

## PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

June 5, 2017

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



**Project Name/Address:** 1139 Williamson

**Application Type:** PUBLIC HEARING  
Demolition and new construction in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District

**Legistar File ID #** [47358](#)

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**Date Prepared:** May 25, 2017

### Summary

**Project Applicant/Contact:** Todd Barnett

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the existing structure and a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new building in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District.

### Background Information

**Parcel Location:** The subject site is located on Williamson Street 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) NA
    - (b) NA
    - (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    - (b) Whether a landmark's designation has been rescinded.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.

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

- (8) Standards for New Structures in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Residential Use. Any new structures on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial 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 proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facades.
  - (d) Materials used in the street facades.
  - (e) The design of the roof.
  - (f) The rhythm of buildings and masses.
  - (g) Directional expression
  - (h) Materials, patterns and textures
  - (i) Landscape treatment

### **Analysis and Conclusion**

The existing building was constructed in 1927 as a commercial building. As a commercial structure, it was placed toward the street breaking the front yard rhythm of the vernacular residential structures along the street. The building was used as a residence as early as the 1940s and was given a gabled roof form in the 1980s.

#### COA for Demolition

41.18(1)(d) The Landmarks Commission shall determine if the demolition of this property frustrates the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City's historic resources. The Landmarks Commission is charged with protecting and enhancing the perpetuation of historic districts and the City's cultural heritage. The demolition of any period appropriate structure would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this Ordinance and the objectives of the preservation plan for the district.

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

- (a) The existing structure is not of such architectural or historic significance that it meets the standards for landmark designation as the language of this standard suggests. Instead, this structure represents the mix of commercial and vernacular residential structures along Williamson Street which establishes the historic character and significance of the historic district.
- (b) N/A This property is not a landmark.
- (c) This vernacular building form contributes to the distinctive architectural and historic character of the historic district, but its form was largely modified by the addition of the gable roof in the 1980s. The existing building has been largely modified from its original appearance and appears to have little architectural or historic significance.
- (d) The Landmarks Commission is charged with protecting and enhancing the perpetuation of historic districts and the City's cultural heritage. The demolition of any period appropriate structure would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this Ordinance and the objectives of the preservation plan for the district. The Third Lake Ridge Historic District Plan states, "The Third Lake Ridge is a study in diversity, an agglomeration of many themes: ethnic settlement, railroad development, urbanization, civic improvement. Its architecture reflects this diversity of development and change."
- (e) The structure was originally constructed in 1927 (other research indicates 1925). The existing structure has been largely modified from the original by the addition of the gable roof and other modifications.
- (f) The building does not meet the intent of this standard. However, the general welfare of the public is promoted by the retention of the City's cultural resources and historic identity.
- (g) The Applicant is not claiming that the existing building is in deteriorated condition.
- (h) The proposed new structure is a two unit residential building. The form and treatment are similar to vernacular residential structures in the historic district and in the immediate context of the subject site.

#### COA for New Construction

41.18(1)(c) Instructs the Landmarks Commission to use the standards of 41.23(8) to determine the appropriateness of the proposed new construction. The Visual Compatibility map is attached to this report. A discussion of the new construction standards of 41.23(8) follows:

- (a) The proposed building has a gross volume that is larger, but compatible with the gross volume of other buildings in the historic district and within the immediate context of the subject site.
- (b) The proposed building is 2 ½ stories tall and similar to other buildings in the general context (2-2 ½ story).
- (c) The proposed building generally has a proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facades that are similar to other buildings in the historic district and within the immediate context of the subject site. The corner window of the second floor is not in a typical rhythm. In order to rectify this incompatibility, the front elevation may need to be reconsidered.
- (d) The proposed building has a fiber cement lap siding exterior wall material using 4" and 8" exposures. The submission materials indicate an engineered wood lap siding as an alternate exterior wall material. The lap siding appearance is common in the historic district and in the immediate context of the subject site. The drawings indicate that the siding accent panels will be smooth face fiber cement or engineered wood, the trim will be engineered wood or cellular PVC boards, the stair "wrap" will be wood with opaque stain, the railings will be cable or steel and wood boards, the windows will be fiberglass, the doors will be fiberglass or wood, the columns will be natural wood or steel and the porch skirting will be wood or cellular PVC. While the materials are not common, they are likely found within the historic district and within the

- immediate context and are generally being used in ways that are compatible with elements in the historic district.
- (e) The proposed building has a gabled main roof and a secondary flat roof which are similar to roof forms present on numerous buildings in the historic district and with buildings in the immediate context of the subject site.
  - (f) The proposed building is setback from the street and this placement is more compatible with the context than the existing building placement, but the proposed building should be located so that it is not an outlier. A more consistent setback will create a rhythm of masses and spaces that is compatible with other patterns in the historic district and within the immediate context of the subject site.
  - (g) The proposed building has a vertical expression which is similar to the adjacent residential buildings. Within the vertical expression are horizontal and vertical elements that create a residential composition that is generally compatible with other buildings in the historic district and within the immediate context. The narrow windows and accent panels create a vertical expression along the west elevation that seems to be different from other buildings.
  - (h) Please review discussion of (d) above.
  - (i) The submission materials indicate that the landscape treatment will use plantings to screen parking in the rear yard and that a rain garden will be featured in the front yard. The overall landscape treatment is very similar to other treatments present at other properties in the historic district and in the immediate context.

New construction in a historic district is an opportunity to reinforce the historic character of the district. The proposed new building has a traditional building form and materials that will provide a generally traditional appearance. There are key elements of the proposed building that do not provide a traditional appearance and the Commission must determine if these elements are compatible with the historic resources within 200'.

## Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition may be met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the request. If the Landmarks Commission does not believe the standards for granting the Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition are met, staff recommends the Landmarks Commission deny the request.

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

1. The Applicant shall describe any differences in appearance between the proposed exterior materials and the alternate materials.
2. The Applicant shall provide more information about the treatment of the window trim, the visible underside of the porch framing, the returns of eaves; the appearance of the foundation material; the porch deck material; the use of corner boards; the type of windows (double hung, casement, etc.); and the location of HVAC equipment.
3. The Applicant shall discuss options to remedy the vertical feeling of the west elevation which may include changing the window proportion to match the windows on the east elevation.
4. The Applicant shall push the building back to align it more closely with the front setback of the adjacent buildings.
5. The Applicant shall reconsider the front elevation in order to create a more typical rhythm of masses and spaces.