



**Project Name & Address:** 826 Williamson Street  
**Application Type(s):** Certificates of Appropriateness for demolition & new construction  
**Legistar File ID #** [75230](#)  
**Prepared By:** Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division  
**Date Prepared:** February 1, 2023

## 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.

(2) Building Site

(a) General

1. New parking areas, access ramps, trash or mechanical equipment enclosures shall be designed so that they are as unobtrusive as possible, retain the historic relationship between the buildings and the building and the landscape, and are visually compatible with other historic resources in the district.

2. Fences and retaining walls in the front yard shall be in character with the style of fences or retaining walls historically found in the district, or in keeping with the materials and character of historic resources in the district.
- (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.
  - (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
  - (a) Porch Elements
    1. Entrances and porches shall be of a size and configuration consistent with the historic resources in the district.
    2. The primary entrance for the structure shall be located on the front elevation, or, structures on a corner lot may have a corner entrance.
  - (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 former service station and construct a new mixed-use structure on the lot for 826 Williamson Street. The existing structure is single-story, flat-roofed, metal panel-clad service station structure built in 1955. It retains a great deal of historic integrity, but was constructed well outside of the period of significance for the Third Lake Ridge historic district, which is from 1850 to 1929, and is out of character with the historic resources in the historic district. As such, the proposal appears to meet the standards for the request to demolish the existing structure.

The new building is three stories up to the street frontage and then four stories after an approximately 25-foot step back from the front façade and a 30-foot step back from the front property line. The front façade is broken into 5 bays and clad in brick. The commercial portion on the south end is broken into two bays that give the appearance of two commercial storefronts facing the street, there is a recessed area that serves as the primary entrance to the residential portion, and then the northern end of the front façade is broken into two bays that also give the appearance of two street facades that share a party wall. The architectural detailing and articulation allow what is actually one building to read as a series of commercial building. The southern elevation follows the pattern of the front-facing commercial façade and faces towards a small surface parking lot. As those bays address the parking area, this acts like a corner building and the building has a corner entry to speak to that configuration. The rear (west) and north facades are largely clad in fiber cement clapboard. Most commercial buildings in the district and in the vicinity have their architectural details on the primary façade with a change to simple materials on secondary elevations.

The building will also be served by an underground parking structure with a shared access that passes through the parcel at 302 S Paterson. The proposed garage door is very contemporary, but as it will be located below grade, it is unlikely to be visible. Overall, the proposed structure appears to meet the new construction standards.

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) While the existing service station has a great deal of character it is not particularly architecturally significant and it is not historically significant.
  - (b) N/A
  - (c) The existing structure is outside of the period of significance and is out of character with the historic resources in the district.

- (d) As this is not a historic resource, its demolition is not contrary to the purpose of this ordinance.
- (e) The structure is not exceptionally old or unusual.
- (f) Retention of the structure would not benefit the general welfare of the public.
- (g) The structure is not proposed for demolition due to the condition of the existing structure.
- (h) The proposed new structure appears to be in keeping with the character of historic resources within 200 feet.

Staff would request complete photographic documentation to be added to the preservation file of this property prior to its demolition.

#### **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. The building is proposed to be situated on the lot that it occupies most of the space and has a similar front setback. Several of the lots have in the vicinity have drive aisles or parking areas adjacent, so the configuration has precedent.
2. Street Setback. The commercial portion has a similar setback to other commercial structures and the residential portion is slightly setback with a small stoop area filling the area between the building and the street which is in keeping with the residential architectural vocabulary of historic resources in the vicinity.
3. Visual Size. Between the substantial step back for the upper story and the division of distinct bays on the front and south facades allows what is actually a single structure to read as separate structures sharing a party wall, which is an arrangement found in the district and allows those separate bays to convey the visual side of the street facades of historic resources in the vicinity.
4. Building Form. There is precedent for the flat-roofed commercial form of this building.
5. Architectural Expression. The building strongly references the architectural expression of historic resources within 200 feet.

(2) Building Site

(a) General

1. The small new parking area on the south end of the property is minimally intrusive and is mitigated by the commercial façade wrapping around the building to address that parking area.
2. The residential area of the building will have masonry planter boxes flanking the stoops that access the walk up units. The materials and configuration allow this area to reference the residential architectural vocabulary of historic resources while being on a more commercial style structure.

(3) Exterior Walls

(a) General

1. The facades that are highly visible from the developed public right-of-way are masonry in a style and color typical of historic resources. The window areas also feature metal panels, which references the use of metal ornamentation on the historic resources in the vicinity. The side and rear areas that are less visible are proposed to be clad in fiber-cement clapboard. All trim and boards need to be smooth surfaced or have a wire-brushed appearance rather than the faux wood grain currently proposed for some of those materials. The proportions of all of these materials are such that while they reference historic styles, they will read as new materials.

(4) Roofs

(a) Form

1. A flat roof is typical of historic resources within 200 feet.

(b) Materials

2. The flat roof will not be visible to pedestrians and any roofing material is allowed.

- (e) Rooftop Features
  - 1. Between the stepped back upper story and the front of the building is a rooftop deck that is largely obscured behind the front parapet, making it inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the street.
- (5) Windows and Doors
  - (a) General
    - 1. The door and window styles appear to be in keeping with the character of historic resources within 200 feet.
  - (e) Awnings
    - 1. The building has a mix of fabric awnings and flat architectural canopies, which are in keeping with the character of historic resources in the vicinity.
    - 2. The awning materials and configuration are typical of historic resources.
  - (f) Garage Doors
    - 1. There are no historic resources with the style of garage door proposed, but as it will be located below grade, on the rear of the building, it will not be visible to pedestrians, so its contemporary character does not have an effect on the historic character of the building.
- (6) Entrances, Porches, Balconies and Decks
  - (a) Porch Elements
    - 1. The simple porch with an asymmetrical stair and doorway configuration has precedent on the residential resources in the vicinity.
    - 2. The primary entrance for the residential area of the building fronts on Williamson Street and the commercial areas have entries that would front onto Williamson, the parking lot, and has a corner entry the directs the user to the commercial entries facing the parking lot.
  - (b) Balconies and Decks
    - 1. There are no projecting or inset balconies proposing for any of the elevations. The rooftop deck is addressed under the “rooftop features” standards.
- (7) Building Systems
  - (a) Mechanical Systems
    - 1. The submittal materials assert that all mechanical equipment will be minimally visible on the rooftop or be otherwise minimally visible. Staff will review the building permit sets to ensure this compliance.
    - 2. The submittal materials assert that these types of features will not be visible from the developed public right-of-way.
    - 3. Any venting is proposing to be painted to match the adjacent materials.
  - (c) Lighting and Electrical Systems
    - 1. Staff would recommend administrative approval of exterior light fixtures as those are not included in the current submittal materials.
    - 2. This property will likely require security lighting and staff would request details on those features for administrative approval.
    - 3. Any exterior mounted conduit will need to be covered so as to not make it visible from the developed public right-of-way.
    - 4. Rooftop equipment will need to be minimally visible.

## 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 condition:

1. Provide final lighting and building designs showing mechanicals to staff for administrative approval.
2. Update materials specs to show smooth-surfaced or wire-brushed appearance wood-appearing materials.
3. Provide complete photo documentation of the existing structure prior to demolition.