



Architectural Review Board Minutes

September 18, 2024 – 3:00 P.M.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The meeting was called to order by the acting Chair, Cartledge Blackwell, at 3:03 pm.

1. Roll Call

Christine Dawson, Historic Development staff, called the roll as follows:

Members Present: Cartledge Blackwell, Abby Davis, Stephen Howle, Cameron Pfeiffer-Traylor, and Jennifer Roselius

Members Absent: Catarina Echols, Karrie Maurin, Stephen McNair, and Barja Wilson

Staff Members Present: Annie Allen, Kimberly Branch-Thomas, Christine Dawson, Hannon Falls, Marion McElroy, and Bruce McGowin

2. Approval of Minutes from September 4, 2024

Jennifer Roselius moved to approve the minutes from the September 4, 2024 meeting.

The motion was seconded by Stephen Howle and approved unanimously.

3. Approval of Mid-Month COAs granted by Staff

Jennifer Roselius moved to approve the mid-month COAs granted by Staff.

Cameron Pfeiffer-Traylor seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

MID-MONTH APPROVALS - APPROVED

- Applicant:** Erin Wheeler
Property Address: 257 Charles Street
Issue Date: 08/28/2024
Project: Replace existing generator on property. Retain concealing foliage around generator.
- Applicant:** ASF Contracting LLC
Property Address: 1114 Dauphin Street
Issue Date: 08/28/2024
Project: Reroof with shingles. Color: Grey Slate
- Applicant:** Vickie Croft
Property Address: 1569 Dauphin Street
Issue Date: 08/29/2024

- Project:** Install a 13'x29' fiberglass swimming pool southeast of the main dwelling in the back yard. A 12'-0" deep patio area the width of the pool area will be installed south of the pool, connecting the existing accessory structure to the pool area. The patio will consist of either poured concrete or concrete pavers.
4. **Applicant:** Jimmy Dickinson
Property Address: 273 Houston Street
Issue Date: 08/30/2024
Project: Repair damaged siding and soffit on front (west) facade. Remove damaged or rotten wood and replace it with new to match existing. Paint to match existing.
5. **Applicant:** Fortified Exteriors LLC
Property Address: 28 S. Reed Avenue
Issue Date: 09/03/2024
Project: Reroof in kind with shingles in Charcoal color.
6. **Applicant:** Franchise Management Services Inc.
Property Address: 1220 Texas Street
Issue Date: 09/03/2024
Project: Reroof in kind with shingles in Cobblestone Gray color.
7. **Applicant:** Fortified Exteriors LLC
Property Address: 920 Conti Street
Issue Date: 09/03/2024
Project: Reroof in kind with shingles in Georgetown Gray color.
8. **Applicant:** Anthony Andrew Saybe
Property Address: 1111 Springhill Avenue
Issue Date: 09/03/2024
Project: Reroof with asphalt shingles in Black.
9. **Applicant:** Phillip Davenporte
Property Address: 556 Eslava Street
Issue Date: 09/04/2024
Project: Repaint exterior trim, foundation lattice panels, and porch deck. Color: Mobile BLP Satin Black (50-11).
10. **Applicant:** Professional Roofing & Construction
Property Address: 1156 Selma Street
Issue Date: 09/04/2024
Project: Reroof in-kind with shingles. Color: Charcoal
11. **Applicant:** WRICO Signs
Property Address: 107 St. Francis Street
Issue Date: 09/05/2024
Project: Install a 36"x20" double-faced routed pan blade sign to read "Parc Le Tralour Food Hall Event Center".
12. **Applicant:** Reelentless Construction LLC
Property Address: 350 Dauphin Street
Issue Date: 09/05/2024
Project: Replace existing roof with new roof insulation and white TPO single ply roof system. New Parapet Edge Metal: Stone White
13. **Applicant:** All Weather Roofing & Construction LLC

Property Address: 22 McPhillips Ave
Issue Date: 09/05/2024
Project: Reroof in kind with shingles. Color: Colonial Slate

APPLICATIONS

1. 2024-46-CA

Address: 1214 Texas Street
Historic District: Oakleigh Garden
Applicant / Agent: Albert Carter
Project: Demolition of 2-story frame house

APPROVED - CERTIFIED RECORD ATTACHED

2. 2024-47-CA

Address: 311 S. Ann Street
Historic District: Oakleigh Garden
Applicant / Agent: Stephen Harris
Project: Replace double-leaf front door with single door and sidelights

DEFERRED - APPLICANT NOT PRESENT

~~3. 2024-48-CA~~ DEFERRED AT APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Address: 456 Chatham Street
Historic District: Oakleigh Garden
Applicant / Agent: Bynum Properties on behalf of Eddie Clemons
Project: After-the-fact: Replace all windows with vinyl types; replace front and back doors; replace front steps; install driveway.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. The next ARB meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.



Agenda Item #1

Certified Record 2024-46-CA

DETAILS

Location:

1214 Texas Street

Summary of Request:

Demolish existing 2-story frame structure

Applicant (as applicable):

Albert F. Carter

Property Owner:

same

Historic District:

Oakleigh Garden

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The subject structure expresses a style unique to Mobile and the broader Gulf Coast region.
- The structure has been allowed to deteriorate to a dangerous state, such that Municipal Enforcement has issued a citation.
- The current owner wishes to construct a new structure on the property after demolition.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Oakleigh Garden Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1972 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning and development. The district is significant for its high concentration of 19th- and 20th-century architectural types and styles and significant in the area of landscape architecture for its canopies of live oaks planted from 1850 to 1910. The district is significant in the area of planning and development as the location of Washington Square, one of only two antebellum public parks remaining in Mobile. The district was expanded in 1984, and an updated nomination was approved in 2016.

The structure at 1214 Texas Street is a frame two-story hipped roof classical revival dwelling with a two-story recessed porch spanning the façade, supported by boxed columns with base and capitals. The fenestration consists of French doors with transoms across both first and second floors of the façade. City directories and historic maps reveal a construction date of c. 1915. Its current square form with rear two-story porch appears to have been very minimally altered from its earliest representation on the 1925 Sanborn overlay. A survey form from the Historic Development property file dated 1989 states that the house was covered in vinyl siding. It is unclear when this material was applied. The first floor of the rear porch was enclosed at some point prior to 2016. The property record documents two midmonth COAs issued in the 1990s for minor in-kind repairs to the porches. Other than these alterations, there appears to have been little exterior work carried out at this property.

According to Historic Development records, this property has never appeared before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

SCOPE OF WORK

Demolish two-story single-family dwelling.

APPLICABLE STANDARDS *(Design Review Guidelines for Mobile's Historic Districts)*

1. **10.0** Vacant Lots

The appearance of a vacant lot can potentially negatively impact the character of a historic district. When a vacant lot exists or is created through demolition, property owners must properly maintain, landscape and/or screen the property. This applies to a temporarily vacant lot. Owners must landscape a vacant lot with a ground cover approved by the ARB, such as grass. The owner must maintain the ground cover and keep the property free of trash and debris, as required by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Mobile.

2. **12.0** Demolition Guidelines

- Consider the current significance of a structure previously determined to be historic.
- Consider the condition of the structure in question. Demolition may be more appropriate when a building is deteriorated or in poor condition.
- Consider whether the building is one of the last remaining positive examples of its kind in the neighborhood, county, or region.
- Consider the impact that demolition will have on surrounding structures, including neighboring properties, properties on the same block or across the street or properties throughout the individual historic district.

- Consider whether the building is part of an ensemble of historic buildings that create a neighborhood.
- Consider the future utilization of the site.
- If a development is proposed to replace a demolished historic structure, determine that the proposed replacement structure is consistent with the guidelines for new construction in historic districts.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The property under review is a contributing structure in the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The subject application seeks approval to demolish the historic dwelling at 1214 Texas Street.

The *Guidelines* state that when demolition is contemplated, the current significance of the structure should be considered. The subject house is considered a contributing property to the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The two-story wood-frame classical structure represents the classical revival style which was widely popular in Mobile at the turn of the twentieth century. The particular blend of elements such as the full-width two-story porch, deep protective overhangs, full-length French doors, and restrained classical decoration create a specific colonial revival style adapted to Mobile's climate and culture.

Per the *Guidelines*, "the condition of the structure in question" should be considered. "Demolition may be more appropriate when a building is deteriorated or in poor condition." In the case of the subject property, the new owner's original intent was to rehabilitate the home. Once access to the interior was achieved, it became evident that the structure has degraded past the point of rehabilitation and appears to be a threat to public safety and the house to its immediate west. As discussed above, a survey photo from 1989 shows the house in relatively good repair. This is also stated on the accompanying document from the same survey. A Google Street View image from 2016 shows areas of exterior deterioration and vegetation overgrowth at the property. As mentioned in the *Property and Application History* above, two midmonth COAs were issued in the 1990s for in-kind repairs and replacement to the porches. Whether this work was carried out is unclear. Between 2016 and the present, the structure has clearly declined to a dangerous state of disrepair and loss of structural integrity. Among many issues discovered at the property, the west exterior wall appears to be bowing and buckling and in danger of collapse. There are several openings in the roof and at fenestration openings, exposing the structure to the elements. Rot is evident in structural elements both on the porches and the main building. Due to the dangerous nature of the property's condition, Municipal Enforcement issued a citation and had Alabama Power cut the electricity to the house.

Whether the building in question is "one of the last remaining positive examples of its kind in the neighborhood, county or region" should be factored into any decision to allow or disallow demolition in a historic district. As stated above, this structure is a distinctive example of incorporating the local building customs of the Gulf Coast region into the popular colonial revival style at the beginning of the twentieth century. A cursory look around the immediate neighborhood and the surrounding district for other similar instances of this particular style proves challenging. One somewhat comparable structure resides at 1262 Selma Street (c.1904). While this dwelling possesses similar elements such as symmetry, overhanging eaves with exposed brackets, a two-story full-width front porch supported by classical columns, and full-length windows, it seems to express more of a neo-classical flair with the Tuscan columns, fanlight and side-lights, versus the more restrained elements at 1214 Texas, and it lacks the verticality created by the run of French doors across the first floor. The same can be said at other properties that demonstrate some of the features of 1214 Texas, such as 162 and 261 Michigan Avenue,

but do not achieve the same characteristic appearance. The loss of the unique architectural character of the structure at 1214 Texas would diminish the architectural integrity of the district. Additionally, because of the building's location on a corner lot, its deletion would disrupt the established rhythm of development on both Texas and Regina streets and visually weaken the historic context of adjacent properties on both streets.

Another consideration required by the *Guidelines* is the impact that a demolition would have on surrounding structures. In this case, the applicant has stated that plans for new construction are forthcoming, however no plans have yet been submitted. In the case of temporary vacant lots created through demolition, the *Guidelines* state that owners "must properly maintain, landscape and/or screen the property." The applicant has confirmed to Staff that after demolition, the lot would be leveled, planted with grass seed, and maintained until new construction plans are finalized. (10.0, 12.0)

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Mr. Albert Carter, the owner, was present to discuss the application. He stated that he recently purchased the subject property in order to save and restore the historic dwelling, and after the purchase agreement was drafted, the previous owner allowed him access to the interior of the house. It was at this time, Mr. Carter noted, that he became aware of the extent of structural deterioration and that rehabilitation was not an option. He added that the intent is to build on the lot, or relocate another historic home to the property; that in the interim, the lot would be leveled and maintained. He stated that because he lives across the street, and is a part of the neighborhood, he is invested in seeing this property maintained and redeveloped.

Ms. Taylor Russ, a resident of Oakleigh Garden Historic District, and owner/resident of the adjacent property to the west of the subject lot, came forward to speak in favor of the application. She stated that the collapsing west wall has gotten progressively worse over the last two years and poses a danger and threat to her property.

No written public comments were received.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Ms. Dawson noted to the Board that the City's Municipal Enforcement Department had been out to the property and has issued a Notice of Violation due to the collapsing condition of the west wall, which has become a public danger.

Ms. Roselius asked the applicant if he had completed the purchase of the subject property. Mr. Carter replied that he had.

Ms. Pfeiffer-Traylor asked Mr. Carter if he had entered the structure after the purchase and then decided to demolish it. Mr. Carter replied that this is correct. He then explained that he had offered the property back to the previous owner; however, the owner stated that he did not have the money to rehabilitate or demolish the structure. Mr. Carter added that Steve May, who has restored many dilapidated homes in the area, also visited the property and noted that it was the worst he had ever seen.

Ms. Pfeiffer-Traylor asked if anyone else had looked at the house. Mr. Carter stated that no one else had, adding that he was previously a licensed contractor and architectural designer.

Ms. Roselius asked the applicant to speak to his intentions for the property after demolition. Mr. Carter stated that he had no concrete plans, but that his wish was to put something similar back on the lot, as he loves the style of the home, especially the front double gallery.

Ms. Roselius stated that the application is unique as the house is a significant contributing property which is clearly in a severe condition. She explained that the Board must consider proposed plans for post-demolition, and it is difficult to not know what will go on the property. Mr. Carter stated that he spoke to Mr. Williams from Municipal Enforcement and mentioned that he wanted to save the house, to which Mr. Williams voiced concerns and didn't think delaying demolition was wise, given the imminent public threat.

Mr. Blackwell listed criteria that the Board looks at when considering a demolition, which included architectural significance, condition of the subject structure, and proposed redevelopment. He stated that the house at 1214 Texas is one of the most significant on the street; however, it has been in serious decline for over a decade, and the west wall has gotten substantially worse. He continued that, given the fact that Mr. Carter is a longtime resident of the community and is invested in the neighborhood, he was hopeful that the application would move forward.

Mr. Carter stated that the previous owner was very resistant to selling the property and was somewhat uncomfortable about letting others see the condition of the interior. He added that he offered the house back to the previous owner to allow him to go through the process of either demolition or stabilization, but the owner refused the offer due to lack of finances.

Ms. Roselius stated that if Mr. Carter had not gone through this process, it may have caused an imminent danger. Mr. Carter stated that in his view, it is either he or the City that will tear the house down.

Ms. Pfeiffer-Traylor asked if there is anything that can be salvaged from the house. Mr. Carter replied that cleaning out is not an option due to fumes, etc., but that Steve May would be removing anything that is safely salvageable.

Ms. Davis commented that this house has more significance to the historic streetscape due to its corner location and noted that a vacant corner lot would contribute substantially to a loss of integrity in the neighborhood. Ms. Pfeiffer concurred, noting the lack of presence and disruption of rhythm.

Mr. McGowin reminded the Board that, due to the threat to public safety, if Mr. Carter did not voluntarily demolish the structure, the City would put a lien on his property to carry out the demolition.

Ms. Roselius stated that, considering the City has already determined that the structure is a public safety hazard, taxpayers should not be burdened when the property owner is committed to keeping the integrity of the district. Ms. Pfeiffer-Traylor agreed with Ms. Roselius, adding that, although the Board is very reluctant to grant demolition COAs, this situation is unique and also painful. She added that the applicant is very interested and invested financially and emotionally, which is reassuring. She stated that she is hesitant because there are no concrete future plans in place, especially given the significance of the corner lot location. She suggested that the applicant state intended plans on the record, then the Board can then use them to amend the facts of the report.

Mr. Carter stated that his short-term plan is to contact with a demolition company the following week to demolish the house and fence; then infill dirt would be brought in to smooth out the lot. Subsequently, the non-ornamental vegetation would be removed and ornamental growth cleaned up. Going forward, the grass and existing ornamentals would be consistently maintained, but no additional plantings would occur because the footprint of a future structure is unknown at this time.

Mr. Blackwell noted that in the past, the Board has approved phased demolition applications which consisted of: 1) demolition, 2)leveling, 3)planting.

Ms. Pfeiffer-Traylor mentioned that, before leveling the lot, items of interest may be found in the ground.

FINDING FACTS

Ms. Roselius moved that, based on the evidence presented in the application, the Board finds the facts in the Staff's report of the application, as written.

Ms. Davis seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

DECISION ON THE APPLICATION

Ms. Roselius moved that, based on the facts approved by the Board, while demolition of the structure would impair the architectural or historic character of the property and the district, the application should be granted a COA due to the condition of the building.

Mr. Howle seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 pm.

These minutes were approved by the ARB at their October 2, 2024 meeting.