structure on parcels zoned for employment use that are located within 200 feet of other historic resources shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways:

- (a) Gross volume
- (b) Height
- (c) The rhythm of solids and voids in the street façade(s)
- (d) The materials used in the street façade(s)
- (e) The design of the roof
- (f) The rhythm of building masses and spaces

## Analysis and Conclusion

The building being proposed for demolition was constructed in 1926. The building has brick walls and a curved roof structure. There is not a history of the original building provided in the preservation file. The addition at the Williamson Street frontage was probably constructed in the 1950s and is also being proposed for demolition. It has synthetic stucco walls and a flat roof structure. The street façades have been modified numerous times. The Landmarks Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of this structure on May 5, 2014 related to the construction of a similarly designed new building.

A discussion of the demolition standards 41.18(2) follows:

- a. This specific structure is not of such architectural or historic significance that it meets standards for landmark designation as the language of this standard suggests. Instead, with the other commercial and industrial structures in the district, this structure better relates to standard c.
- b. The existing structure is not and has never been designated a landmark.
- c. The building contributes to the commercial and industrial character of this area of the historic district. The loss of this structure will diminish the number of structures in this area that communicate this architectural and historic character.
- d. The policy and purpose section of the ordinance charges the Landmarks Commission with protecting and promoting the City's historic resources. The policy and purpose section of the Historic Preservation Ordinance also focuses on enhancing the character of the City by ensuring that new construction complements the historic resources. The demolition of this specific structure would not be contrary to the purpose of the ordinance if the proposed new building meets the standards of the ordinance.
- e. The existing building is a structure that conveys the commercial and industrial growth of the City and the area. The building is not of such extraordinary value that it could not be replaced without great difficulty or expense.
- f. The retention of the existing building would probably not promote the general welfare of the people of the City and the State by encouraging study of American history, architecture and design or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage; however, the general welfare of the public is promoted by the retention of the City's cultural resources and historic identity, as well as high quality design and construction of new development on sites in historic districts that do not convey historic integrity.
- g. The condition of the building is not being claimed as a hardship.
- h. The new structure proposed to be constructed is largely compatible with the buildings and environment of the district.

A discussion of the new development standards 41.23(6) follows. The Visual Compatibility map is attached to this report.

- (a) The gross volume of the proposed building is of a similar gross volume to other buildings in the 200' area, and the design is generally compatible with the other buildings. The design could be modified to be more visually compatible with the buildings in the 200' area. These

modifications may include providing a building “top” at the upper story on Blount Street, stepping the building mass down toward the adjacent buildings, and providing more horizontal elements to offset the vertical design vocabulary.

- (b) The proposed building is taller than the neighboring buildings and the other buildings in the 200’ area, but is relatively consistent with the heights. The standard relates to visual compatibility of the height and therefore, the design of the proposed building could be modified so that the height is more visually compatible as described above.
- (c) The rhythm of solids and voids in the street façade(s) of the proposed building are generally compatible with the buildings in the 200’ area. To improve compatibility, the proposed building could take more design cues from the adjacent buildings.
- (d) The materials used in the street façade(s) of the proposed building are generally compatible with those used in the buildings and environment within the 200’ area. The brick areas that hover over the glass storefront should be visually linked to the ground to better relate to the material treatments of the other buildings in the VRA. The wood cladding seems out of place in relation to other materials in the area. While wood is obviously a material used in the historic district, its use as a flat wall material is limited. Samples of the wood cladding should be provided for review.
- (e) The proposed building has a flat roof which is compatible with other buildings in the VRA.
- (f) The rhythm of building masses and spaces created by the construction of the proposed building is compatible with the existing rhythm of masses and spaces within the 200’ area.

## Recommendation

Staff believes the standards for granting the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition may be met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the request contingent on the approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction.

Staff believes the standards for granting the Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction may be met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the request with the following conditions of approval:

1. The Applicant shall bring material and color samples to the meeting for review. The material selections shall be determined by the discussion of the Commission or by the final review and approval of staff or at her discretion, the Landmarks Commission.
2. The Applicant shall confirm that the modular masonry material is a standard (2 1/4” or 2 1/2” x 7 5/8”) size.
3. The design shall be modified as described in this staff report and discussed by the Landmarks Commission to be more compatible with buildings in the 200’ area.
4. The final elements shall be reviewed and finalized by staff or at her discretion, the Landmarks Commission.