



Project Name & Address: 654 Williamson Street
Application Type(s): Certificates of Appropriateness for demolition & new construction
Legistar File ID # [70738](#)
Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division
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Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects
Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish an existing commercial structure and construct a new mixed-use structure.

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is located in the Third Lake Ridge local historic district.

Relevant 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.

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.

41.27 STANDARDS FOR NEW STRUCTURES

(1) General

(a) Primary Structures

The design for a new structure in a historic district shall be visually compatible with other historic resources within two hundred (200) feet in the following ways:

1. Building Placement. When determining visual compatibility for building placement, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as lot coverage, setbacks, building orientation, and historic relationships between the building and site.
2. Street Setback. When determining visual compatibility for street setbacks, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as the average setback of historic resources on the same block face within two hundred (200) feet, and the setback of adjacent structures.
3. Visual Size. When determining visual compatibility for visual size, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as massing, building height in feet and stories, the gross area of the front elevation (i.e., all walls facing the street), street presence, and the dominant proportion of width to height in the façade.
4. Building Form. When determining visual compatibility for building form, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as building type and use, roof shape, symmetry or asymmetry, and its dominant vertical or horizontal expression.
5. Architectural Expression. When determining visual compatibility for architectural expression, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as the building's modulation, articulation, building planes, proportion of building elements, and rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the façade.

(3) Exterior Walls

(a) General

1. Materials used for new structures shall be similar in design, scale and architectural appearance to materials that date to the period of significance on historic resources within two hundred (200) feet, but differentiated enough so that it is not confused as a historic building.

- (4) Roofs
 - (a) Form
 - 1. Roof form and pitch shall be similar to the form and pitch of the roofs on historic resources within two hundred (200) feet.
 - (b) Materials
 - 2. Any roofing material shall be permitted on flat or slightly pitched roofs not visible from the developed public right-of-way.
 - (e) Rooftop Features
 - 1. Rooftop decks or terraces and green roofs or other roof landscaping, railings, or furnishings shall be installed so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the street.
- (5) Windows and Doors
 - (a) General
 - 1. Door and window styles should both match the style of the new structure and be compatible with those on historic resources within two hundred (200) feet.
 - (b) Windows and Storm Windows
 - 1. Multi-light windows shall have true divided lights or simulated divided lights with muntin grids on the exterior and interior with spacer bars between the panes of glass.
 - (c) Entrance Doors and Storm Doors
 - 1. Sliding glass doors shall not be installed on the ground floor elevation along any street frontage.
 - (d) Shutters
 - 1. Shutters shall be allowed if they are found on historic resources in the district, and shall replicate their operable appearance.
 - (e) Awnings
 - 1. Awnings will be of a configuration and form consistent with the awnings in the district.
 - 2. Awning materials shall have the appearance of the materials found on historic resources with awnings.
 - (f) Garage Doors
 - 1. Garage doors shall be similar in design, scale, architectural appearance, and other visual qualities prevalent within the historic district.
- (6) Entrances, Porches, Balconies and Decks
 - (b) Balconies and Decks
 - 1. Projecting, partially projecting/inset, and inset balconies are prohibited on elevations visible from the developed public right-of-way, unless there is precedent on the historic resources in the district.
- (7) Building Systems
 - (a) Mechanical Systems
 - 1. Mechanical equipment shall be screened if it is visible from the developed public right-of-way.
 - 2. Static vents, electric vents, wind turbines, and attic fans visible from the developed public right-of-way are prohibited.
 - 3. Grilles, vents, equipment, and meters shall be finished or painted to match adjacent building materials.
 - (c) Lighting and Electrical Systems
 - 1. Decorative light fixtures shall be compatible in style and location with the overall design of the building.

2. Security light fixtures or security cameras shall be installed so that they are as unobtrusive as possible.
3. Exterior mounted conduit on elevations visible from the developed public right-of-way is prohibited.
4. Roof appurtenances such as antennas, satellite dishes, or communications equipment should be installed so that they are minimally visible from the developed public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure historic features.”

Analysis and Conclusion

The proposed project is to demolish the existing commercial building on the site and construct a new 5-story mixed use structure. The new structure would have a three-story base level and the upper two stories feature a significant stepback. The building is largely brick with the upper stories and rear area featuring a slightly different color of brick to suggest an organic evolution of the structure, according to the application materials. The functional rear of the building is proposed to have fiber cement clapboard along with balconies for some units. These will be minimally visible from the developed public right-of-way, and this differentiation of materials and design helps to denote that this is the rear of the structure. The stepback area is proposed to contain a rooftop patio area with the railings largely nested below line-of-sight behind the building parapet. Of the doors to access this area, one is proposed as a sliding glass door and that seems to be out of character with what would be seen on the front of the historic resources in the district.

As a corner property there is a corner entrance that will serve both the commercial and residential areas. There is a larger central entrance on the Williamson Street side, which is to serve the commercial area. The garage doors are proposed as being largely glass. There are not historic commercial garage doors apparent on historic resources, so the use of glass will allow these areas to read as voids.

The project is still undecided in material specifications and staff would request that those final specifications, along with any lighting and mechanical plans, be administratively approved as long as the Landmarks Commission approves the design of this new structure.

For the existing structure, the Preservation File for this property begins with a 1980 CDBG grant to redevelop the property into the daycare that served here up until recently. As part of that work, they clad the exterior in EIFS and removed the Streamline Moderne details that were still in place at that time. The Sanborn Maps show a two-story brick commercial structure at the corner of the property going back to the earliest available. The 1942 map shows the larger concrete block addition, which the map notes as being a “Drug Wholesale Warehouse,” but still with a two-story brick structure attached to the front. The existing “front” wing of the building is clearly one story and the 1980 CDBG grant shows a one-story building.

Regardless of the supposed age of the building, the Preservation Planner reviewed the CDBG project and determined that dramatically altering the existing structure was not problematic due to the prevalence of nonhistoric buildings at that end of the historic district. Due to the dramatic loss of historic integrity, this building is no longer able to convey its historic associations.

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections follows:

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.

- (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) The existing structure had lost historic integrity and there is minimal historic information on what it was once used for.
 - (b) N/A
 - (c) Due to the loss of historic integrity, the existing structure no longer contributes to the character of the historic district.
 - (d) Demolition of this structure is not contrary to the policy and purpose of the ordinance because of the loss of historic integrity.
 - (e) The building is not 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) Retention of the existing structure would not promote the general welfare of the public.
 - (g) The condition of the property was approved by the City 40 years ago.
 - (h) The new structure appears to meet the historic district standards.
- Staff does not believe that additional documentation beyond what will be supplied for the demolition permit to the Plan Commission is necessary.

41.27 STANDARDS FOR NEW STRUCTURES

- (1) General
- (a) Primary Structures

The design for a new structure in a historic district shall be visually compatible with other historic resources within two hundred (200) feet in the following ways:

 - 1. Building Placement. The proposed new building will largely fill the property, which is in line with the historic commercial resources in the vicinity.
 - 2. Street Setback. The building comes up to the front property lines, which is in keeping with the commercial historic resources.
 - 3. Visual Size. The application materials detail the large historic commercial buildings in the vicinity. Even with that the stepback of the upper stories allows for a more contextual pedestrian experience along Williamson Street to what the public would experience along that corridor.
 - 4. Building Form. The largely rectangular building with a flat roof is the predominant form for historic commercial buildings within 200 feet.
 - 5. Architectural Expression. The application materials specify the design references for the architectural detailing of this structure, which will both read as a new structure but uses a similar architectural vocabulary to the historic resources in the vicinity.
- (3) Exterior Walls
- (a) General
 - 1. The color of the masonry appears to replicate the appearance of historic materials, but the final material palette is still undetermined.
- (4) Roofs
- (a) Form
 - 1. The flat roof is typical of historic commercial resources within 200 feet.
 - (b) Materials
 - 2. The flat roof will have a mixture of decking and roofing materials, none of which will be visible from the pedestrian line-of-sight.

- (e) Rooftop Features
 - 1. The rooftop patio area is proposed to be minimally visible from the street and site as it is to be nested behind the parapet of the building.
- (5) Windows and Doors
 - (a) General
 - 1. Largely the door and window styles appear to match the building and be compatible with the historic resources in the vicinity. Staff requests final specifications to ensure compliance with this standard. The sliding glass door on the front façade is out of character with what is found on historic resources and should be change to a different style.
 - (b) Windows and Storm Windows
 - 1. Staff requests final window specifications to ensure that multi-light windows are true or simulated divided lights.
 - (c) Entrance Doors and Storm Doors
 - 1. No sliding glass doors are proposed for the ground-level of any street frontage.
 - (e) Awnings
 - 1. There are metal architectural canopies proposed above the entrances. This is consistent with entrance features in the district.
 - 2. Metal is a common entrance feature in the district.
 - (f) Garage Doors
 - 1. The garage doors on this structure will allow those openings to read as voids.
- (6) Entrances, Porches, Balconies and Decks
 - (b) Balconies and Decks
 - 1. The balconies for this corner property are located on the functional rear of the building, are significantly set back from the street, and will be minimally visible from the developed public right-of-way.
- (7) Building Systems
 - (a) Mechanical Systems
 - 1. There are no details about mechanical equipment in the submittal materials. Staff would request those final plans be approved administratively to ensure compliance with this standard.
 - 2. It is unclear if any venting will be visible from the developed public right-of-way.
 - 3. Any grilles, vents, equipment, and meters shall be finished or painted to match adjacent building materials.
 - (c) Lighting and Electrical Systems
 - 1. There are no details about lighting. Staff would request those materials be submitted for administrative approve to ensure compliance with this standard.
 - 2. Any security lighting will need to be as unobtrusive as possible.
 - 3. If there is any exterior mounted conduit, it will either need to be obscured with line-hide or not be visible from the developed public right-of-way.
 - 4. There are no details on any proposed roof appurtenances.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness are met and recommends the Landmarks Commission approve the project with the following conditions:

- 1. Provide final lighting and building designs showing mechanicals to staff for administrative approval.
- 2. Provide final window, door, and masonry specifications to staff for approval.