



# Agenda Item #1

## Application 2025-36-CA

### DETAILS

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**Location:**

13 N Warren Street

**Summary of Request:**

Demolish existing contributing structure

**Applicant (as applicable):**

Taylor Atchison/Rata Investments LLC

**Property Owner:**

Rata Investments LLC

**Historic District:**

Lower Dauphin

**Classification:**

Contributing

**Summary of Analysis:**

- The subject structure expresses a style unique to Mobile and the broader Gulf Coast region.
- The structure has deteriorated to a structurally unfit state.
- The applicant has plans for redevelopment of the lot
- The property is located in the Downtown Development District

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## PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

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Lower Dauphin Street Commercial Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1979 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of commerce and architecture. The district is significant for its unique character stemming from the high concentration of closely spaced two- and three-story brick buildings and as Mobile's nineteenth century commercial thoroughfare. The district boundaries were expanded in 1982, 1995, 1998, and 2019.

The property at 13 N. Warren Street is a c. 1870 frame one-and-a-half story raised Creole cottage with a full-width front porch incorporated under the side gable roof. The east facing façade consists of two entry doors and two six-over-six windows. Historic maps and Historic Development records show minimal changes to the form of the dwelling. This property has never appeared before the Architectural Review board.

## SCOPE OF WORK

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1. Demolish historic dwelling
2. Install metal fence and gates

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

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1. **10.0** Vacant Lots  
The appearance of a vacant lot can potentially negatively impact the character of a historic district. When a vacant lot exists or is created through demolition, property owners must properly maintain, landscape and/or screen the property. This applies to a temporarily vacant lot. Owners must landscape a vacant lot with a ground cover approved by the ARB, such as grass. The owner must maintain the ground cover and keep the property free of trash and debris, as required by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Mobile.
2. **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.
3. **10.2** Design a fence to be compatible with the architectural style of the house and existing fences in the neighborhood.
  - Install a painted wood picket fence.
  - Install a simple wood or wire fence. Heights of wooden picket fences are ordinarily restricted to 36". Consideration for up to 48," depending on the location of the fence, shall be given. A variance might be required. Staff can advise and assist applicants with regard to a variance. If combined with a wall, the total vertical dimension of the wall and fence collectively should not exceed 36," or in some cases 48".

- For surface parking areas associated with commercial uses, size a perimeter parking area fence to not exceed 48" in height.
  - Install a cast-iron or other metal fence not exceeding 48" in height if located in the front yard.
  - »Install a fence that uses alternative materials that have a very similar look and feel to wood, proven durability, matte finish and an accurate scale and proportion of components.
  - Face the finished side of a fence toward the public right-of-way.
  - Based on the chosen fence material, use proportions, heights, elements and levels of opacity similar to those of similar material and style seen in the historic district.
- REAR AND NON-CORNER SIDE FENCES (LOCATED BEHIND THE FRONT BUILDING PLANE)
- Design a fence located behind the front building plane to not exceed 72" in height. If the subject property abuts a multi-family residential or commercial property, a fence up to 96" will be considered.
  - An alternative fence material with proven durability, matte finish and an accurate scale and proportion of components is acceptable. A simple wood-and-wire fence is acceptable provided it is appropriate to the style of the house.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

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The property under review is a contributing structure in the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial Historic District. The subject application seeks approval to demolish the historic dwelling at 13 N Warren Street.

The *Guidelines* state that when demolition is contemplated, the current significance of the structure should be considered. The subject house is considered a contributing property to the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial Historic District. The frame one-and-a-half story Creole cottage, with its deeply pitched roof, recessed porch, and symmetrical façade represents a specific form and style of vernacular architecture found along the Gulf Coast. The particular blend of elements such as the full-width front porch, deep protective overhangs, two front entry doors, and restrained classical decoration characterize a specific style developed and adapted to Mobile's climate and culture.

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." From the street, deterioration of the structure is visually evident. There are several openings in the exterior walls due to the decline of the siding and framing. A detailed condition survey submitted by the applicant reveals further deterioration on the interior. Rafter failure, top plate decline, missing framing, and rot of top plates, floor joists, and exterior walls are present, demonstrating a clear state of decline to a dangerous state of disrepair and loss of structural integrity.

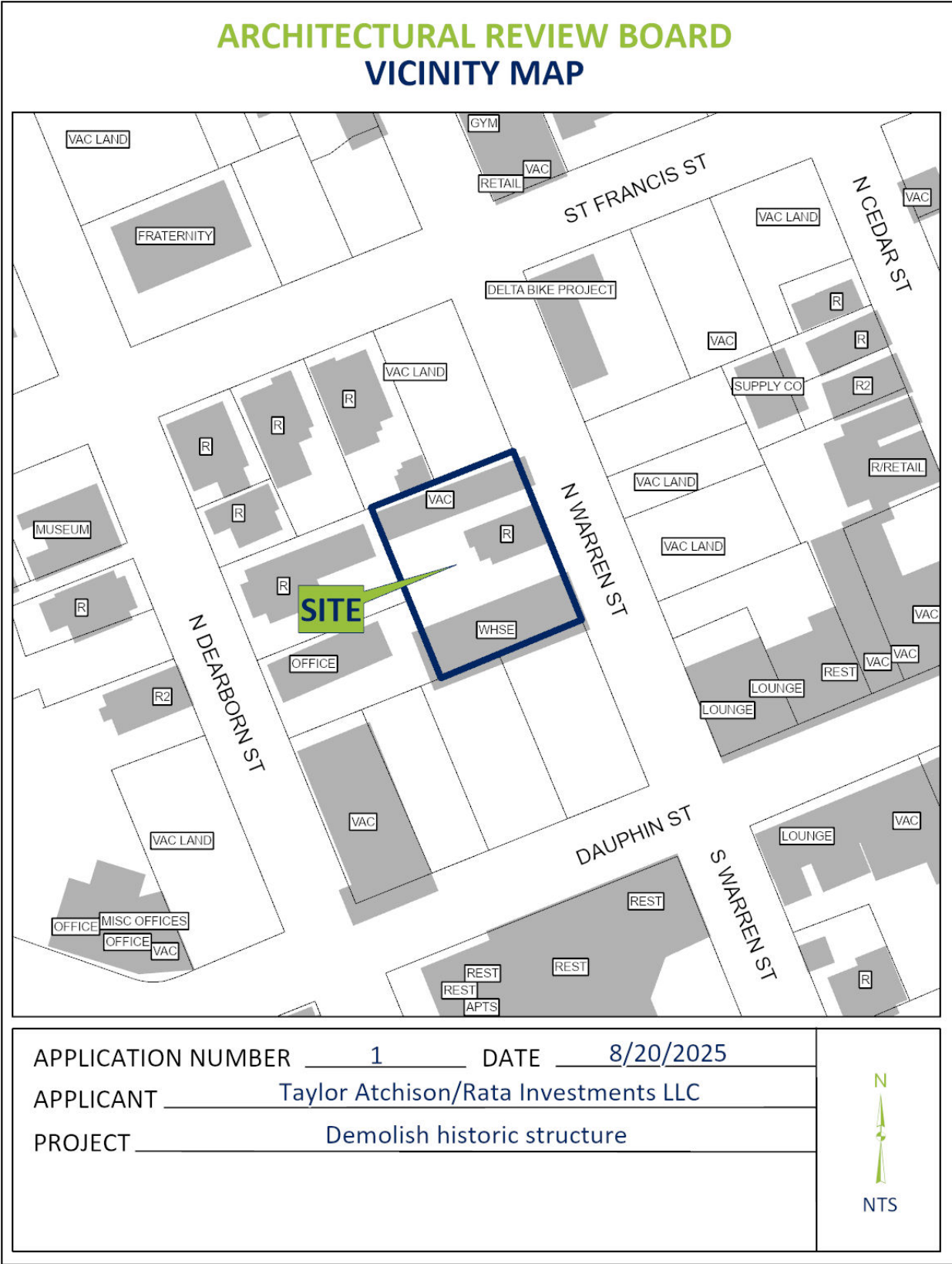
Whether the building in question is "one of the last remaining positive examples of its kind in the neighborhood, county or region" should be factored into any decision to allow or disallow demolition in a historic district. As stated above, this structure is a distinctive example of local building customs of the Gulf Coast region. Although there are other examples of the Creole cottage extant in the broader historic area, their numbers are in decline. This is particularly so in the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial District, where this form of residential architecture is considerably rare. A cursory look around the immediate neighborhood and the surrounding district for other similar instances of this style proves challenging. One somewhat comparable structure is the c. 1834 Portier House located at 307 Conti Street. While this dwelling expresses the form of a Creole cottage, it is much more high style in its design features, detailing, and profile. The Portier House, though a few blocks away, is located in a separate historic district. It can be concluded that the structure at 13 N. Warren is one of the last examples of its kind in the Lower Dauphin Commercial District.

The impact that demolition would have on the surrounding structures and neighborhood must be considered. The immediate vicinity and subject block of N. Warren Street has historically been a mix of commercial and residential, yet many residential structures have disappeared. At present, all residential structures along this portion of the street have been deleted apart from the dwelling under review.

The applicant has expressed plans for future development of this parcel. Initially, the building at 13 N. Warren was included in these plans, until closer inspection revealed its loss of structural integrity and unsafe condition. A concept drawing was submitted with the application providing a general idea of how the area is to be developed, with the buildings at 11 and 15 N Warren Street rehabilitated for occupancy and use. These drawings also propose an approximately 7'-0" high metal fence with arched gate, set between square masonry columns with caps. The fence would run along the east property line between 11 and 15 N Warren Street.

This property is located within the Downtown Development District. The demolition of the structure has been reviewed by and received approval from Consolidated Review Committee.







## Site Photos



1. View of property, looking SW



2. View of east façade, looking SW



3. View of north elevation, looking SW



4. View of south elevation, looking Nw



4. View of streetscape, looking NW



5. View of property across the street, looking E







Photo Number: 1	Location: South Exterior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated exterior siding and bottom of window framing
Camera Facing: North	



Photo Number: 2	Location: South Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated floor joists and foundation sills. Missing window, window framing, and sections of studs.
Camera Facing: South	





Photo Number: 3	Location: North Exterior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated foundation sills and siding
Camera Facing: Southeast	



Photo Number: 4	Location: North Exterior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated foundation sills and siding
Camera Facing: Southeast	





Photo Number: 5	Location: North Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated foundation sills, siding, studs and floor joists missing
Camera Facing: Northwest	



Photo Number: 6	Location: Central Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated floor beams, floor joists and load bearing stud walls
Camera Facing: Southwest	





Photo Number: 7	Location: West Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated floor beams, missing floor joists, Foundation damage
Camera Facing: West	



Photo Number: 8	Location: East Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Deteriorated floor beams, foundation damage will not allow doors to shut
Camera Facing: Southeast	





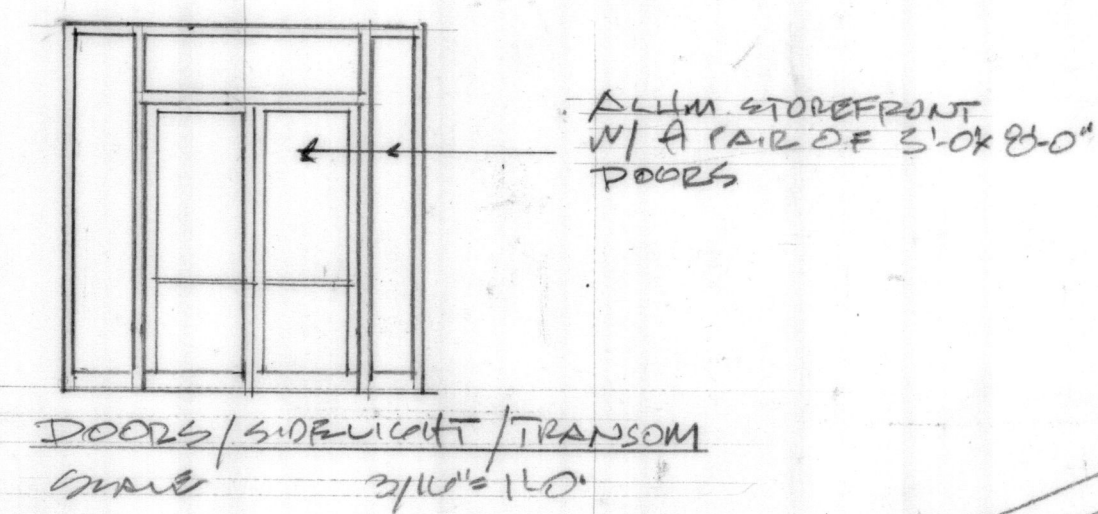
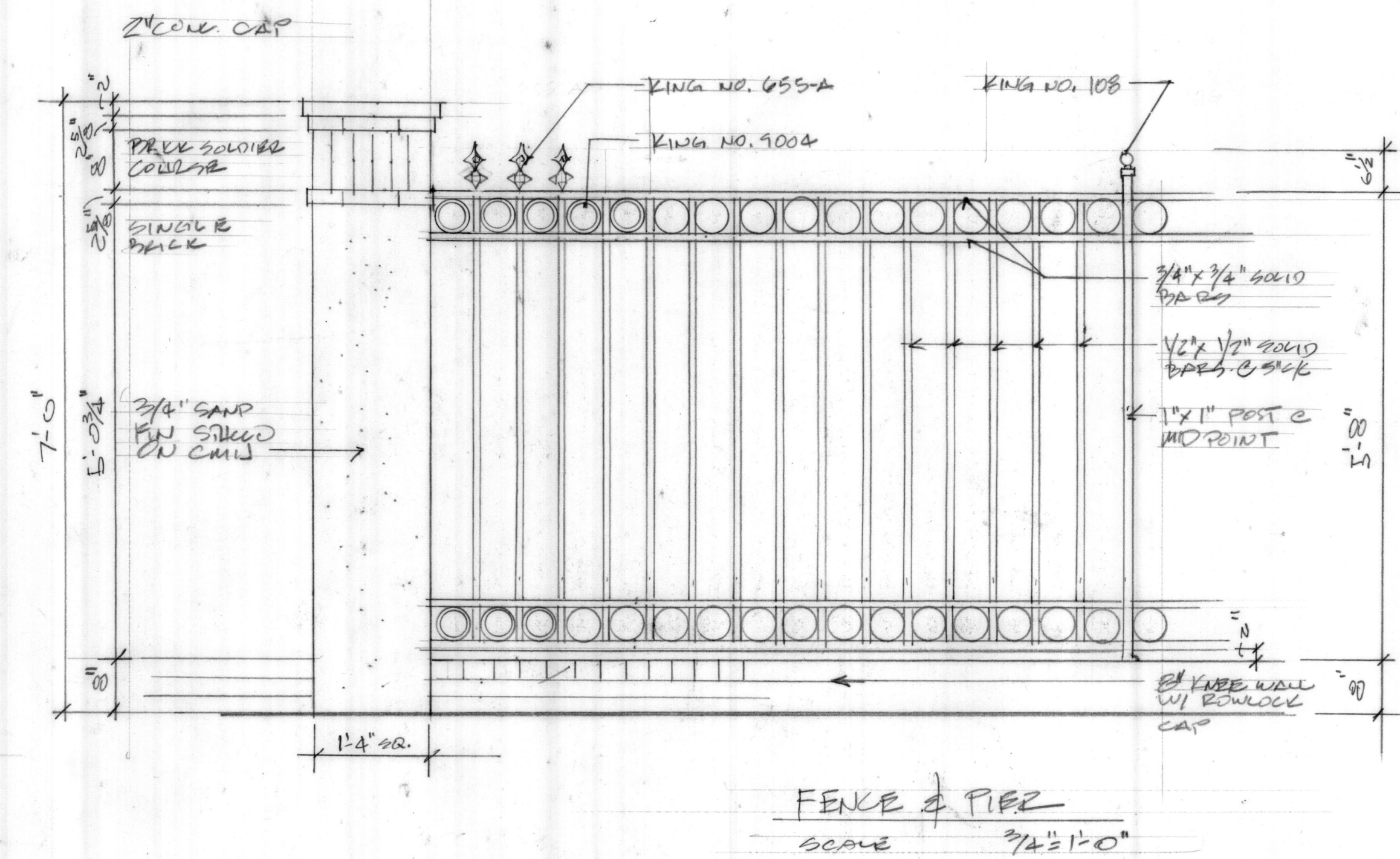
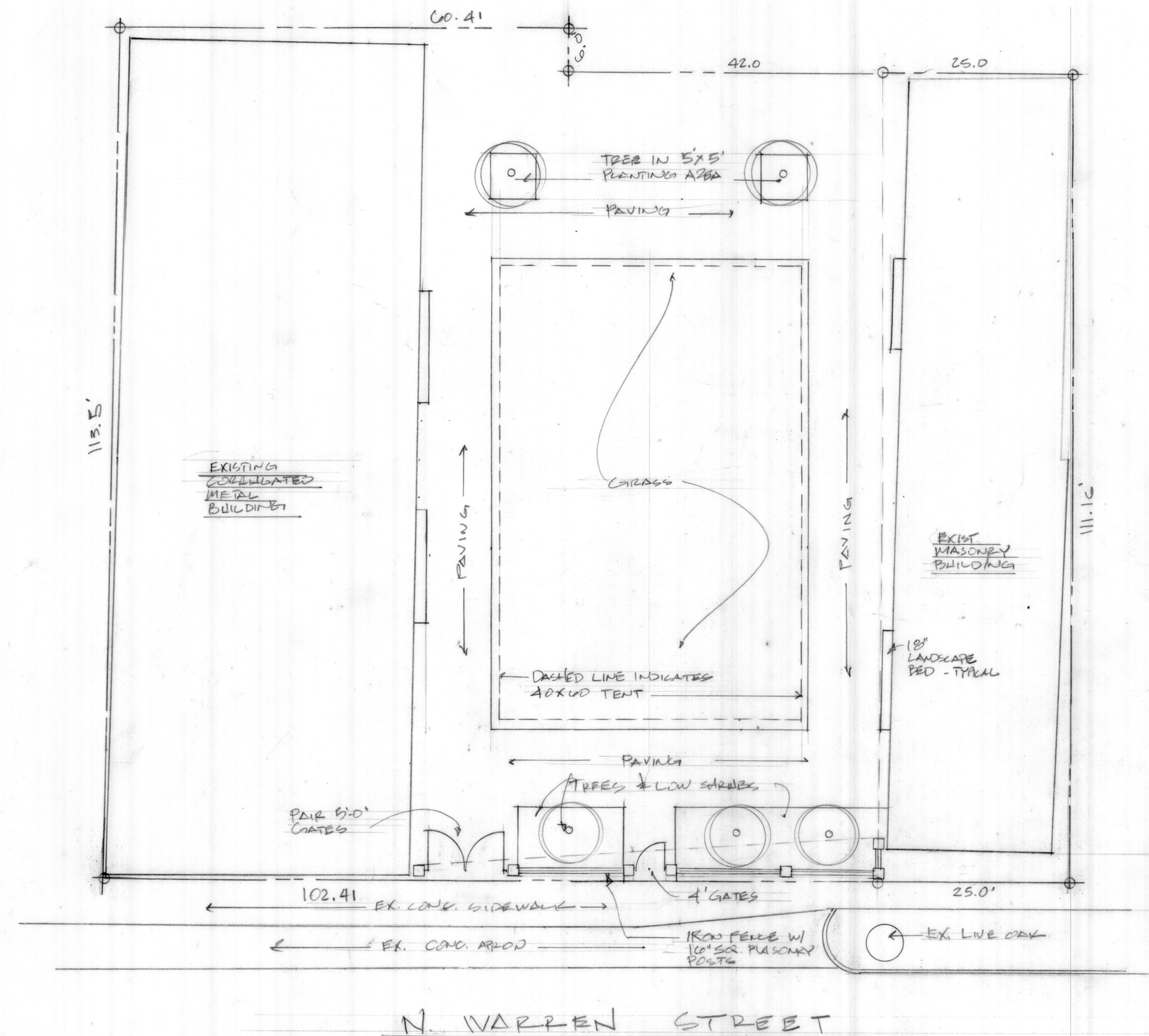
Photo Number: 9	Location: East Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Rafter failure due to deterioration of rafter, exterior wall top plate and exterior wall studs
Camera Facing: Southeast	



Photo Number: 10	Location: East Interior of Structure
Date Taken: 04-29-25	Comments: Rafter failure due to deterioration of rafter, exterior wall top plate and exterior wall studs
Camera Facing: Northeast	



4 JULY, 2025



SITE PLAN  
SCALE 1"=10' 0"

