



Agenda Item #1

Application 2024-46-CA

DETAILS

Location:

1214 Texas Street

Summary of Request:

Demolish existing contributing 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 of 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)

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 1 DATE 9/18/2024

APPLICANT Albert Carter

PROJECT Demolition of 2-story frame house



Site Photos – 1214 Texas Street



1. View of façade, looking S



2. View of east elevation, looking NW



3. View of west wall, looking N



4. View of west wall, looking SE



5. View of east elevation, looking W



6. View of north (rear) elevation, looking SW

Site Photos – 1214 Texas Street



7. Detail of porch deterioration (submitted by applicant)



8. View of south façade and west wall. Note structural deterioration of west wall (submitted by applicant)



9. Interior photo (submitted by applicant)



10. Interior photo (submitted by applicant)



11. Interior photo (submitted by applicant)



12. Interior photo (submitted by applicant)