

## PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

June 27, 2022

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



**Project Name & Address:** 401-409 S Baldwin Street & 1303-1323 Williamson Street

**Application Type(s):** Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition, new construction, and a land combination in the Third Lake Ridge historic district

**Legistar File ID #** [71949](#)

**Prepared By:** Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

**Date Prepared:** June 21, 2022

### Summary

**Project Applicant/Contact:** Ernest Stetenfeld, Society of St. Vincent de Paul

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of three existing commercial structures, construction of a new structure, and a land combination.

### Background Information

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

#### Relevant State Statute Section:

**Wisc SS 62.23(7)(em)2m.** In the repair or replacement of a property that is designated as a historic landmark or included within a historic district or neighborhood conservation district under this paragraph, a city shall allow an owner to use materials that are similar in design, color, scale, architectural appearance, and other visual qualities.

#### 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.

- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for land divisions, combinations, and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in historic districts, unless it finds that the proposed lot sizes adversely impact the historic character or significance of a landmark, are incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, or fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.

#### **41.23 THIRD LAKE RIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT.**

- (6) Standards for New Structures in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use. Any new structures on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial use that are located within two hundred (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 proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facade(s).
  - (d) The materials used in the street facade(s).
  - (e) The design of the roof.
  - (f) The rhythm of buildings masses and spaces.

## Analysis and Conclusion

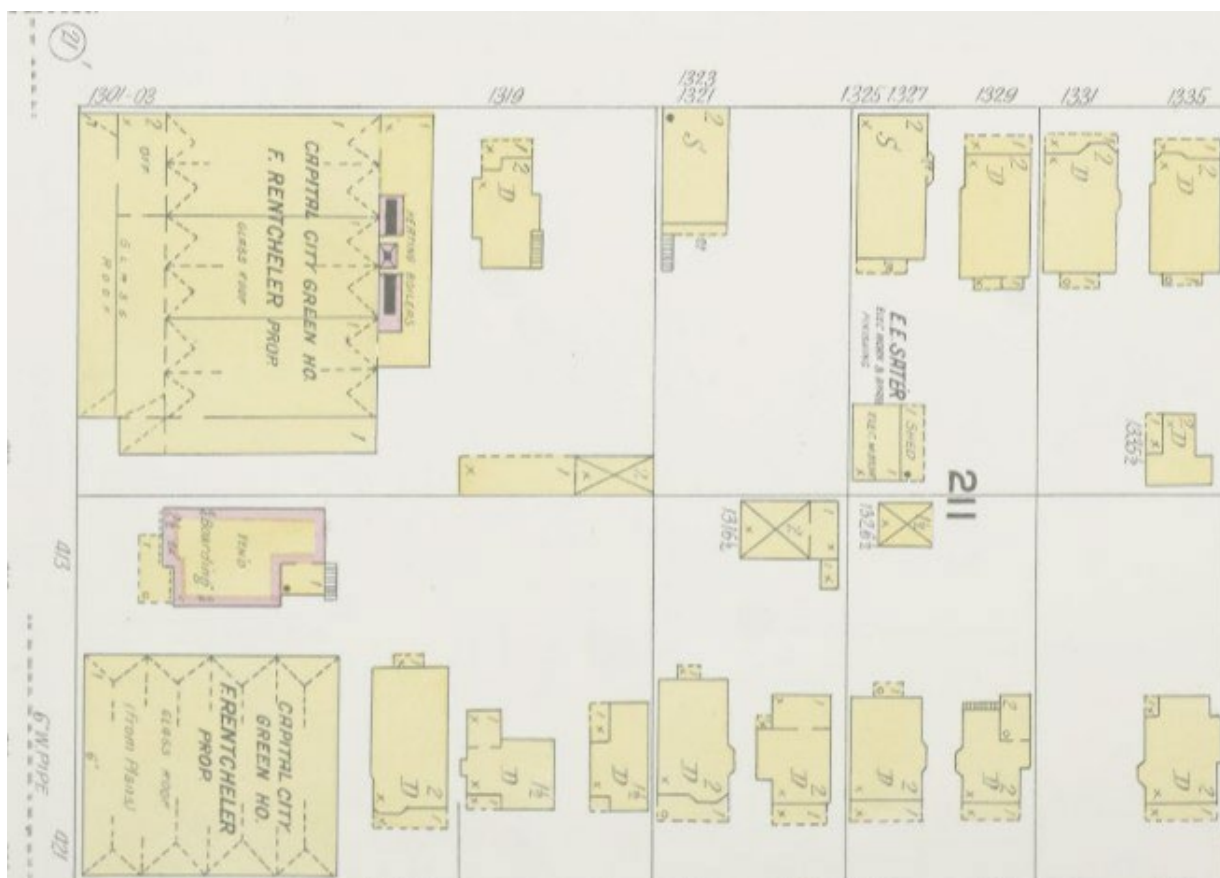
The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish three existing commercial structures, resolve the underlying lot lines for a land combination to create one lot, and construct a new two-story structure in the location of the demolished structures. This request involves approval of the demolitions, land combination, and new construction. Two of the buildings on the St. Vincent campus will remain and the surface parking lot.

## Demolition

Of the structures proposed for demolition, 1303 Williamson was constructed outside of the period of significance and is out of character with the historic district. 401 S Baldwin was constructed within the period of significance, but an unapproved 1980s remodel removed or obscured most historic building fabric. This structure has poor historic integrity and substantial structural concerns. St. Vinnie's original building has also suffered some unfortunate alterations to the Mediterranean Revival commercial building. Additionally, the structural failure of the bow truss that both supports the roof and walls would require extensive demolition as part of any repair that would essentially require reconstruction of the building in a way that it would be new construction. Both of the structures on Baldwin appear to be deteriorated beyond repair.

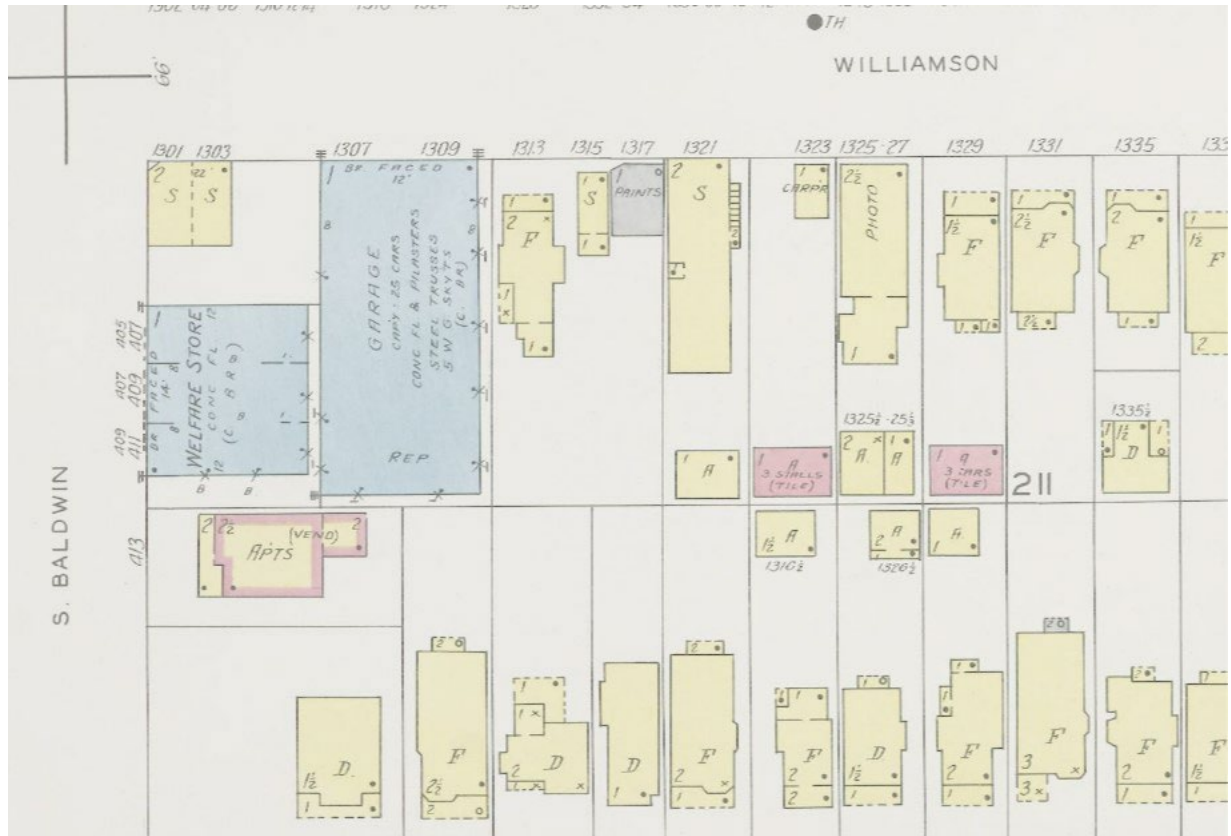
## Land Combination

Historically, this area contained structures for a historic greenhouse operation, where the lots at the end of the block were unusually large in order to contain the buildings related to that operation.



1300 block of Williamson, 1908 Sanborn

The lots in question for today's review include a large lot that time spanned from the intersection of Williamson and Baldwin through 1319 Williamson, with a second 66-foot wide lot containing 1321-1323 Williamson . As these sites redeveloped, the configuration of the lots changed with several land divisions.



1300 Block Williamson, 1942 Sanborn

While St. Vinnie's is shown in the 1942 Sanborn in its original building at 409 S Baldwin, it was then located on a lot that mostly just contained that structure. Over time, St. Vinnie's expanded their operations and moved into additional buildings. City processes did not require them to combine lots even though their operations included connecting between buildings located on legally separate parcels.

The proposed land combination will return the parcel configuration to a larger parcel size that approximates the 1908 configuration with the inclusion of the 66-foot wide lot that currently contains a surface parking lot. This process will recognize a land use that has existed historically for the St. Vinnie's campus.

## New Construction

The proposal is to construct an addition to the remaining structures of the St. Vinnie's campus in the area with the proposed demolitions. The new structure would feature a two story wing at the intersection, with a corner entry, which mimics the entry configuration on the existing structure and found on other corner structures in the vicinity. The style of architecture uses a similar architectural vocabulary to historic resources located within 200 feet. For the wing that will replace 409 S Baldwin, it will be a single-story, contemporary interpretation of Mediterranean Revival commercial-style structure. Again, the style and configuration uses a similar architectural vocabulary to historic resources within 200 feet, specifically the structure that it would be replacing.

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections follows:

**41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.**

- (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) Neither 401 S Baldwin or 1303 Williamson have particularly significant architectural or historic value. 409 S Baldwin is significant to St. Vinnie's, but the structural deficiencies would require a nearly complete reconstruction, which would be a technical demolition.
  - (b) N/A
  - (c) The structures at 1303 Williamson and 401 S Baldwin do not contribute to the character of the historic district. 409 S Baldwin does contribute, but again, the structural failures would require a technical demolition to remediate.
  - (d) As these structures are either lacking in historic or physical integrity, their demolition is not contrary to the purpose of this of this ordinance.
  - (e) None of these structures are particularly uncommon in their style.
  - (f) Retention of these structures will not provide substantial benefit to the understanding of history..
  - (g) The condition of 401 S Baldwin predates St. Vinnie's acquisition and they have attempted to maintain it. The condition of 409 S Baldwin was discovered during maintenance of the building. This damage was unexpected and not due to lack of maintenance.
  - (h) The new construction appears to meet the standards of the historic district.  
Staff would recommend complete photographic documentation of each of these structures prior to demolition.

Land Combination

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections follows:

**41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.**

- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. Historically this area of the Third Lake Ridge Historic District featured a similarly sized large lot. The St. Vinnie's campus has operated in these structures for an extended period of time and this process will recognize the combined use of these structures.

New Structure

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections follows:

**41.23 THIRD LAKE RIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT.**

- (6) Standards for New Structures in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use. Any new structures on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial use that are located within two hundred (200) feet of other historic resources shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways:
- (a) This area of the historic district features commercial structures that largely fill the volume of the lot on which they are situation. The proposed new construction will read like there are two separate commercial buildings being constructed, both of which would be visually compatible with the gross volume of historic resources within 200 feet.
  - (b) The two-story height of the portion of the new structure will replicate the height of similar historic resources in the vicinity. The single-story wing will replicate the height of the existing 409 S Baldwin building.

- (c) The proposed structure will replicate the proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facades of the commercial resources in the vicinity.
- (d) The use of masonry on the street facades replicates the types of materials found on historic resources within 200 feet.
- (e) Both of the buildings will feature flat roofs that are obscured behind parapets. This is in keeping with historic resources in the vicinity. The proposed solar panels and rooftop mechanicals are located so as to not be visible from the pedestrian line of sight.
- (f) In this dense commercial node on Williamson, the proposed rhythm of buildings masses and spaces will replicate that of historic resources within 200 feet.

## 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:

- Submit complete photographic documentation to staff for the preservation file prior to demolition of the existing structures.