



Agenda Item #1

Application 2025-01-CA

DETAILS

Location:

1059 Elmira Street

Summary of Request:

Remove north portion of ancillary structure.
Construct new façade.

Applicant (as applicable):

John D. Thomas

Property Owner:

Same

Historic District:

Oakleigh Garden

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The application proposes partial demolition of an accessory structure that is not mentioned in the National Register district nomination and that postdates the primary dwelling by approximately 30 years.
- The majority of the structure will remain, and partial demolition will create a streetscape rhythm that is more in keeping with the neighborhood in general.
- The proposed new façade is in keeping with the overall style and character of the commercial accessory structure, though it does introduce some modern replacement materials.

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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 primary residence at 1059 Elmira Street is a folk-Victorian shotgun house with a rear wing. A similar single-story frame dwelling is shown on the 1904 and 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Both maps show a rectangular footprint with an inset porch at the southwest corner. By 1956, Sanborn Maps show that the rear porch had been enclosed and the existing rear wing constructed. City Directories and tax records indicate that the structure was constructed in 1892. The turned porch columns and simple carved wood brackets are typical of shotgun dwellings of this period.

The Sanborn Maps indicate that the large accessory structure at 1059 Elmira was constructed sometime between 1904 and 1925. The 1925 Sanborn Map shows a single-story rectangular frame structure with a zero-lot line setback identified as an automobile painting shop. At this time, the accessory structure was approximately the same size as the c. 1890 dwelling. By 1956, the accessory structure had been expanded into an L-shaped structure occupying most of the subject lot. While still of wood frame construction, the accessory structure was clad in metal siding. The structure has remained largely unchanged since 1956.

The subject property has appeared once before the Architectural Review Board. In September 2006, the Board approved the construction of a rear addition.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Demolish portion of existing structure and construct new primary façade.
 - a. The front portion of the structure – measuring 20' wide by 37' deep – would be removed.
 - b. A new façade would be constructed at the north end of the remaining structure.
 - i. The proposed façade would feature a low parapet wall would follow the pitch of the gable roof on either side of a raised rectangular cap.
 - ii. Double-leaf board-and-batten barn-style doors would be centered in the new façade.
 - iii. A simple metal shed roof would shelter the doorway.
 - iv. The façade would be clad in 8" fiber cement horizontal lap siding.
 - v. Fiber cement corner boards and parapet coping would frame the façade.

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.
2. **5.3** Preserve the key historic walls of a building.
 - Maintain significant historic façades in their original form.
 - Maintain historic façade elements.
 - Pay special attention to maintaining the historic appearance of building walls of corner buildings.
 3. **5.4** Preserve original building materials.
 - Repair deteriorated building materials by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the material.
 - Remove only those materials which are deteriorated, and beyond reasonable repair.
 - Do not remove original materials that are in good condition.
 4. **5.6** Use original materials to replace damaged materials on primary surfaces where possible.
 - Use original materials to replace damaged building materials on a primary façade if possible. If the original material is wood clapboard, for example, then the replacement material should be a material that matches the original in finish, size and the amount of exposed lap. If the original material is not available from the site, use a replacement material that is visually comparable with the original material.
 - Replace only the amount of material required. If a few boards are damaged beyond repair, for example, then only they should be replaced, rather than the entire wall.
 - Do not replace building materials on the primary façade, such as wood siding and masonry, with alternative or imitation materials unless it cannot be avoided.
 - Wholesale replacement of exterior finishes is generally not allowed.
 5. **5.15** Repair or replace a damaged historic door to maintain its general historic appearance.
 - Replacements should reflect the age and style of the building.
 - Use materials that are visually comparable to that of the original.
 - Do not use solid core or flush doors.

ACCEPTABLE DOOR MATERIALS Materials that are the same as the original, or that appear similar in texture and finish to the original are acceptable.

These often include:

- » Wood panel
- » Wood panel with glass lights
- » Leaded glass with lead comes
- » Metal with a painted finish
- » Other materials original to the building

UNACCEPTABLE DOOR MATERIALS Materials that do not appear similar to the original in texture and finish are unacceptable.

These often include:

- » Unfinished Metal
- » Fiberglass or synthetic
- » Wood flush doors.

6. **5.19** Where repair is impossible, replace details and ornamentation accurately.
 - When replacing historic details, match the original in profile, dimension, and material.

- A substitute material may be considered if it appears similar in character and finish to the original. A measured drawing may be required in these instances to recreate missing historic details from photographs.
- Do not apply architectural details that were not part of the original structure. For example, decorative mill work should not be added to a building if it was not an original feature. Doing so would convey a false history.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The property under review is a contributing structure in the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The subject application seeks approval to demolish a portion of a commercial accessory structure on the lot at 1059 Elmira Street. Following demolition, the application proposes constructing a new primary façade.

The *Guidelines* state that when demolition is contemplated, the current significance of the structure should be considered. While the primary dwelling at 1059 Elmira Street is listed as a contributing historic property, the National Register nomination makes no mention of the large commercial accessory structure on the lot. The front portion of the structure was constructed sometime between 1904 and 1925, but the largest portion of the structure dates to the period between 1925 and 1956. Both construction dates fall within the period of significance for the district, which spans from 1833 to 1958. The existing structure retains its overall form as it existed in 1956, and the existing metal siding may also date to this period. However, plywood sheathing on the primary façade is a later addition. All windows are covered with plywood, and large plywood sheets have replaced the original garage doors. A period-appropriate 6-light wood paneled door does remain. Since doors and windows are the most character-defining features of such a simple commercial structure, the lack of original fenestration severely undermines the architectural integrity of the subject property.

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.” The property owner reports that the accessory structure has suffered significant termite damage that has rendered the front portion of the building unsafe for repairs.

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. The subject property is an outlier in the Oakleigh Garden Historic District, which is primarily residential. Several large masonry commercial buildings are located on the north edge of the district along Government Street. In the district interior, small corner shops were a common commercial development after 1900. Surviving examples of small commercial structures from this period include 916 Charleston Street, 1061 Elmira Street, and 964 Savannah Street, all of which are more intact and in better overall condition than the subject property.

Another consideration required by the *Guidelines* is the impact that a demolition would have on surrounding structures. In this case, the partial demolition will have no negative impact on neighboring structures. The existing structure currently the subject dwelling. Its zero-lot line setback also disrupts the rhythm of the street, visually dividing the block in two. Partial demolition of the front portion would create a 37-foot setback, which is much more in keeping with the overall development pattern of the street and will reestablish original viewsheds from the porch of the primary dwelling at 1059 Elmira Street.


When rehabilitating a historic structure, the *Guidelines* recommend maintaining historic significant facades in their original form. If demolition of the front portion of the subject property is deemed appropriate, there will be no remaining historic façade to preserve. The remaining portion of the building is a later rear addition and therefore never had a street-facing façade. In this instance, the *Guidelines* do not support replication of the existing façade as this would place a ca. 1925 façade on a ca. 1956 addition. As proposed, the new façade design, with its lack of ornamentation and simple board-and-batten doors, is in keeping with mid-20th-century commercial construction. The proposed parapet design represents a departure from the front gable of both the existing

façade and the primary dwelling. However, there is neighborhood precedent for parapet walls on commercial structures, most notably at Callaghan's Irish Social Club (916 Charleston Street), which dates to roughly the same period as the ca. 1956 addition.

In reference to exterior cladding materials, the *Guidelines* prohibit replacing "building materials on the primary façade, such as wood siding and masonry, with alternative or imitation materials unless it cannot be avoided." The *Guidelines* further state that, if repair of the original material is impossible, a "substitute material may be considered if it appears similar in character and finish to the original." Therefore, while the *Guidelines* strongly discourage using fiber cement board on the primary façade of an existing structure, they do allow it where repair of the original material is not possible. The original wood siding on the c. 1925 structure is no longer extant, and the c. 1956 addition appears to have always been clad with corrugated metal sheets. A smooth fiber cement board that approximates the appearance of wood siding may therefore be appropriate, especially considering its use on an accessory structure that would sit behind the front plane of the primary dwelling.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER <u>2</u> DATE <u>1/15/2025</u>	
APPLICANT <u>John D. Thomas</u>	
PROJECT <u>Remove north front portion of historic ancillary building. Construct a new facade</u>	

Site Photos – 1059 Elmira Street



1. View of property, looking SW



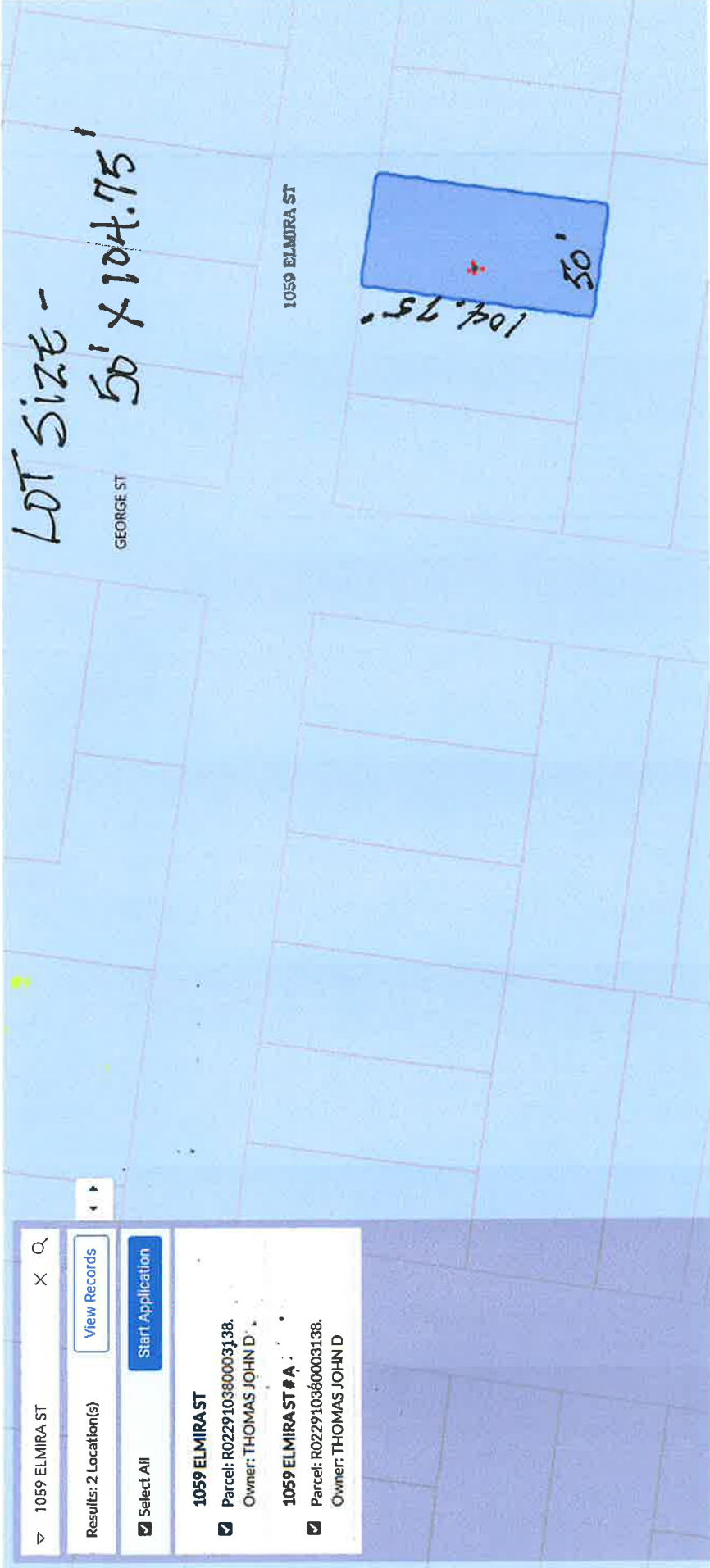
2. View of property, looking S



3. View of ancillary structure, looking SW



4. View of ancillary structure, looking SE



LOT SIZE -

50' x 104.75'

GEORGE ST

1059 ELMIRA ST

104.75'
50'

1059 ELMIRA ST

Results: 2 Location(s)

Select All

1059 ELMIRA ST

Parcel: R022910380003138.
Owner: THOMAS JOHN D.

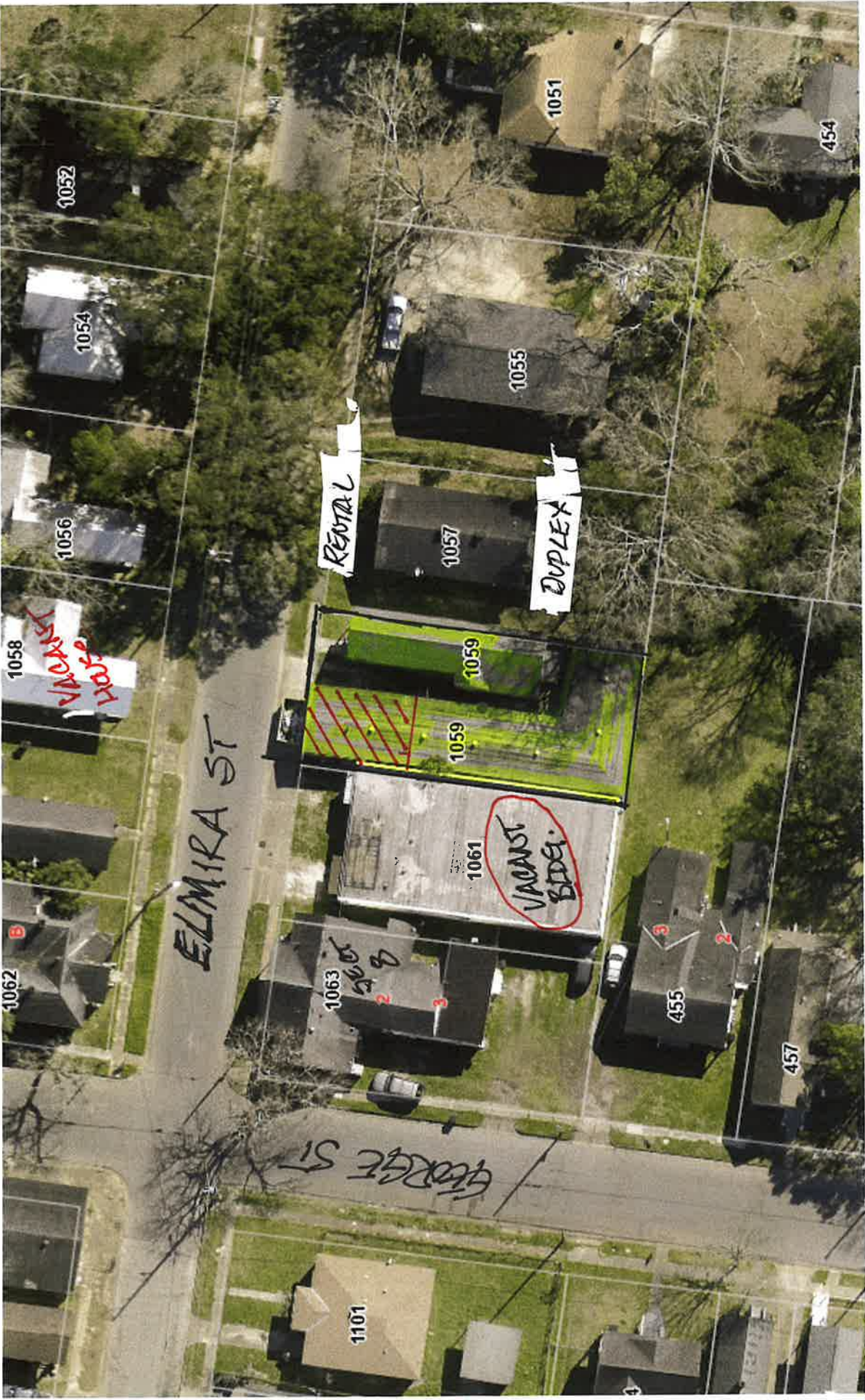
1059 ELMIRA ST # A

Parcel: R022910380003138.
Owner: THOMAS JOHN D



Start Application

View Records



1052

1054

1051

454

1055

RENTAL

1057

DUPLEX

1059

1059

1061

VACANT BIDS

1058

VACANT

ELMIRA ST

1062

1063

455

457

GEORGE ST

1101

1059 ELMIRA ST



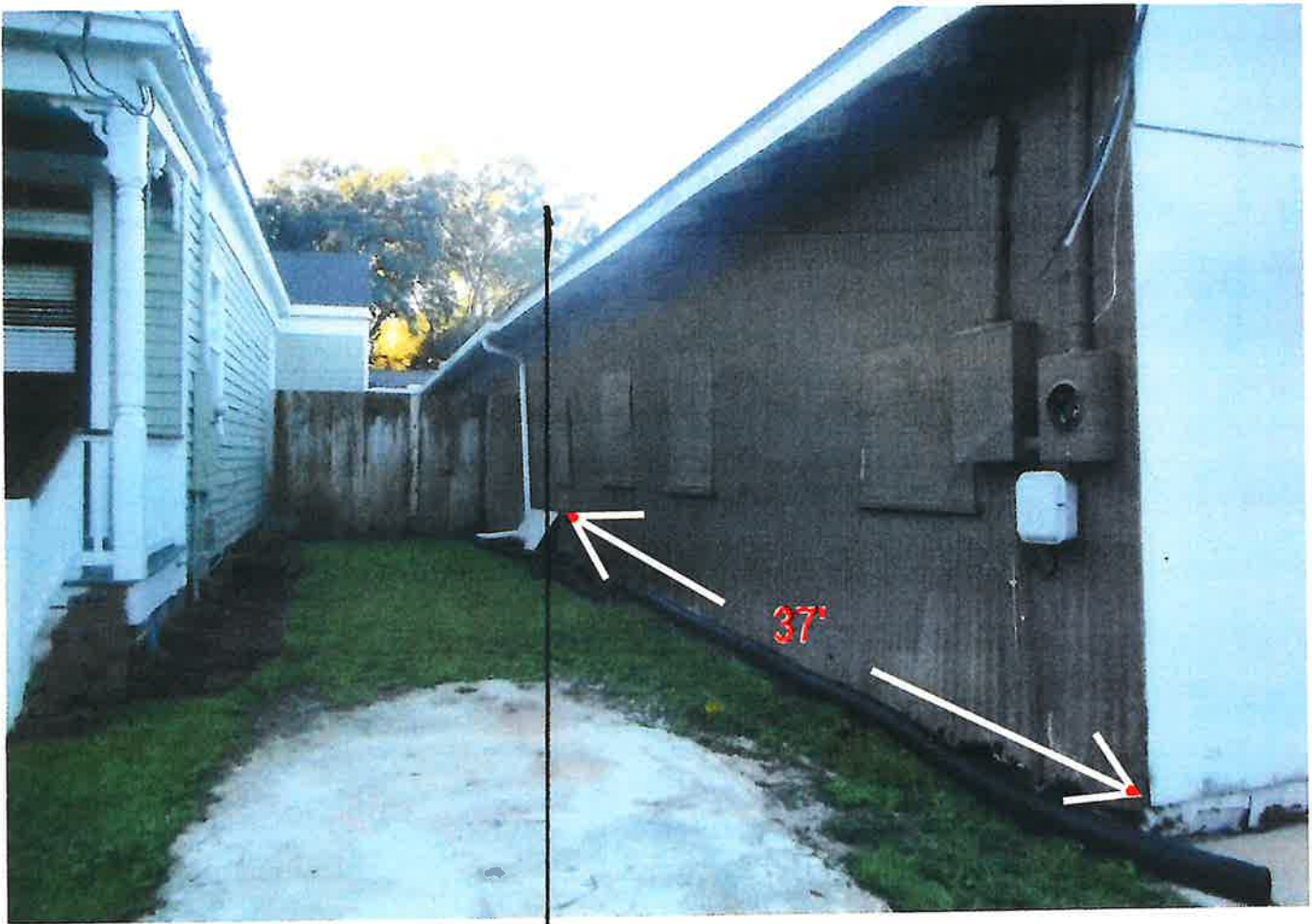


**EAST SIDE
OF 1059 ELMIRA
STREET**



PROPOSED DEMO TO THIS POINT

WEST SIDE OF OUTBUILDING



PROPOSED DEMO TO THIS POINT

EAST SIDE OF OUTBUILDING



DEMO

20'

37'

CONCRETE TO REMAIN

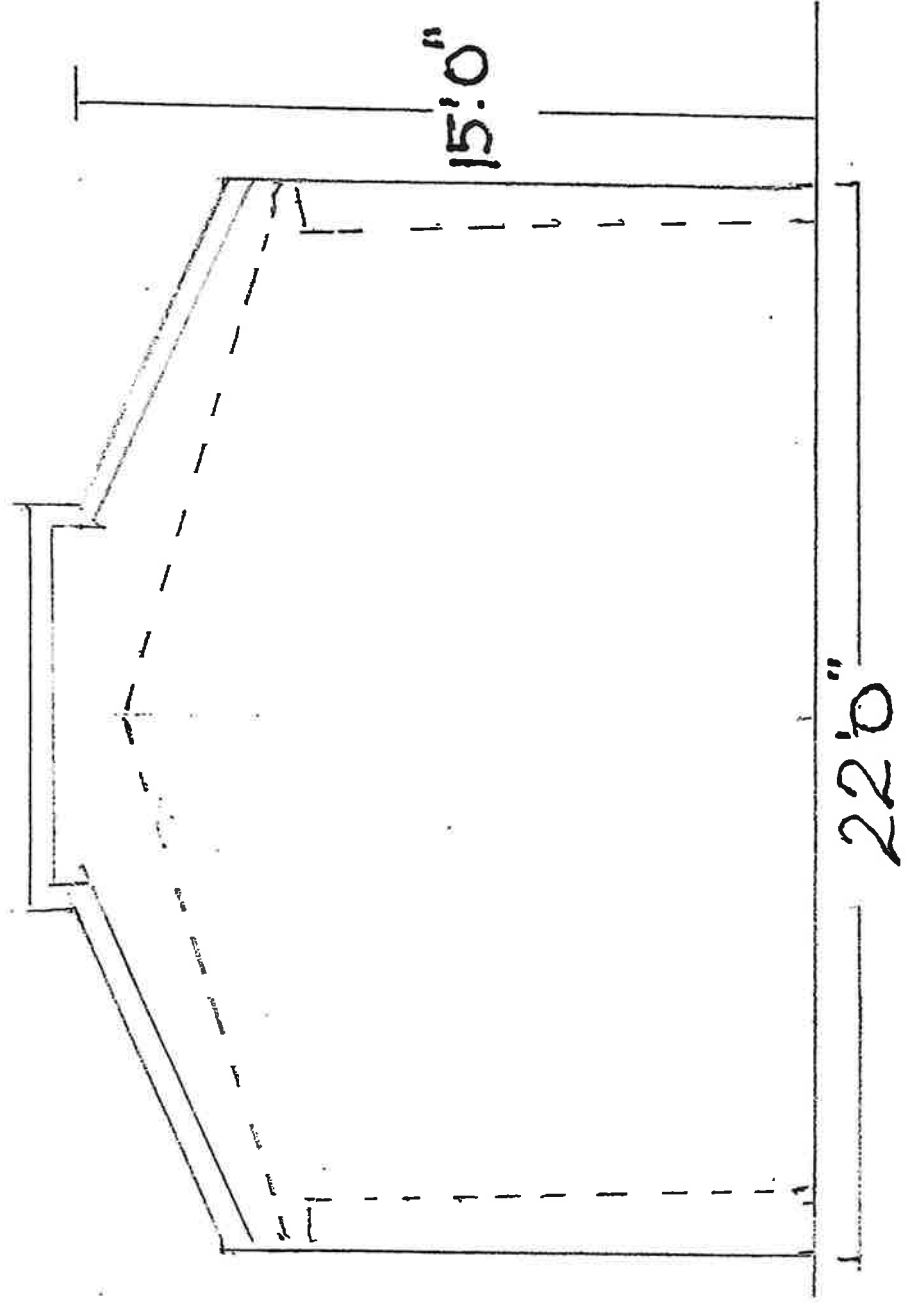
REMOVE 30' x 37'

RETURN THIS AREA TO GREEN SPACE

NORTH

PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION OVERLAY

-----Indicates the Current Front Elevation



1059 ELMIRA STREET

PROPOSED NEW FRONT ELEVATION

