
Regarding: **1384 Williamson Street – Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District (Legistar #19314)**

Date: Aug 4, 2010
Prepared By: Amy Scanlon and Bill Fruhling

General Information:

The owners are proposing to demolish the existing single-family structure at 1384 Williamson Street to provide outdoor display and storage space for the adjacent hardware store. The structure is currently used as additional storage for the hardware store.

The current building is a small vernacular residence that, according to City Assessor's records, was constructed in 1894. It has a two story mass with gabled roof running front to back and a one story mass with gable roof placed perpendicular to the two story mass. On the front, the roof of the one story mass changes to a low pitched shed and continues over a front porch that runs the length of the one story mass at the first floor. It is possible that the building masses were constructed in different building campaigns.

The Ace Hardware store is located to the northeast (right) and another vernacular residence is located to the immediate southwest (left). The majority of the block consists of altered commercial and residential buildings. On the opposite side of Williamson Street there is a similar mix of commercial buildings, and altered commercial and residential buildings.

The Marquette-Schenk-Atwood Neighborhood Plan (adopted in 1994) identifies this block as part of a neighborhood shopping district. The parcel is currently zoned for commercial uses.

Although no prior action has been taken by the Commission, the owners of this property have considered demolition of this property for at least 15 years, and a memo by staff at that time indicated that demolition would likely not be opposed. This memo dated April 26, 1995 (included in your packet), states:

“The small vernacular house is a simple late 19th century building of no particular architectural or historical significance. My guess is that the Landmarks Commission and the neighborhood would not oppose demolition provided that the addition to the hardware store is designed well.”

Landmarks Ordinance:

33.19(5)(c)3 Standards (for demolition) In determining whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for any demolition, the Landmarks Commission shall consider and may give decisive weight to any or all of the following:

- a. Whether the building or structure is of such architectural or historic significance that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the City and the State;
- b. Whether the building or structure, although not itself a landmark building, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the District as a whole and therefore should be preserved for the benefit of the people of the City and the State;
- c. Whether demolition of the subject property would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this chapter as set forth in Sec. 33.19 and to the objectives of the historic preservation plan for the applicable district as duly adopted by the Common Council; (*staff note: this section is included below*)
- d. Whether the building or structure is of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and/or material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty and/or expense;
- e. Whether retention of the building or structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the City and the State by encouraging study of American history, architecture and design or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage;
- f. Whether the building or structure is in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve or restore it, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner which is self-created or which is the result of any failure to maintain the property in good repair cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness;
- g. Whether any new structure proposed to be constructed or change in use proposed to be made is compatible with the buildings and environment of the district in which the subject property is located.

33.19 (1) Purpose and Intent (of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance) It is hereby declared a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this section is to:

- (a) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements and of districts which represent or reflect elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history.
- (b) Safeguard the City's historic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such landmarks and historic districts.
- (c) Stabilize and improve property values.
- (d) Foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past.

- (e) Protect and enhance the City's attractions to residents, tourists and visitors, and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry.
 - (f) Strengthen the economy of the City.
 - (g) Promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the City.
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Staff Comments:

The loss of a building in a historic district is poignant and each decision to approve or not approve a demolition must consider the unique situation of each case when applying the demolition standards found in the Landmarks Ordinance. Such requests are seldom black and white, as is the case with this proposal. The Commission is being asked to approve the demolition of a small house that is over 100 years old to provide additional space for a hardware store that has been a long term anchor in the neighborhood.

Staff evaluated the proposal against the demolition standards cited above and do not believe that this structure is of particular architectural or historic significance, as indicated in the above-referenced 1995 memo. There is nothing unusual or uncommon about its design, texture and/or material. In fact, it is a typical working class house of its time that is common in the neighborhood.

Although some photos of the property were submitted, additional information on whether the structure is deteriorated to the point that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve or restore it was not provided. However, staff does not believe that the owners are citing that as a reason for the request.

Weighing all aspects of this request, staff believes that the Landmarks Commission could find that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition can be met.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The Greater Williamson Street Business Association "GWABA" supports the demolition project of Ace Hardware at 1384 Williamson St. We have reviewed the project and the site plans for the completed project.

Respectfully,

Donna Sheehan

GWABA President