



Agenda Item #4

Application 2023-45-CA

DETAILS

Location:

54 N. Cedar Street

Summary of Request:

Demolish one-story single-family residence

Applicant (as applicable):

Janice Morrison

Property Owner:

Janice Morrison

Jaime Hobbs

Darnisha Boykin

Staff Reviewer:

Annie Allen

Historic District:

Lower Dauphin Street Commercial

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The house at 54 N. Cedar is a contributing structure within the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial historic district.
- The house is found to be in a deteriorated state and has been cited by Municipal Enforcement.
- The house contributes to preserving the historic development pattern of the immediate vicinity.
- Consideration has been given to possibly relocating the structure, as an alternative to demolition.
- The applicant intends to convert the empty lot into a garden.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

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 contributing dwelling at 54 N. Cedar is a wood-frame shotgun style home with a rear projection on its south elevation. The 1878 City Directory, along with the 1891, 1904, and 1924 Sanborn maps depict a large brick commercial building at 54 N Cedar. This east side of the block remains predominately comprised of commercial structures through 1924. The subsequent Sanborn overlay, which occurred in 1955 depicts a domestic structure at 54 N. Cedar in a form that appears to be that of the existing dwelling. According to the owner, the subject structure was moved to its current location. The original location is unknown. Aerial photography reveals that the house may have been extant at 54 N. Cedar in 1952. The National Register nomination dates the structure to c. 1900.

At some point a rear porch and carport on the north elevation were added to the structure. These were deleted in 2017.

Historic Development Department records show that the property appeared once before the Architectural Review Board (ARB). In 2017 an application was approved to remove the roof of a collapsing carport and portions of later additions.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Demolish the one-story single-family residence at 54 N. Cedar Street.
2. Convert the empty lot into a garden.

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

Demolition Guidelines (12)

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

STAFF ANALYSIS

The application involves the demolition of a contributing structure within the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial Historic District.

Significance

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 in the Lower Dauphin Street Commercial district. The shotgun dwelling type, which features single room width and multiple room depth, represents a

vernacular form common mainly in urban areas throughout the Southeast. The subject property is a hipped-roof structure consisting of an off-set perpendicular rear wing, which represents a typical variation of the shotgun form, intended to create more living space.

Condition

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.” The structure under review is found to be in a deteriorated state. Visual inspection revealed missing windows, peeling paint, rotten framing and siding, openings created by missing soffit boards and framing materials, boarded-up openings in exterior walls due to deleted additions, etc. Historic Development Department vertical files show that, due to collapse, both the rear porch and carport were removed in 2017. Records further contain a structural engineering inspection report which states that the structure is unsalvageable and should be demolished, along with a notice from Municipal Enforcement informing the owner of the deteriorated state of the dwelling. The owner has been approached by experienced local property developers about possibly relocating and rehabilitating the house. However, Staff is unaware of any such plan .

Impact on the Street and District

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. Although the contributing dwelling did not originate at this location, it contributes to the district as a historic structure, as it has sat at 54 N. Cedar over fifty years. Previously, a large one-story brick commercial building sat on the lot from at least 1885. Since 1955, widespread demolition along adjacent properties and surrounding blocks mainly to the north, has resulted in vacant lots and the construction of new, large commercial structures. Included in the vacant lots are the two lots directly across N. Cedar from the subject property, along with the abutting lot to its north. Currently, 54 N. Cedar is one of two remaining residential properties on the immediate block.

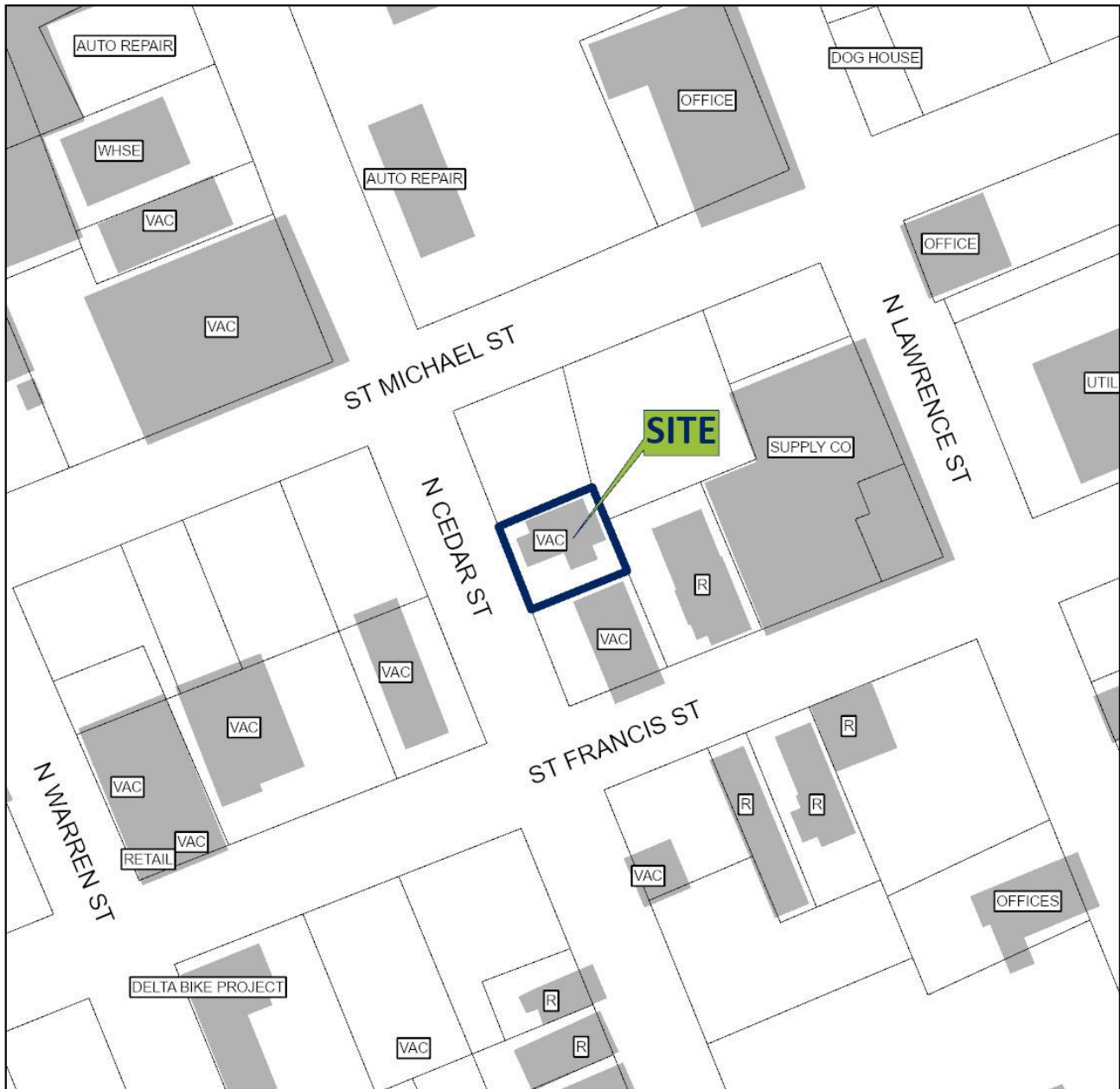
The immediate vicinity has historically been a mix of commercial and residential, consisting of larger commercial and multi-tenant structures, and smaller one or two story single-family and duplex cottage dwellings, mostly of frame construction. Because most of the residential structures along North Cedar north of St. Francis Street have been deleted, 54 N. Cedar creates a boundary that contributes to safeguarding the historic interpretation of the immediate block which includes the Bettie Hunter home (part of the Dora Franklin Finley African American Heritage Trail) at 504 St. Francis, to the southeast. Along the adjacent block to the south (bounded by St. Francis and Dauphin Streets), the historic pattern of mixed residential and commercial remains mostly intact on the west side of N. Cedar, whereas all of the residential buildings on the east side are no longer extant. Therefore, the location of the subject dwelling, also on the east side of N. Cedar, helps to underpin the historic built pattern of the street and the district.

The *Guidelines* 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. The immediate vicinity has historically been a mix of commercial and residential, consisting of larger commercial and multi-tenant structures, and smaller one- or two- story single-family and duplex cottage dwellings, mostly of frame construction. Because most of the residential structures along North Cedar north of St. Francis Street have been deleted, 54 N. Cedar creates a boundary that contributes to safeguarding the historic interpretation of the immediate block which includes the Bettie Hunter home (part of the Dora Franklin Finley African American Heritage Trail) at 504 St. Francis, to the southeast. Along the adjacent block to the south (bounded by St. Francis and Dauphin Streets), the historic pattern of mixed residential and commercial remains mostly intact on the west side of N. Cedar, whereas none of the residential buildings on the east side is extant. Therefore, the location of the subject dwelling, also on the east side of N. Cedar, helps to underpin the historic built pattern of the street and the district.

Nature of Proposed Development

Further, the *Guidelines* instruct that the future use of a cleared site should be considered. The applicant has designated that the lot will be enclosed and converted into a garden.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 4 DATE 9/6/2023

APPLICANT Janice Morrison

PROJECT Demolish one-story single-family residence



NTS

Site Plan – 54 N. Cedar Street

Existing Site Plan: 54 N. Cedar Street



Site Photos – 54 N. Cedar Street



1. West (front) elevation



2. Southwest view



3. Northwest view



4. Rear projection on south elevation



5. Detail of deterioration



6. Detail of rear elevation