



Agenda Item #3

Application 2024-15-CA

DETAILS

Location:

12 N. Lafayette Street

Summary of Request:

Demolition of structure

Applicant (as applicable):

Dortch Figures and Sons, on behalf of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School

Property Owner:

McGill-Toolen Catholic High School

Historic District:

Old Dauphin Way

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- Based on information deemed from the staff site visits, the structure does not appear to be in a state of extreme deterioration or danger of collapse.
- The demolition of 12 N. Lafayette Street would have negative impact on the architectural and historic integrity the Old Dauphin Way National Historic District.

Report Contents:

Property and Application History2
 Scope of Work2
 Applicable Standards2
 Staff Analysis3
 Attachments4

PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Old Dauphin Way Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1984 under Criterion C for significant architecture and community planning. The district includes most nineteenth-century architectural styles and shows adaptations of middle-class domestic designs of the nineteenth century to the regional, Gulf Coast climate. It includes “fine examples of commercial, institutional, and religious structures as well as 20th-century apartments.”

Per the National Register nomination, the two and one-half story frame Queen Anne dwelling at 12 N. Lafayette Street was constructed c. 1898. The house does not appear on the 1878 Hopkins map of the ward, but it does appear on the 1925 Sanborn map (the earliest available for this area). At that time, the house was basically rectangular, with a one-story wrap porch at the southwest corner and a one-story addition with small porch at the southeast corner. The building’s footprint in historic aerials after that year are obscured by tree cover. However, based on field observation, it appears the rear one-story addition was expanded east, and the porch infilled at some point in the mid-twentieth century.

The property at 12 N. Lafayette Street has appeared previously five (5) times before either the Old Dauphin Way Review Board (ODWRB) or the Architectural Review Board (ARB). A request in 1986 to repair the beaded porch ceiling, porch decking, and wood siding was approved by the ODWRB. In 1990, the ODWRB approved the replacement of sills and joists, tongue-and-groove decking, the removal of a rear stairway and door opening, and replacement of the porch cap and bottom rail. An application to install paving, fencing, and landscaping to the immediate east and south of 12 N. Lafayette (at 8 N. Lafayette, site of a non-contributing multi-family property, since demolished) was approved by the ARB in 2014. In 2021, the ARB approved an application to move the subject dwelling to a lot in the Oakleigh Garden Historic District at 350 Marine Street. This project never came to fruition. In 2022, an application to demolish the subject structure was denied by the ARB.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Demolish two-story residence on the property.
2. Incorporate property into McGill-Toolen Catholic High School’s softball complex.

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

Chapter 12: Demolition and Relocation of Historic Structures

1. Consider the current significance of a structure previously determined to be historic
2. Consider the condition of the structure in question. Demolition may be more appropriate when a building is deteriorated or in poor condition

Impact on the street

3. Consider whether the building is one of the last remaining positive examples of its kind in the neighborhood, county, or region.
4. 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.
5. Consider whether the building is part of an ensemble of historic buildings that create a neighborhood.

Nature of Proposed Development

6. Consider the future utilization of the site.
7. 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

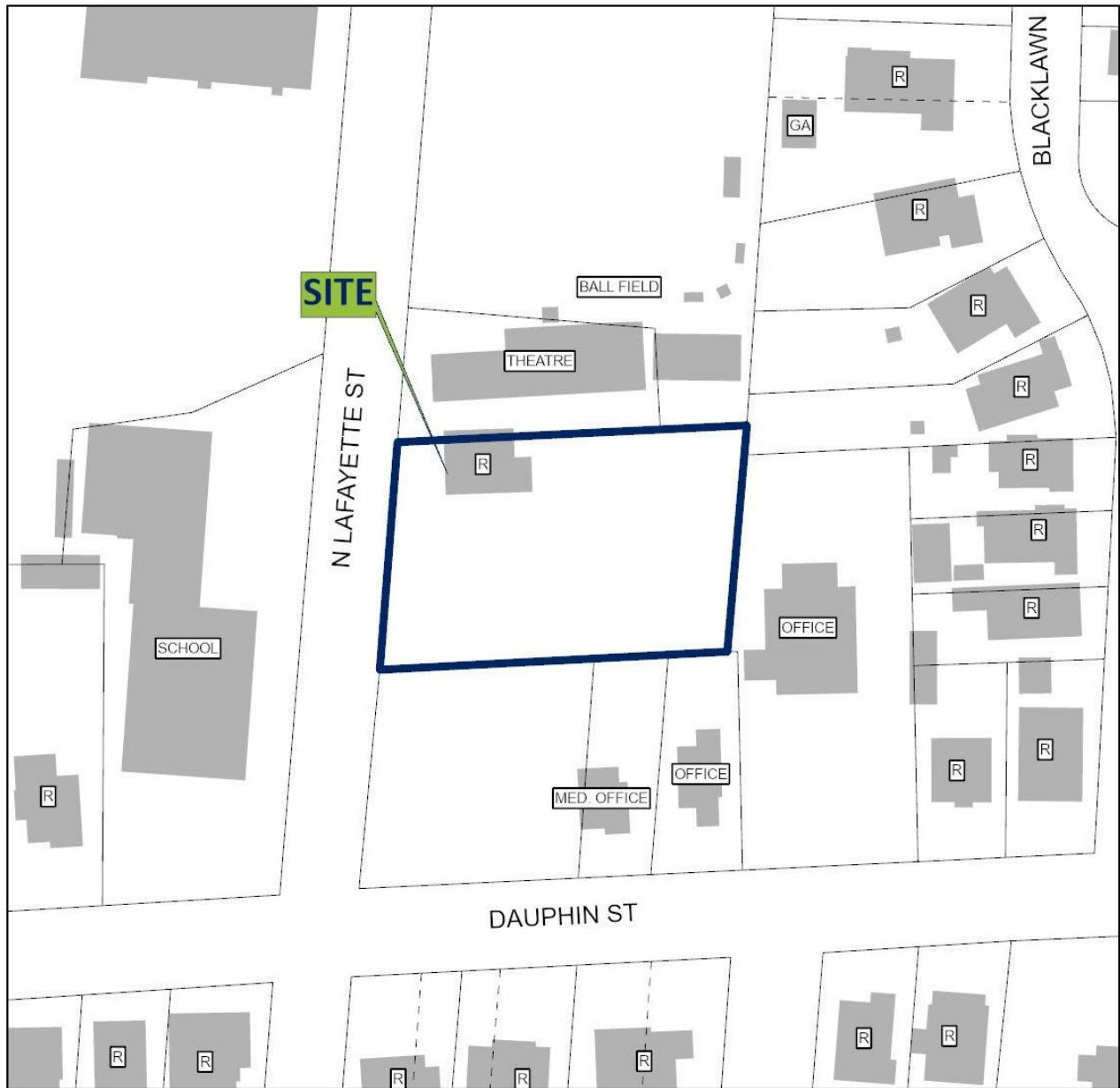
STAFF ANALYSIS

The structure at 12 N. Lafayette Street being considered for demolition is a contributing property in the Old Dauphin Way Historic District. It is a fine representation within the district of late vernacular Queen Anne architecture with irregular massing, dominant front gable, and cutaway bay window. It also maintains an abundance of distinguishing decorative features such as a spindle work frieze and porch supports, lace brackets, pendant finials, and decorative shingles. (1)

After receiving an application for demolition of the subject property in June 2022, two staff architectural historians from the Historic Development Department visited the property to document the status of the historic structure in compliance with the *Guidelines'* directive to consider the condition of a building which is under review for demolition. From outward appearances, it was not apparent that the house was beyond repair. It was observed at that time that the north end wall appeared to lean to the north. There were portions of rotten siding, window surrounds, and fascia boards, etc. Damaged shingles were observed, along with a portion of the wraparound porch on the southwest corner which had sustained damage to its fascia board and roof. The structure did not appear to be in danger of collapse. A representative of the applicant who was on site at the time stated that the foundation was in a significant state of deterioration. However, this condition was not stated in the June 2022 application (nor is it stated in the current application), and staff members did not have access to the foundation during the site visit to verify this statement. The June 2022 application stated that the owner had reached out to a list (provided in the application) of companies, individual investors, contractors, and non-profits who all showed interest in moving the house to an empty lot. In each case, according to the application, a company to move the structure could not be found. According to the minutes of the ARB meeting on July 6, 2022, during which the application was reviewed, the applicant cited several parties who had considered the possibility of moving the structure to a new location but had deemed the move cost prohibitive or not feasible. Following the denial of the applicant's application to demolish the structure in August 2022, staff and a couple of alumni visited the property with a contractor who subsequently prepared an estimate for the work necessary to rehabilitate the building for use as a small reception and archives facility. Staff returned to the site in March 2024 to assess the current condition of the structure. Although there is evidence of continuing deterioration of exterior siding, trim, and roof, the structure does not appear to be structurally unsafe or in danger of collapse. However, an engineering report would be required to determine the structural integrity of the building. (2)

The *Guidelines* also require consideration of the impact that the demolition of the subject property will have on the street and district, along with the nature of proposed development, if any. The east and west sides of North Lafayette Street north of Dauphin Street have experienced a high rate of building loss over the last half century as McGill-Toolen High School and the Archdiocese of Mobile's youth sports programs have expanded, including demolition of the mid-century Mobile Theater Guild building in 2023; the subject building is not located in close proximity to the Toolen Building, the one other contributing resource along the east side of North Lafayette Street. Although at this time there are no finalized drawings or plans for the subject property, after demolition the current application states that the lot at 12 N. Lafayette will be incorporated into a planned expansion of McGill-Toolen's softball complex. The demolition of the building at 12 North Lafayette Street could result in an empty lot, which eventually could endanger this portion of North Lafayette's Street's inclusion in the Old Dauphin Way National Register Historic District, and with an aggregate of structure loss throughout the district, even lead to the de-listing of Old Dauphin Way altogether. (3-7)

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 3 DATE 4/3/2024
APPLICANT Dortch Figures & Sons, Inc. on behalf of McGill-Toolen Catholic High School
PROJECT Demolish two-story frame single-family residence



Site Photos – 12 N. Lafayette Street



1. West facade



2. West end of south elevation



3. View of south elevation, looking northwest



4. View of rear elevation, looking southwest.



5. View of rear and north elevations, looking west

Proposed Softball Complex

12 N Lafayette St

