



Agenda Item #3

Application 2025-07-CA

DETAILS

Location:

509 St. Francis Street

Summary of Request:

Demolish commercial structure

Applicant (as applicable):

Royshanda Smith

Property Owner:

Same

Historic District:

Lower Dauphin

Classification:

Non-Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The structure is in poor condition.
- The property has been cited by Municipal Enforcement.
- The Consolidated Review Committee granted approval in November 2024 to demolish the subject structure.
- A submitted structural report recommends demolition.
- The applicant has submitted no plans for future use of the lot.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Lower Dauphin Street Commercial Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1979 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of commerce and architecture. The district is significant for its unique character stemming from the high concentration of closely spaced two- and three-story brick buildings and as Mobile's nineteenth century commercial thoroughfare. The district boundaries were expanded in 1982, 1995, 1998, and 2019.

The 1885, 1891, and 1904 overlays of the Sanborn Insurance maps show a large lot on the southeast corner of St. Francis and N. Cedar Streets. The lot was occupied by a two-story frame structure with a full-width porch oriented toward St. Francis Street. A rear single-story wing was offset to the east with a porch running along its west elevation. A second two-story rectangular structure, with its long side oriented east-west, was connected to the larger structure by an open connecting element such as a frame covered walkway. On the 1885 and 1891 maps, the structure is designated 'female boarding'. By the 1904 survey, the structure is designated simply as a dwelling and has been altered to include various small additions. The 1924 overlay shows the addition of a large, connected frame garage on the south end of the property. These structures have disappeared by the 1955 update. At this time, the map records a single-story rectangular masonry structure stretching east-west along the north property line (St. Francis Street), designated as a store. A small, connected frame garage structure projects off the east end of the store's south elevation. A second single-story masonry structure sits to the south of the first, oriented towards N. Cedar Street. This structure is divided into three 'stores' and consists of a full-width frame porch along its west façade. According to aerial photographs, the masonry structure oriented toward St. Francis Street was deleted between 1997 and 2002. The second structure remains extant.

This property has never previously appeared before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

SCOPE OF WORK

Demolish one-story commercial structure

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

1. 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 application seeks approval to demolish the one-story masonry structure at 509 St. Francis Street. The applicant received approval from the Consolidated Review Committee in November 2024 to demolish the subject structure.

The *Guidelines* state that when demolition is contemplated, the current significance of the structure should be considered. The property under review is a non-contributing structure in the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial District. While the construction date of c. 1950 certainly meets the age requirement for listing on the National Register, the structure's loss of integrity and that of the lot as a whole may render the property ineligible.

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 considerable poor condition." The subject property poor condition. There is no roof on the structure, and it appears that the building has been exposed to the elements for some time. All windows and doors have experienced significant rot or are no longer extant. The building appears as a shell and not a whole structure. All other buildings on the lot have been demolished or removed, leaving large expanses of exposed concrete slabs. Vegetation is growing on and through the building. The property was cited by municipal enforcement in September of 2024. A structural report undertaken by Gant Group & Associates, LLC., and submitted by the applicant reads the following:

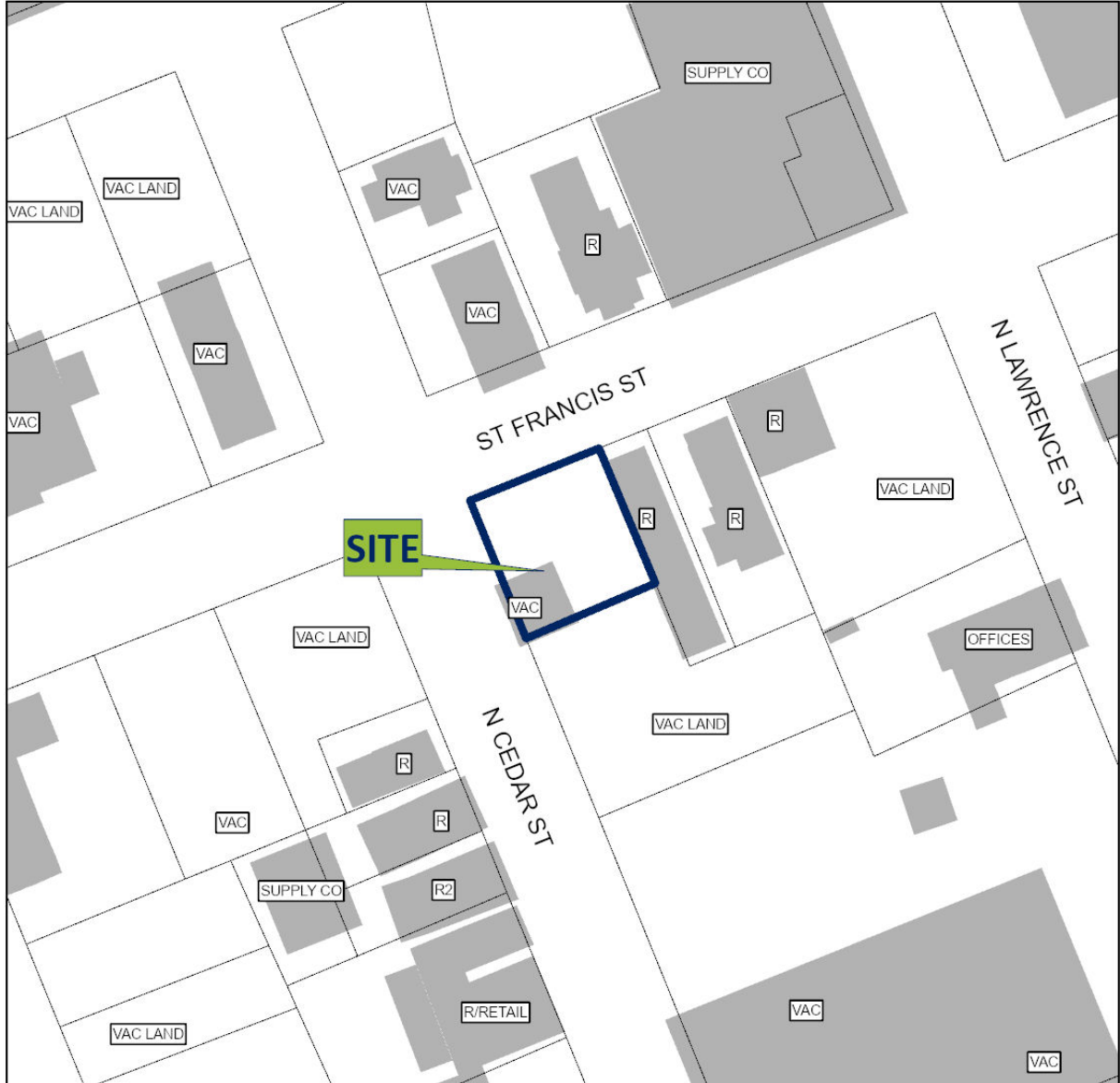
"Based on our assessment of the structural integrity of the facility and recognition that it poses no real historic value or context to the neighborhood, it is GGA's recommendation that the building be demolished."

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. This commercial structure is one of many examples of single-story multi-tenant masonry commercial structures found throughout Mobile's historic districts and in the Lower Dauphin District specifically. Many can be found along Dauphin Street and further afield throughout other districts such as Oakleigh Garden.

Another consideration required by the *Guidelines* is the impact that a demolition would have on surrounding structures. The immediate vicinity has historically been a mix of commercial and residential, consisting of small and larger commercial and multi-tenant structures, and smaller one- or two-story single-family and duplex cottage dwellings, mostly of frame construction. Since 1955, widespread demolition along adjacent properties and surrounding blocks has resulted in vacant lots and the construction of new, large commercial structures.

The *Guidelines* instruct that the future use of a cleared site should be considered. No plans for future development of the lot at 509 St. Francis were submitted with this application. Demolition alone, with no plan to rebuild or redevelop the lot, which already has experienced demolition, would further contribute to the gap-toothed and neglected appearance of the block and surrounding area. (12.0)

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 4 DATE 2/5/2025

APPLICANT Royshanda Smith

PROJECT Demolish commercial structure



Site Photos – 509 St. Francis Street



1. View of property, looking SE



2. View of façade, looking NE



3. View of west façade, looking E



4. View of north and east elevations, looking SW



5. Detail of structure's condition



6. Detail of structure's condition

Planning & Zoning Department
Consolidated Review Committee



November 22, 2024

Royshanda Smith
507 St. Francis Street
Mobile, AL 36602

Via Email:
czell@hotmail.com

RE: **Demolition**
509 St. Francis Street
T-5.1 Sub-District
Demolition of existing structure
CRC-003130-2024

To Whom It May Concern:

The CRC has reviewed the project, and determined that the proposed demolition will comply with the Downtown Development District requirements.

Please note that due to the site being located in the Lower Dauphin Street Historic District, a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) will be required prior to the issuance of associated permits. Contact Historic Development at either 251-208-7281 or historicdevelopment@cityofmobile.org for more information on this process.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marie York".

Marie York
Principal Planner



November 12, 2024

Fr: Carlos R. Gant, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
467 Dauphin St., Suite A
Mobile, AL 36602

Re: 509 St. Francis St. Demolition Review

Gant Group and Associates (GGA) and our respective structural engineer visited the property noted above on November 11, 2024 to ascertain its condition. We found the existing property to be in a state of extreme disrepair. The following was noted:

- Doors, if present, are not original and are deteriorated.
- Windows were not present, and all wood trim related to them is rotted.
- The entire roof of the facility is destroyed (No joist or roof framing is intact).
- The Concrete Masonry Walls (CMU) are damaged and no longer have structural viability due to the length of exposure of the open cells to the weather. Many of the blocks were brittle or damaged and would have to be abandoned or replaced to renovate.
- All building interiors were completely gutted and open to the elements.

Based on our assessment of the structural integrity of the facility and recognition that it poses no real historic value or context to the neighborhood, it is GGA's recommendation that the building be demolished.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlos R. Gant, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP

