

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Application Date: October 29, 2014

Applicant: Ryan Strickland, S&I Residential, owner

Property: 901 Heights Boulevard, Lot 12, Block 231, Houston Heights Subdivision. The property includes a historic 1,260 square foot, one-story wood frame single-family residence and a detached garage situated on a 7,500 square foot (50' x 150') corner lot.

Significance: Contributing Queen Anne residence, constructed circa 1910, located in the Houston Heights Historic District South.

Proposal: Demolition of a contributing one story residence.

In 2010 the previous owner received a COA for an addition that was never constructed, though interior demolition was begun in 2011 without permits.

See enclosed application materials and detailed project description on p. 6-27 for further details.

Public Comment: We have received four emails in opposition to the demolition. See Attachment A.

Civic Association: No comment received.

Attachments: A. Public Comment
B. Applicant Materials

Recommendation: Denial - does not satisfy criteria (c) 1, 2 & 3 and (d) 1, 2 & 3

HAHC Action: -

APPROVAL CRITERIA

**DEMOLITION OF A LANDMARK, PROTECTED LANDMARK,
CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE, OR WITHIN AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**

Sec. 33-247(a): The issuance of a certificate of appropriateness for the demolition of a landmark, a protected landmark, or a contributing structure, or for the demolition of a building, structure or object on or in an archaeological site shall be subject to the establishment of an **(c) unreasonable economic hardship** or the establishment of an **(d) unusual and compelling circumstance**.

(c) Determination of the existence of an **unreasonable economic hardship** shall be based upon the following criteria:

S D NA

S - satisfies D - does not satisfy NA - not applicable

(1) That the property is incapable of earning a reasonable return, without regard to whether the return is the most profitable return, including without limitation, whether the costs of maintenance or improvement of the property exceed its fair market value;

The applicant purchased the property earlier this year for \$385,900 in its current condition. No materials have been presented to suggest that the property's condition has deteriorated since that time.

The applicant provided two estimated costs for repairs and rehabilitation of the site. These are summarized on page 22-24 of this report and detailed within the attached application materials. These include a possible 500 sf addition, but no other possible additions are considered. A larger addition could potentially increase the final square footage to equal (or exceed) the proposed 3700 square foot new construction. No materials are provided to show how a larger addition would affect construction cost or assessed value. Additionally, the comparison indicates that the value of the restored residence with addition would actually be \$22,000 lower than the value of the existing square footage restored. As this is based on three recent comparable sales, the accuracy of this estimate is dependent on the sales chosen. Two of the three comparable properties sold in less than two weeks, with one sold the same day it was listed. It is possible that a longer period on the market would have resulted in higher sales prices. In addition, the comparable properties are located on lots that, at 4,884 sf, 3,285 sf, and 6,250 sf, are significantly smaller than the subject property's 7,500 sf.

The cost estimates also indicate that total replacement of all exterior materials is required, but provide little or no evidence to support this claim. Existing vinyl siding appears to be sound and original wood siding is present underneath it; a complete evaluation of the original siding would require removing the vinyl which has not been attempted. No evidence was provided regarding the condition of existing windows; from the exterior they appear to be sound and/or covered with screens. No materials have been provided to describe the condition of the front porch, but both estimates include complete replacement.

The applicant has suggested that the presence of dry wood termites necessitates the complete removal of all wood on the property; the included engineering report and termite inspection include no evidence for this assertion and the total cost quoted in the termite inspection is less than \$2,000.

The engineering report criticizes the use of "unreinforced concrete masonry units (cmu) stacked over precast bearing pads" in the foundation, but this type of foundation construction is typical within the Houston Heights Historic District South. No evidence has been provided that the foundation is unsound or damaged and must be replaced.

The engineering report also notes the lack of lateral support and of headers and sills for the structure's windows. As a balloon frame structure, this house relied on interior shiplap for lateral structural support. Shiplap was removed without a permit by the previous owner; this condition was known by the applicant at the time of purchase.

Previous unpermitted work also included ceiling joists "cut and left unsupported." This condition was

known by the applicant at the time of purchase, and no materials are provided indicating the cost of replacing members, scabbing in, or otherwise reinforcing existing structural members.

Overall, the engineering report recommends structural reinforcement and replacement of rotted or damaged pieces, not wholesale replacement of all materials as quoted in the restoration estimates.

As a designated historic property, the buildings qualify for City historic tax exemptions for work on the buildings, discounted permit fees, exemptions from energy code compliance, and reduced parking requirements. No investigation of how these incentives may be beneficial to costs associated with the property has been explored.

Based upon the information provided, an inability of the property to earn a reasonable return has not been established.

- (2) That the property cannot be adapted for any other use, whether by the current owner, by a purchaser or by a lessee, that would result in a reasonable return;
No materials were provided to suggest a use other than as a single family residence. Similar structures within the district have been repurposed for commercial use, but this was not addressed for this property by this applicant.
Based upon the information provided, an inability of the property to be adapted for any other use has not been established.
- (3) That efforts to find a purchaser or lessee interested in acquiring the property and preserving it have failed; and
The applicant purchased the property in May of this year in its current condition. No attempts have been made to sell it since that time.
- (4) If the applicant is a nonprofit organization, determination of an unreasonable economic hardship shall instead be based upon whether the denial of a certificate of appropriateness financially prevents or seriously interferes with carrying out the mission, purpose, or function of the nonprofit corporation

OR

(d) Determination of the existence of an **unusual and compelling circumstance** shall be based upon the following criteria:

- (1) That current information does not support the historic or archaeological significance of this building, structure or object or its importance to the integrity of an historic district, if applicable;
No materials have been provided to suggest that the classification of this structure as contributing was inappropriate.
- (2) Whether there are definite plans for reuse of the property if the proposed demolition is carried out and what effect such plans have on the architectural, cultural, historical or archaeological character of the surrounding area; and
The applicant intends to construct a new two-story 3,700 sf single-family residence facing Heights Boulevard with detached garage on the property. Though this use is appropriate for the district, elimination of a historic property irreversibly damages the character of Heights Boulevard, particularly in this context. The properties to the immediate north and south are non-contributing apartment complexes; demolishing 901 Heights would render the west side of this intersection devoid of historic properties. Both corner lots on the east side of the intersection contain contributing historic structures, but the width of Heights Boulevard combined with the Heights Boulevard esplanade limits their visibility from the west side of the street.
- (3) Whether reasonable measures can be taken to save the building, structure or object from further deterioration, collapse, arson, vandalism or neglect.
Though the structure is not currently inhabited, no material has been provided to show that it has deteriorated since its purchase or that that it is not secure.

The information provided indicates that measures can be taken to reverse any existing deterioration and neglect. No condition of collapse, arson or vandalism is present.

PROPERTY TIMELINE

Jun 29, 2010: Property purchased by previous owner.

August 2010: Certificate of Appropriateness approved for new addition.

September 2011: new Certificate of Appropriateness approved for new addition.

House was gutted by previous owner in preparation for the remodel, but work was not completed.

May 13, 2014: Property purchased by current owner in gutted condition.

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PROPERTY LOCATION
HOUSTON HEIGHTS SOUTH HISTORIC DISTRICT

- Building Classification**
- Contributing
 - Non-Contributing
 - Park



INVENTORY PHOTO

MAY 2010



CURRENT PHOTOS

11/10/2014



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY APPLICANT



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY APPLICANT



Figure 1: Unsupported Roof Hips

Figure 2: Missing Floor

Figure 3: Leaning Footings

NEIGHBORING PROPERTIES / CONTEXT PHOTOS



Subject property, 907 Heights (non-contributing apartment building), 909 & 911 Heights (non-contributing residences), 915 Heights (contributing residence constructed circa 1915)



View west down West 9th Street; subject property to right, 835 Heights (non-contributing apartment complex) to the left

NEIGHBORING PROPERTIES / CONTEXT PHOTOS

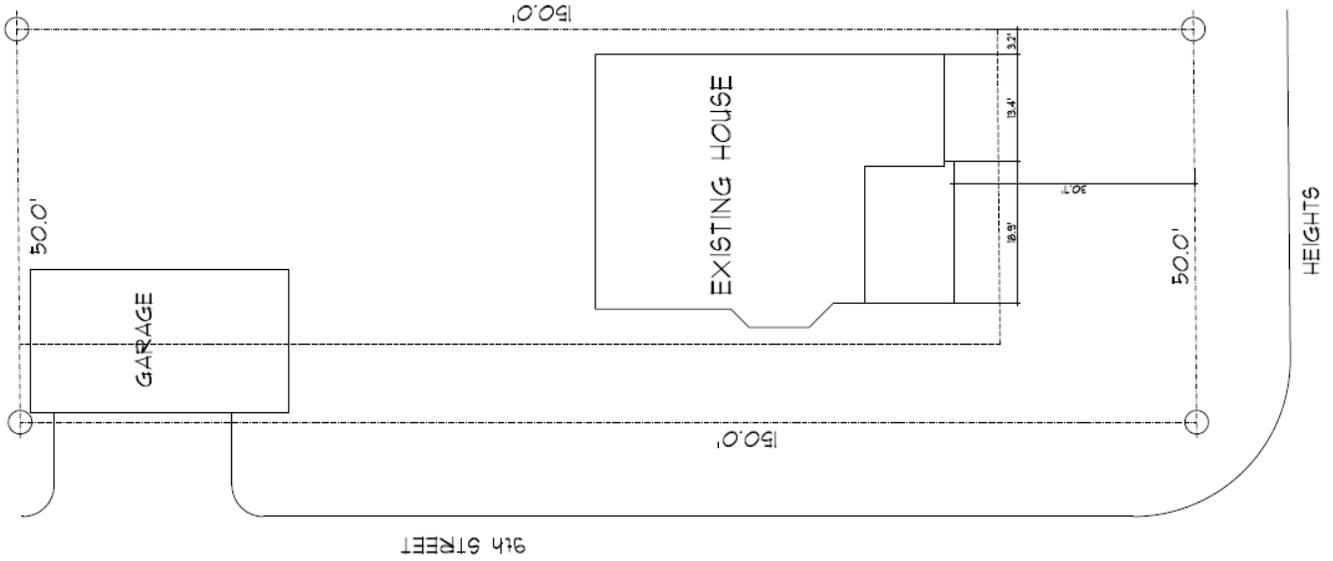


West 9th Street looking east; Noncontributing garage apartment on subject property, contributing residence on subject property



West 9th Street looking east from subject property; 902 Heights (contributing apartments constructed circa 1925) on left (north) corner lot, 848 Heights (contributing residence constructed circa 1920) on right (south) corner lot

PROPERTY SURVEY OR SITE PLAN



COA APPROVED 8/25/2010

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:

The applicant requests approval of a certificate of appropriateness for the following work:

- Remove existing synthetic sidings to expose original horizontal lapped wood siding beneath which will be repaired or replaced in kind; Construct a new 871 square foot addition to the existing 1,236 square foot residence; The addition will begin at a point located 25'-0" behind the front wall of the existing residence and will extend towards the rear of the building an additional 10'-0"; The proposed addition will have the same overall height to roof ridge as existing and will create new living space in the attic area through the use of side and rear facing dormers; Existing asbestos roof shingles will be removed and replaced with a new composition shingle roof;
- East Elevation (front facing Heights Boulevard): No alterations are proposed for the front elevation;
- South Elevation (facing 9th Street): Addition will feature a side facing roof dormer which will be lower than the existing roof ridge; Dormer will feature a pair of double hung sash windows and decorative shingles in the gable peak to match existing roof gables; At the ground floor remove two double hung wood sash windows located towards the rear of the existing building and reframe this area; Install a new window opening to the left (rear) of the two windows to be removed which will match others; Far left (rear) of first floor will feature an inset porch with perimeter hand rail which will be more accurately described on the west(rear) elevation description;
- West Elevation (Facing rear property line): The rear elevation will feature a partial width inset porch beneath the main roof; Porch will feature a perimeter handrail with wood stick balusters and porch roof will be supported by a series of square or round columns with simple capitals; First floor will feature a series of five double hung wood sash windows to match other elevations; Roof level will feature a single rear facing dormer with paired double hung windows to match other elevations;
- North Elevation (facing side property line): Addition will feature a side facing roof dormer which will be lower than the existing roof ridge; Dormer will feature a pair of double hung sash windows and decorative shingles in the gable peak to match existing roof gables; At the ground floor remove three double hung wood sash windows located towards the front of the existing building and reframe this area; Install three new windows in same area with slightly different placement which will match others; Install three windows to the right (rear) of the elevation which will match other elevations.



COA APPROVED 8/25/2010

PROPOSED EAST (FRONT) ELEVATION



PROPOSED WEST (REAR) ELEVATION



COA APPROVED 8/25/2010

PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION



PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION



COA APPROVED 9/22/2011

NO CHANGES TO ELEVATIONS APPROVED 8/25/2010

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:

The applicant was approved for a Certificate of Appropriateness for an addition at the August 25, 2010 Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission. The work never commenced and the applicant now requests approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following work:

- Remove existing synthetic sidings from all elevation; Applicant proposes to salvage as much original wood siding as possible; If the original siding cannot be salvaged, applicant proposes to use horizontal lap fiber cement siding with a 4 ½" reveal; Construct a new 871 square foot addition to the existing 1,236 square foot residence; The addition will begin 25'-0" behind the front exterior wall of the existing residence and will extend towards the rear of the building an additional 10'-0"; The proposed addition will have the same overall height to roof ridge as existing and will create new living space in the attic area through the use of side and rear facing dormers; Existing asbestos roof shingles will be removed and replaced with a new composition shingle roof;
- East Elevation (front facing Heights Boulevard): Install a fixed window within forward facing gable
- South Elevation (facing 9th Street): Addition will feature a side through-the-roof dormer; Dormer will feature a pair of double hung sash windows and decorative shingles in the gable peak to match existing roof gables; At the ground floor remove three double hung wood sash windows located towards the rear of the existing building and install two new double hung wood windows with 1/1 lites to match
- North Elevation (facing side property line): Addition will feature a through-the-roof dormer; Dormer will feature a pair of double hung sash windows and decorative shingles in the gable peak to match existing roof gables; At the ground floor remove three double hung wood windows located towards the front of the existing building and reframe this area; Install a series of double hung wood windows with 1/1 lites to match
- West Elevation (facing rear property line): The rear elevation will feature a partial width inset porch beneath the main roof; Porch will feature a perimeter handrail with wood stick balusters and porch roof will be supported by a series of square or round columns with simple capitals; First floor will feature a series of five double hung wood sash windows to match other elevations; Roof level will feature a single rear facing dormer with paired double hung wood sash windows to match other elevations



INTERIOR CONDITION PHOTOS AS OF AUGUST 2010







COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTATION (PREVIOUS OWNER)

ILMS RECORD

PROJECT VOIDED

PLANNING HOLD NEVER RELEASED

Project	Gro...	Status	Description-Use	App-Date	Film-No
11077593	B	VOIDED	RESIDENTIAL REPAIRS PER SPEC LIST	08/18/2011	110775...
05017842	B	INACTIVE	COMM ELECT PERMIT	02/18/2005	

103 Project Comments (Click below to navigate to the related maintenance program)

Comment-...	Permit	IS-Type	Comment
08/18/2011	13	PRN	Reviewed under the 2006 IRC
08/18/2011	13	PRN	No additional permits required
08/18/2011	GE		Project number void at applicant, Donna J. Arledge, request.

Hold-Date	Department	Hold-Type	Action-Status	Permit-Type	Hold-Reason
08/18/2011	PLANNING	HARD HOLD		GE	Houston Heights H
08/18/2011	STRUCTURAL P	HARD HOLD	APPROVED	GE	HOLD FOR PLAN CHE

Permit-Type	Description	Status	Receipt	Review-Fee	Permit-Fee
13	Building Pmt	Void	N/A	.00	95.00
GE	General Hold	Void	N/A	.00	.00

PERMITS VOIDED

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APPLICANT DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEMO

901 Heights Blvd.

Property Description

The current property as it exists today is a vacant structure that has been gutted by the previous owner. It is obvious that the prior owners of this property intended to remodel the property in some capacity and has stripped out all interior walls and important historical details from inside the structure. The project was then abandoned for what seems quite some time and the home was left to the elements. The home has also been at some point cover by vinyl siding and no original historical details seem to be remaining on the exterior of the home. Upon engineering inspection (report submitted along with this request) it was deemed that the damage done by the elements as well as the previous owner and the presence of dry wood termites (inspected by termite company, report also included) have left this home in a state of extreme disrepair.

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APPLICATION MATERIALS REVIEW & SUMMARY BY STAFF

SEC. 33-247(b)

(1) A certified appraisal of the value of the property conducted by a certified real estate appraiser:

"AS IS" VALUE ESTIMATE - The subject's site is improved with older residential improvements that are at the end of their economic life and are to be razed and/or modified for construction of the proposed improvements. The razing of older improvements for new home construction is common in the subject's neighborhood. As such, the "as is" value is the site value, \$380,000.
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The property was appraised for site value only at \$380,000 on 4/22/2014. The applicant paid \$385,900 for the property in April.

See application material pages 12-67.

(2) The assessed value of the land and improvements thereon according to the two most recent assessments unless the property is exempt from local property taxes:

\$365,946	2014	\$282,000 land + \$83,946 improvements
\$336,353	2013	\$246,750 land + \$89,603 improvements
\$293,300	2012	\$211,500 land + \$81,800 improvements
\$266,750	2011	\$211,500 land + \$55,250 improvements

Valuations					
Value as of January 1, 2013			Value as of January 1, 2014		
	Market	Appraised		Market	Appraised
Land	246,750		Land	282,000	
Improvement	89,603		Improvement	83,946	
Total	336,353	322,630	Total	365,946	365,946

Assessment Year	2013	2012	2011
Assessed Value - Total	\$322,630	\$293,300	\$266,750
YOY Assessed Change (\$)	\$29,330	\$26,550	
YOY Assessed Change (%)	10%	9.95%	
Market Value - Total	\$336,353	\$293,300	\$266,750
Market Value - Land	\$246,750	\$211,500	\$211,500
Market Value - Improved	\$89,603	\$81,800	\$55,250

See application material pages 68-71.

(3) All appraisals obtained by the owner in connection with the acquisition, purchase, donation, or financing of the property, or during the ownership of the property:

No additional appraisals were provided other than appraisal described above in item 1.

See application material pages 12-67.

(4) All listings of the property for sale or rent that are less than a year old at the time of the application:

The property was listed at \$420,000 on 9/19/2013, lowered to \$385,000 and sold to current owner on 5/15/2014 for

\$385,900.

See application material pages 73-76.

(5) Evidence of any consideration by the owner of uses and adaptive reuses of the property:

The applicant provided an engineering report and termite inspection with a fumigation estimate of \$1,991.80 commissioned to evaluate the condition of the property. No evidence of consideration of any use other than single family residential was provided.

See application material pages 77-97.

(6) Itemized and detailed rehabilitation cost estimates for the identified uses or reuses, including the basis of the cost estimates:

The applicant provided two cost estimates for restoring the residence.

G. R. Construction:

Description	Amount
1. rebuilding the existing structure to current code and correcting issues on the home a. all of the exterior needs to be removed it is not reusable b. all of the roof needs to be removed with plywood need to take all out c. all roof rafters are damaged from damages done prior to home and weather d. after all demolition is done what ever structural that is left will be treated for termites infestation e. we will need to demo inside home as needed to do approved repairs for home f. all windows from home are damaged and not working properly need to be taken out g. all lumber that is damaged from termite or weather will be removed h. all plumbing need to corrected and need to be brought up to code i. all electrical is not up to code and its hazard to be left undone j. the exterior porch and decking has to be taken out is all rotted and damaged k. subfloors are damaged and need to be repair as floor supports are damaged and need to be fixed up to code l. need to redo all stairway with stairsteps ifts a safety hazard and not secured m. all walls need to be taken down and redone	498,500.00

Dwayne Picou:

1. Rebuilding the Existing structure to current Code, Correcting noted issues on Engineering Report as well as returning the home to its Historical Origin will cost approx. **\$472,389.00.**
 - a. 100% of current exterior must be removed and disposed of
 - b. 100% of current roof must be removed and disposed of
 - c. All roofing rafters must be removed and disposed of
 - d. Home must be treated for live termite infestation
 - e. Termite infested beams and boards must be removed and disposed of
 - f. All windows in home are nonfunctional and must be replaced
 - g. All Electrical must be replaced (removed by previous owner)
 - h. All plumbing must be replaced (removed by previous owner)
 - i. Foundation, piers and beams must be replaced
 - j. All Interior doors and walls must be replaced (removed and destroyed by previous owner)
 - k. Floor Decking is missing and open to the ground below in several rooms
 - l. Stairs must be removed and replaced as per code
 - m. Exterior porch decking must be removed and replaced due to wood rot.

Because of the current condition and partial demolition work done by the previous home owner there is nothing significant or Historical to work off of. Working around the current structure will not allow for any Historical Preservation and will result in a much higher cost per square foot.

In addition, Dwayne Picou provided an itemized restoration estimate of \$596,690, \$124,301 higher than the non-itemized estimate. This includes the cost of constructing a 496 square foot addition. Many of the individually listed items appear inflated or unnecessary, including:

146	Wood Siding				\$ 13,432.00
147	Brick Vneer				\$ 6,780.00

No evidence has been provided that 100% of the current exterior must be removed. The original wood siding appears to be intact underneath the vinyl siding. It is unclear what "brick veneer" refers to, but no evidence has been provided of damage or deterioration to the brickwork associated with the porch.

167	Windows				\$ 18,675.00
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The house still has its original windows. No evidence has been provided that any of them are damaged beyond repair and must be replaced.

89	Footings/Pads				\$ 7,980.00
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92	Slabs - Foundation, Basement, Garage				\$ 11,040.00
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No documentation has been provided that the foundation, pier and beams must be entirely replaced due to damage. It is unclear whether "Slabs" refers only to the non-contributing garage, or if work on the primary residence is included as well.

102	Patios				\$ 3,980.00
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It is unclear what this item refers to, but no evidence has been provided of damage to the front porch.

104	Masonry Chimneys				\$ 3,800.00
105	Fireplaces/Hearths				\$ 1,200.00

It is unclear what this item refers to; the existing residence does not appear to have a chimney.

103	Exterior Stairs				\$ 3,250.00
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No evidence has been provided of damage to the front porch steps.

112	ROUGH FRAMING				
113	Sill & Seal				\$ 3,474.00
114	Steel/Wood Carrying Beam, Lolly columns				\$ 2,780.00
115	Floor Framing				\$ 14,980.00
116	Exterior & Interior Walls, Rough Stairs				\$ 17,840.00
117	Sheathing, Subflooring				\$ 2,120.00
118	Roof Framing/Trusses				\$ 9,780.00
119	Subfascia				\$ 2,300.00
120	Steel Framing Connectors				\$ 1,200.00
121	Nails, Screws, Fasteners				\$ 890.00
122	Prep for Plaster, Drywall				\$ 1,680.00
123	Rough Framing - Labor				\$ 9,875.00
124	Other				\$ -
127	Subtotal		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 66,919.00

The provided engineering report indicates that repairs and replacement of individual pieces are required, not the wholesale replacement of all floor, roof, and exterior framing.

162	Exterior doors, prehung				\$ 3,290.00
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No evidence has been provided that the existing exterior doors need to be replaced, and the quoted price is likely excessive for two exterior doors. As a point of reference, a solid mahogany exterior door is currently available for \$678.30:

Steves & Sons | Model # M2203-CT-PJ4LH | Internet # 205341788

Shaker 3 Lite Stained Mahogany Wood Entry Door

★★★★★ (5) | Write a Review | Questions & Answers (8)



Was \$798.00

\$678.30 / each

Save \$119.70 (15%) through 11/19/2014

178	Water Heater				\$ 6,800.00
179	Fixtures: Toilets, Tubs, Sinks, Showers				\$ 7,440.00

Though these items are necessary for a habitable residence, these costs appear to be inflated.

257	Other Flooring Travertine				\$ 4,500.00
258	Acoustical, Metal, Decorative Ceilings				\$ 1,290.00

These items indicate finish choices rather than expenditures necessary to the usability of the residence.

280	Open Porch				\$ 11,290.00
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No evidence has been provided regarding the current condition of the front porch.

291	Range, Cooktop				\$ 3,270.00
292	Microwave				\$ 2,150.00
293	Range Hood				\$ 2,590.00
294	Dishwasher				\$ 1,180.00

These items represent finish choices made by the applicant, not necessary minimum costs.

See application material pages 98-114.

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(7) A comparison of the cost of rehabilitation of the existing building with the demolition of the existing building

and the construction of a new building:

Cost Comparison (Remodel vs. New Build)

	Remodel As Is: (1200 sqft)	Reodel with Addition (1700 sqft)	New Build (3719sqft)
Land	388,000	388,000	388,000
Construction Cost Average of 2 Bids	485,445	621,945	610,000
Total Cost	873,445	1,009,945	998,000
Value of Property Average of Range	649,000	627,000	1,124,000
Difference	(-224,445)	(-382,945)	126,000

Remodeling the property with a 500 square foot addition is described as resulting in a lower value than remodeling the existing square footage alone. In addition, many of the costs described in the itemized remodel estimate in item 7 are not necessary to the restoration of the residence. Both estimates also include wholesale replacement of all exterior materials, including siding, windows and porch materials. Wood siding is currently present under vinyl siding and a thorough inspection is not possible without wholesale removal of the vinyl layer. In addition, vinyl siding, though not original, does not need to be replaced to ensure the usability of the structure. Existing windows and porch materials have also not been shown to be damaged beyond ability to repair.

See application material pages 115-117.

(8) Complete architectural plans and drawings of the intended future use of the property, including new construction, if applicable:

The applicant proposes to construct a 3,719 two-story house and detached garage.

See application material pages 118-125.

(9) Plans to salvage, recycle, or reuse building materials if a certificate of appropriateness is granted:

901 Heights Blvd.

Material Reuse Plan

It has been strongly advised that we not reuse any existing components of the existing home, due to the presence of dry wood termites.

See application material pages 126-127.

(10) An applicant who is a nonprofit organization shall provide the following additional information:

Not applicable

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ATTACHMENT A
PUBLIC COMMENT

From: Clay Jordan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 12, 2014 2:02 PM
To: PD - Historic Preservation
Subject: Application #141101 Hearing 11/20/2014 (901 Heights Blvd Demolition)

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concern over the proposed demolition of the residence located at 901 Heights Boulevard. As a nearby neighbor, I have had the opportunity to view this residence many times during my daily walks. I was very aware when it came on the market this spring and paid particularly close attention to it as I was in the process of renovating my own bungalow. Granted, I could only do a visual inspection of the outside elements and the parts of the interior I could see through the window, but this bungalow is in far better shape than what I started with and having completed my remodel, I can't see any justification for demolishing it.

The builder only purchased the property a few months ago, which had already been approved and prepared for renovation. For whatever reason that didn't happen, the builder already stands to benefit from not having to do that work himself. Ironically, it is also because of this work that the house became effectively unavailable for all but builders as the traditional means of financing would not work.

This should not be used as a reason to allow its destruction. The builder was responsible for knowing the condition, historical restrictions, and the likelihood he would be unable to demolish before he purchased. These are reasons enough not to be lenient but if any homes in the historic district need to be saved, I would think it would be those that line Heights Boulevard so close to its epicenter as this one is.

I know from experience it would be cheaper to rebuild rather than renovate and I can't help but think this economic incentive is what the builder is after. He still stands to make a good deal of money doing a proper renovation, just not quite as much complying with the intent an purpose of the historic restrictions. He knew this going in and he should be told no. I doubt he's expecting anything less.

Sincerely,

Clay Jordan
320 W 10th Street

From: Andrew Sharensen [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 12, 2014 1:12 PM
To: PD - Historic Preservation
Cc: Hartgrove, Suzy - PD
Subject: Letter in opposition to proposed demolition of 901 Heights Blvd.

I am a resident of the Western Heights Historic District. I live at 1342 Tulane St. On both sides of my house are homes that are in similar condition to the house at 901 Heights Blvd. I purchased my home in 2010 in reliance on the fact that it was in a historic district and the homes on both sides of my house would not be demolished, absent a showing of economic hardship as set forth in the historic ordinance. Since 2010, I have seen homes in similar and worse states of disrepair as the home on 901 Heights Blvd be bought by investors who were able to make a very healthy profit by renovating and adding on to these homes. The most recent example is 1117 Tulane St., which was recently sold for over \$900,000 after being completely gutted and put back together. I have reviewed the application for demolition for 901 Heights Blvd. and am very concerned by the application and the precedent that may be set if HAHC grants the application.

First, as noted in the application, the property had been completely gutted by the prior owner. The condition of the property was evident to the current owner upon purchasing the property. The property originally listed for \$420,000 and sold for \$388,000. Clearly, the current owner was able to negotiate a reduction in the price of the property based on its current condition. Homes in similar condition on 1107 Tulane and 1118 Tulane have recently sold for \$445,000 and \$430,000, respectively. These properties are on a 6600 sq ft lot. The property at 901 Heights Blvd is on a 7500 sq ft. lot. An empty 7500 sq ft lot in a historic district in the Heights can go for \$500-600k. This raises the issue of whether the applicant negotiated for a price reduction on the grounds that the building was in disrepair and would be expensive to renovate when the intention was really to seek permission to demolish. Also, compared to other properties, this applicant may have paid \$50-70,000 less than market value for this property. This builder appears to have a significant head start in terms of property acquisition cost over others in the Heights who are not seeking demolition.

Second, the applicant seeks to make a 500 sq ft addition. While I am not a fan of large additions, it is very common for investors in the Heights to do additions that are 1500-2000 sq ft. By undershooting the addition, the applicant makes it appear that saving the existing structure is not economical when a larger addition may very well be profitable.

Third, the engineering report appears to assume that the existing building must be brought up to current structural code. The building should be grandfathered from compliance with current code requirements. For example, the engineer takes issue with the lack of lateral restraints and inadequate connection to the foundation and inadequate stiffness in the foundation. The engineer also does not like the unreinforced cmus being used in the foundation. However, the foundation in the building is standard for historic homes in the Heights and more than adequate. There are numerous examples where the engineer seeks to enforce the 2006 code on a building that was build 96 years before the code went into existence. This unnecessarily inflates the cost of rehabilitation by requiring the builder to basically build a new house out of an old house.

Fourth, the property changed hands in the spring of this year (May 13, 2014 according to HCAD). There is a drywood termite report that appears to be dated July 15, 2014, recommending treatment. The builder should

not have waited over two months to treat the building for termites, especially waiting until the middle of the summer swarming season. If the building has not been treated, it raises the issue of demolition by neglect.

Fifth, the two contractor estimates for renovation of the property are highly suspect. Neither contractor represents to have any experience in renovating historic homes. Also, the applicant is a builder. According to HCAD, the property is held by S&I Residential Company. Builders typically do not hire other builders. That is basically like a franchised car dealership buying its new inventory from another franchised car dealership. In other words, the estimates represent a retail cost of construction and not the actual cost that this builder will incur. The estimates are off by at least \$100,000+ in typical overhead and profit. The estimates also adopt the flaws of the engineering report. The second estimate calls for a completely new foundation with grading and drainage installed. The second contractor actually calls for a slab foundation, which would not be approved by the commission. The foundation repair estimate looks to be inflated by \$30-40,000. There are also other major repairs that are not sufficiently documented or justified. The claim that all the windows must be replaced is not supported by any evidence of rot or damage to the existing windows. The claim that the existing siding must be completely replaced is also unsupported. There are no pictures of any damage and no quantification of the extent of the damage. Finally, the estimates for the addition are not realistic. One builder claims that it will cost @\$150,000 for the 500 square foot addition. \$200 per square foot is generally the going retail rate for a high quality addition in the Heights. \$300 per square foot is unheard of. \$150 per square foot is generally a builder's cost for an addition. The repair estimates appear to be inflated by at least \$200,000 based on the foregoing. To put the entire issue into perspective, the cost of building an entirely new 3700 sq ft home is represented to be 610,000, which is \$10,000 **less than the cost to remodel with a meager 500 sq ft addition!** If these numbers were accurate, there would not be a single builder renovating and adding on to historic homes in the Heights.

This house is an excellent example of a Queen Anne bungalow with a wonderful triple window on the front porch and unique bay window on the side of the home. It is on a large lot and presents a significant opportunity to expand the existing home in a very profitable manner. It appears that the applicant has purposefully proposed renovations that are too extensive and an addition that is underwhelming in order to game the numbers to make the property seem like it cannot be economically renovated. I urge the planning commission to carefully scrutinize the assumption in this application. The condition of this home is very typical of many historic homes in the Heights that are currently being saved from demolition by being profitably restored and expanded.

Thank you for your time,

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From: Kelsey Trom [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, November 17, 2014 3:29 PM
To: Butler, Geoff - PD
Subject: Comments regarding 901 Heights Blvd Demolition Request:

Geoff,

Can you pass this along to the proper person in the Planning Dept? Thanks!

I am writing to the HAHC opposing the 901 Heights Blvd demolition proposal in front of the commission on 11/20. Although the historical character of the home may have been impacted by prior work done to the property, it still does have a distinctive structure and design elements that shouldn't be demolished. The home is not irreparable, although, yes, it would cost to have it repaired.

The current owner refers to the "prior owners" constantly in the evaluation, likely took the poor condition of the property into effect when acquiring it, and still decided to acquire the property in its current condition.

Additionally, I would caution the HAHC from using the "new construction potential" the owner employs in this evaluation. Under this type of evaluation, even well kept and fully remodeled small historic homes would likely qualify for demolition since the square footage could be so drastically increased by placing new construction on the same lots.

Any questions or further information, please let me know.

Thanks,

Kelsey Trom

November 2014 HAHC Meeting

Comments Regarding Certificate of Appropriateness Applications Submitted for the Houston Heights South Historic District

Agenda Item #31 - 802 Arlington (Addition) – I **support** this CofA request. The proposed addition will not significantly increase the frontal plane of the existing structure, the addition is proposed in the rear of the structure, generally in a location of an existing addition, and the resulting mass of the structure is not significantly increased.

Agenda Item #32 - 721 Cortlandt – I **support** this request for a CofA for this non-contributing structure. I recommend consideration be given to slightly smaller windows on the street elevation to provide a more-appropriate wall-space-to-window-space scale for the smaller structure façade but there is an appreciation for an attempt to bring a non-contributing structure in closer context with historical elements of contributing structures in the HSHD.

Agenda Item #33 - 540 Columbia – I **object** to the granting of a CofA for this proposed addition. While I am supportive of the work scope that attempts to bring back some of the original exterior materials, the proposed significant encroachment of the proposed second floor addition into the existing historical structure is not consistent with the requirement that the existing structure be maintained. A significant increase in the mass of the structure to the point that the addition visually overpowers the existing structure is proposed and is not in agreement with the historical context of the district. The proposed second floor addition would be more appropriate if it were moved back away from the existing structure and not covering a portion of the existing structure. Relocation of the existing structure is not necessary to obtain the desired additional square footage and is contrary to the typical differences found between the two side setbacks on typical sites within the District (usually greater on one side to accommodate a driveway and less on the other side without the driveway).

Agenda Item #34 – 901 Heights Blvd. (demolition) – I **object** to the granting of a demolition permit for this property. The existing structure was in its current condition when the current owner purchased the property so the reduced value of the structure should have been included in the final price and rehabilitation of the existing structure should have been included in the final cost at the time of purchase. The existing structure is not damaged to a point that it should be demolished. There is a substantial amount of land area to add a new structure behind the existing structure. The proposed new structure will negatively impact the historic context and scale of the existing HSHD and the loss of this bungalow along Heights Boulevard would be a significant reduction in the scale of the local area.

Agenda Item #35 - 605 Cortlandt/3502 White Oak – I **object** to the demolition of these structures based on the lack of evidence that the structures on site are not original and constructed within the timeframe of the historical district development. Also, no evidence of attempting to re-use the structures has been presented. The residential structure provides a current return on investment and consideration should be presented to upgrade the existing structures. They are part of the historical context of the

South District and should be retained, repaired, and restored. The loss of one of the few existing historical filling stations remaining in the HSHD would be very detrimental to the existing context of the HSHD. The brick veneer structure seems to be in fair shape and the roof can be repaired. Reuse of the structure with a sympathetic addition could obtain support. There is no evidence that a reuse for the structure was contemplated and, as such, this application should be denied.

J. Kent Marsh, AICP CUD
1538 Arlington St.

DRAFT