



Agenda Item #3

Application 2024-30-CA

DETAILS

Location:

961 Texas Street/505 Charles Street

Summary of Request:

Relocate house to 505 Charles Street and create a landscaped side-yard at vacant lot.

Applicant (as applicable):

Tracy Hunter

Property Owner:

Same

Historic District:

Oakleigh Garden/none

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The receiving lot at 505 Charles Street is not located within a historic district.
- The areas surrounding both the current and proposed receiving lots have witnessed loss of historic fabric.
- The application proposes creating a landscaped side yard at 961 Texas Street.

Report Contents:

Property and Application History 2

Scope of Work 2

Applicable Standards 2

Staff Analysis 3

Attachments 5

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 961 Texas Street is a frame, hipped roof raised cottage with full-width front porch. Its earliest representation on the 1904 Sanborn map shows a square main block with a rectangular projection on the rear. This form remained consistent through the 1956 overlay. At some point after 1956, the recessed area created by the rear projection was filled in, creating a single long rectangular form. The dwelling currently has two seemingly identical front entry doors, each topped by a three-light transom. Due to a lack of photographic evidence or access to the interior, it is difficult to know if this is an original feature of the house or a later alteration. From the exterior, it appears to be original. Historically, there is precedent for this type of vernacular raised cottage to have two entry doors, which would have aligned with a four-room floorplan with no hallway, and the front two rooms opening directly onto the porch. Later alterations are also apparent on the front porch, which is missing its original supports and railing. A dividing wall has been added between the two entry doors, as it appears the house was divided into a duplex at some point in time.

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

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Relocate house at 961 Texas Street to the vacant lot at 505 Charles Street.
 - a. The house would sit on the site 25'-0" east of the Charles Street ROW.
 - b. The applicant plans to rehabilitate the house once relocated.
2. Create a landscaped yard and outdoor living area at 961 Texas Street, to be used as a side yard for 963 Texas Street.

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

1. Consider the current significance of a structure previously determined to be historic.
 - An analysis should be undertaken to determine if the historic structure retains its integrity. In some cases, a property previously identified as a contributing historic structure may no longer retain its integrity due to changes to the structure since the time it was originally determined to be historic.
2. Impact on the Street and District
 - Consider the impact of removing the historic structure relative to its context.
 - Consider whether the building is part of an ensemble of historic buildings that create a neighborhood. (12.0)
3. Nature of Proposed Development
 - Consider the future utilization of the site. (12.0)
4. Relocation Guidelines
 - New Location: Consider whether or not a structure will be relocated within the same district and in a similar context. Relocation may be more appropriate when the receiving site is in the district. Relocated buildings shall be placed in situations that do not impair the architecture or the historic character of the surrounding buildings and district.

- Building Placement: When relocating a building, maintain its general placement and orientation on the new site so as to maintain the architectural and historical character of the streetscape and district.
- Where possible, relocate a building to a site that is similar in size as perceived from the street. (12.0)

STAFF ANALYSIS

The application involves relocating the historic structure at 961 Texas Street to the vacant lot at 505 Charles Street. The applicant owns both lots and has plans to carry out improvements to the structure and property once relocated to 505 Charles.

The Code of the City of Mobile (Chapter 44, Article IV, Sec. 44-80) requires that the ARB not grant a Certificate of Appropriateness “for the demolition or relocation of any Historic Property or property within a local Historic District unless the Board finds that the removal or relocation of such building will not be detrimental to the historic or architectural character of the District.”

The structure to be moved is located in the locally designated portion of the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The house would be removed from its current site, subsequently producing an end result for Texas Street identical to a demolition. Therefore, when relocation is considered, the *Guidelines* direct consideration of the following: the significance of the structure, the impact on the street and district, the nature of proposed development at the origination property, the new location, and the building placement of the relocated building. (12.0)

The significance of the structure

The house at 961 Texas is listed as a contributing property in the locally designated portion of the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The modest raised Creole cottage with full-width front porch and two front entry doors represents a vernacular form common throughout the Southeast. The subject property is a hipped-roof structure with a later enclosed rear portion, intended to create more living space. Although quite a bit of alterations have been carried out on the property, especially to the front porch, most of the alterations are superficial and do not compromise the historic integrity of the structure.

Impact on the Street and District

The *Guidelines* state that 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 involving the removal of a structure within a historic district. As stated above, the raised Creole cottage form, such as the one located at 961 Texas Street, is common to this region, and the prevalence of its form is a defining feature of Mobile’s historic built environment. Although many can still be seen throughout Mobile’s historic districts and beyond, a substantial number have been and continue to be lost.

The *Guidelines* further instruct that the impact of a structure’s demolition on surrounding structures, including neighboring properties, properties on the same block or across the street, or properties throughout the individual historic district should be taken into account. Approximately half of the historic dwellings once extant on the portion of Texas Street where the house now sits have been lost. The 1956 Sanborn map shows fourteen homes on the block; five sitting on the north side of Texas, and nine sitting on the south side (including 961 Texas). Three out of five have been lost on the north side of the street, and four out of nine on the south side. Removal of the historic cottage at 961 Texas would further diminish the historic integrity of the block.

Nature of proposed development at the origination property

The *Guidelines* instruct that the future use of a cleared site should be considered. Conceptual plans for a landscaped side yard that would relate to the house at 963 Texas Street have been submitted with the application. The applicant intends to create an outdoor space which would include retaining the existing fence

that runs along the east and south lot lines, the installation of flowering trees and raised beds, and the creation of a patio seating area. Although the *Guidelines* do not specifically address creating a side yard at an adjacent property, there is precedent for this scenario in Mobile's historic districts. One such example is 603 Church Street, which has incorporated the adjacent lot to the west into a fenced side yard.

Relocation Guidelines: New location

In regard to the receiving location, the *Guidelines* state, "Consider whether or not a structure will be relocated within the same district and in a similar context. Relocation may be more appropriate when the receiving site is in the district. Relocated buildings shall be placed in situations that do not impair the architecture or the historic character of the surrounding buildings and district." The receiving site, 505 Charles Street, is not located in a historic district, and relocating the structure at 961 Texas Street to 505 Charles Street would place a contributing historic building outside the purview of the ARB, meaning any exterior changes or demolition proposed for the property in the future would not be subject to review under the City's preservation ordinance.

The north property line of the receiving lot is the rear property line of 961 Texas and is the southern boundary of the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. As it is located in the same neighborhood setting, 505 Charles is a suitable context for the historic structure at 961 Texas. In fact, historical evidence shows that until around 2011, a structure of similar form and size was extant on the receiving lot. This block of Charles Street is a mix of historic structures and new construction, with the west side of the street having experienced much less loss of historic fabric. There are more vacant lots on the east side of Charles Street, and placing the subject structure on lot 505 would provide a more balanced historic streetscape.

The house, once relocated, would sit on the lot at 505 Charles such that the front yard setback would be 25'-0" from the ROW, which is consistent with the established range along the street. The side yard setbacks on the north and south would measure 9'-0" and 11'-5", respectively.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER <u>3</u>	DATE <u>6/5/2024</u>	
APPLICANT <u>Tracy Hunter</u>		
PROJECT <u>Relocate contributing house from Oakleigh Garden District to adjacent parcel at 505 Charles St (no district). Landscape newly vacant lot as side yard to 963 Texas St</u>		

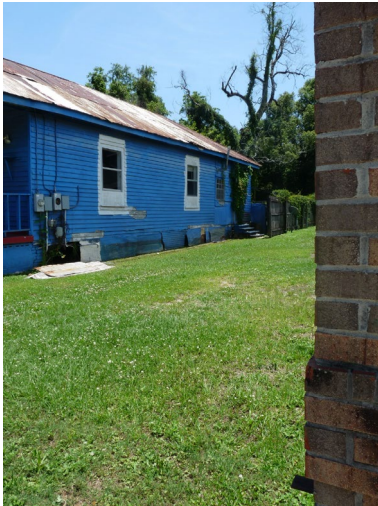
Site Photos – 961 Texas Street



1. View of property, looking southeast.



2. View of property, looking southwest



3. View of west elevation, looking southeast.



4. View of west elevation and adjacent lot to the west



5. View of façade and east elevation, looking southwest.



6. View of rear elevation, looking north.

Site Photos – 505 Charles Street



1. View of vacant lot, looking east.



2. View of vacant lot, looking southeast.



3. View of Charles Street, looking north.



4. View of Charles Street, looking south.

Future for 961 Texas Street Lot

I am the current owner of 961 and 963 Texas Street. My 963 Texas Street property has little to no yard for outside family gatherings.

I desire to move the structure at 961 Texas Street to another vacant lot I own at 505 Charles Street and begin rehabbing the house.

My plans for the 961 Texas Street lot once the structure is removed is to landscape the lot and establish a play area as illustrated below for my children/grandchildren and entertaining other extended family members. This vacant lot will be the perfect oasis for hosting outdoor family events.

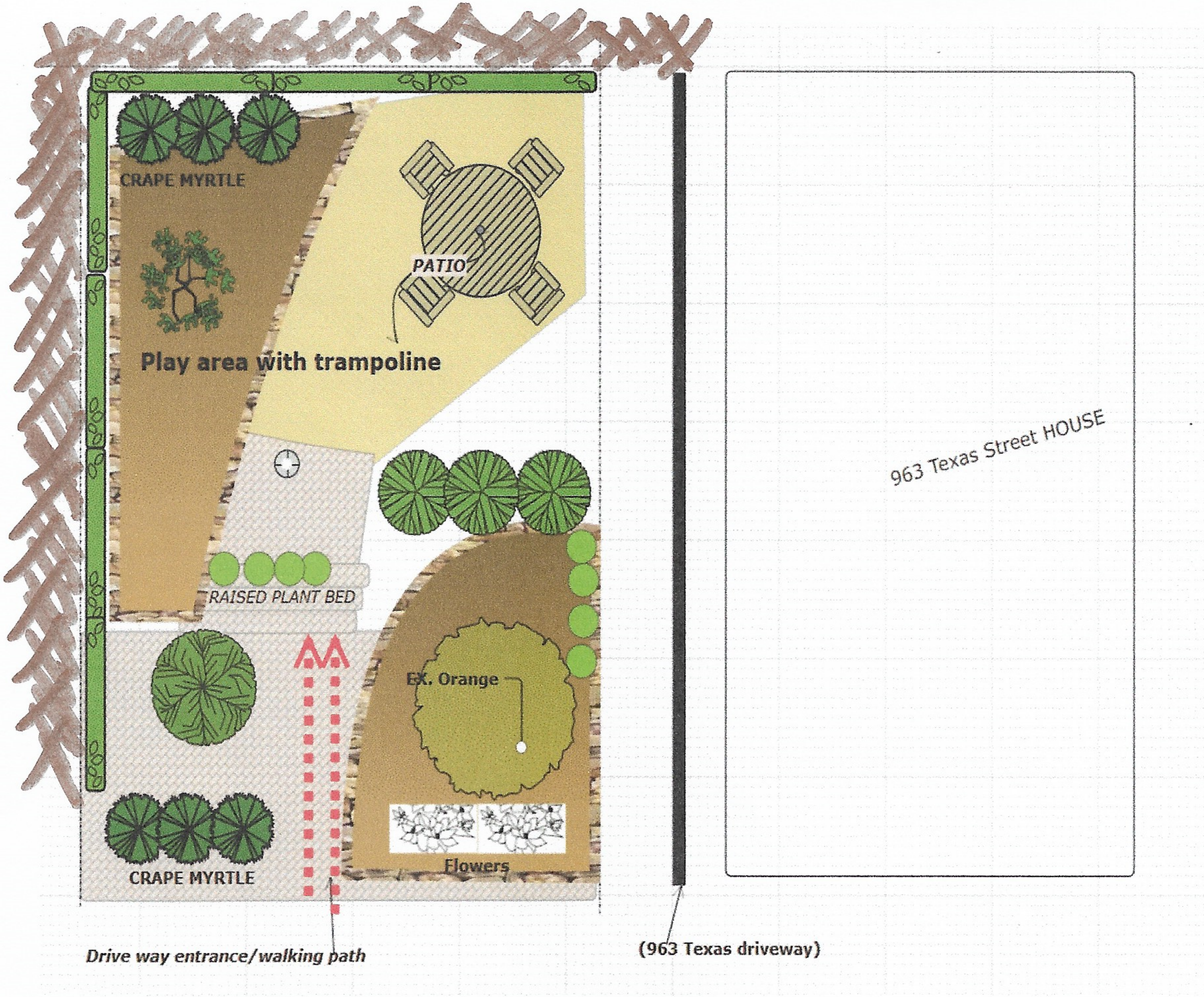
- The lot will be filled the shrubbery, flower plants, raised garden beds and some small fruit and crate myrtle trees.
- The existing 6 feet tall wooden privacy fence running along the south side of the lot will be painted. The existing 6 feet tall wooden privacy fence running along the east side of the lot will be extended to the north point based on the specifications listed within the City's Design Review Guidelines and painted.
- The driveway entrance to the lot will have round pavers (south of the sidewalk) for a walking path to the play, patio table and garden areas.

Page 2 illustrates how I plan to utilize this space.

A handwritten signature in pink ink, appearing to read "C. [unclear] [unclear]", is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

961 Texas Street

963 Texas Street



XXX = FENCE

Handwritten signature in pink ink.