



Agenda Item #10

Application 2025-56-CA

DETAILS

Location:

959 Church Street

Summary of Request:

Remove 2 historic chimneys

Applicant (as applicable):

Nathan Sisk

Property Owner:

Allison Russo, Jeff Hall

Historic District:

Oakleigh Garden District

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- Removing chimneys is not consistent with the Guidelines, however the state of deterioration may be to a degree that the chimneys are beyond reasonable repair.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Oakleigh Garden Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1972 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning and development. The district is significant for its high concentration of 19th- and 20th-century architectural types and styles and significant in the area of landscape architecture for its canopies of live oaks planted from 1850 to 1910. The district is significant in the area of planning and development as the location of Washington Square, one of only two antebellum public parks remaining in Mobile. The district was expanded in 1984, and an updated nomination was approved in 2016.

Historical Development records show that the contributing dwellings at 959 Church Street first appeared in its current configuration in the 1904 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. However, a structure was first documented on the property in the same footprint of the subject property in the 1878 City Atlas. The residence is a folk house in the Pyramidal family. Possibly, the north block with hipped roof was the structure documented in the 1878 City Atlas, and sometime between then and 1904 a wing was added on the south elevation to create the current footprint. According to Historic Development Department Records, this property has not appeared before the Architectural Review Board.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Remove 2 chimneys below the roof line.
2. Re-roof the structure to fortified standards using black architectural shingle

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

- 5.4 Preserve original building materials.
 - Repair deteriorated building materials by patching, piecing-in, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing the material.
 - Remove only those materials which are deteriorated, and beyond reasonable repair.
 - Do not remove original materials that are in good condition.
- 5.10 Preserve the original form of a historic roof.
 - Maintain the original pitch.
 - Preserve decorative elements, including crests and chimneys.

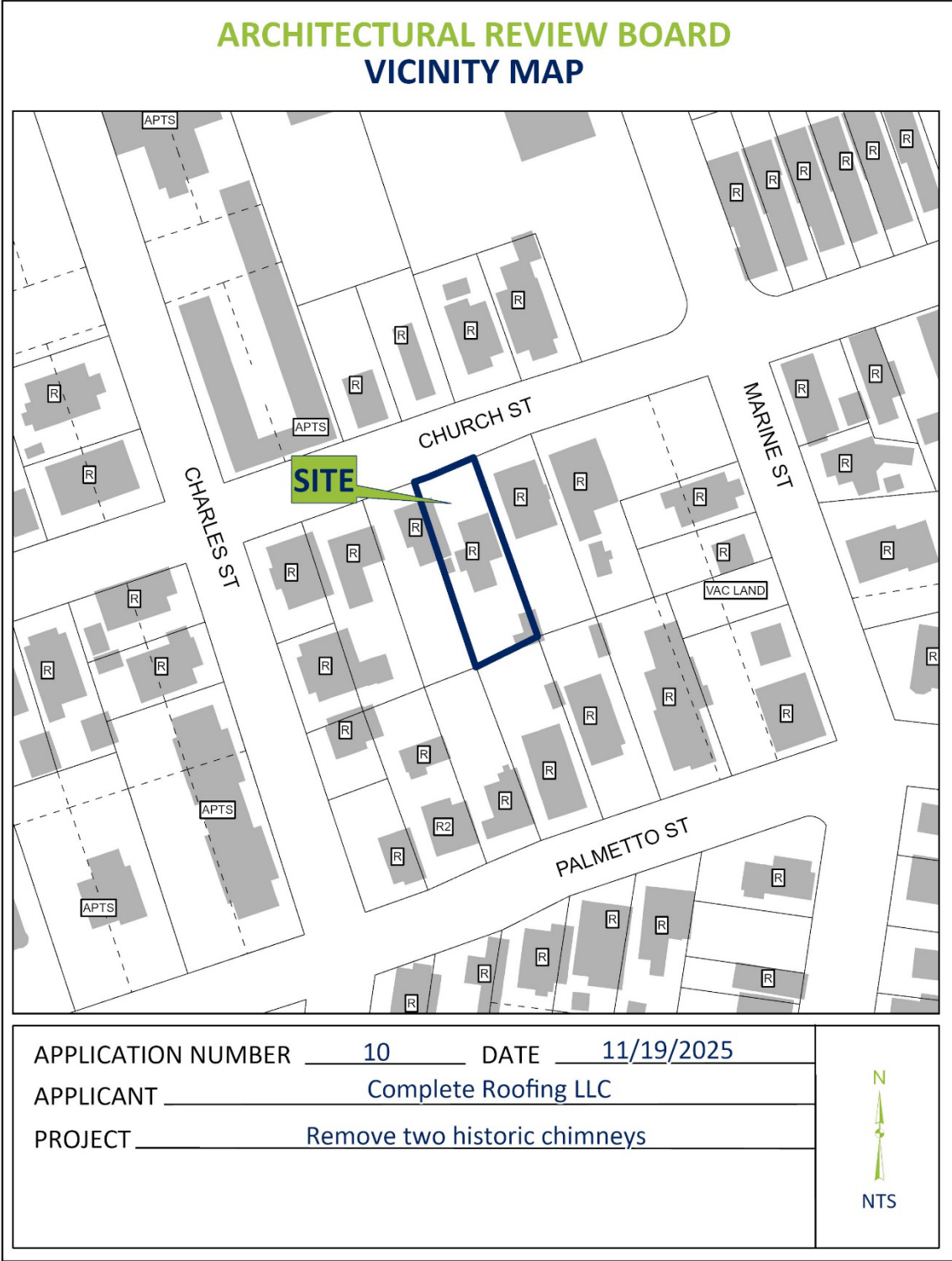
STAFF ANALYSIS

The subject property is a contributing structure to the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The proposed project includes the removal of 2 chimneys that are located on the west and east elevation.

The *Guidelines* dictate to, “preserve decorative elements, including crests and chimneys” (5.10). The applicant has expressed concern about the structural integrity of the 2 chimneys and has submitted a structural review of them. The review discusses the severity of deterioration that was observed including crumbling and spalling of the exposed brick-and-mortar joints on the eastern chimney, (chimney 1). Much of chimney 1 is covered by a thin concrete like material likely applied to seal off cracking and water intrusion. Chimney 2, on the western elevation, also expressed spalling of the brick-and-mortar joints. Additionally, chimney 2 exhibits severe mortar deterioration, especially near the roof decking and the mortar joints are recessed approximately 1” from the face of the brick, which was noted as an indication of advanced loss of mortar and structural strength.

The *Guidelines* say to, “preserve original building materials” and to only remove materials that are deteriorated and beyond reasonable repair (5.4). The submitted documentation reveals the chimneys to be in a precarious condition and would most likely qualify as being beyond reasonable repair. The applicant has expressed their

preference to preserve the chimneys if possible, but has noted that there is high likelihood that the chimneys could become destabilized during the flashing installation process due to the comprised integrity of the brick and mortar.



Site Photos – 959 CHURCH STREET



1. North elevation (façade) facing south.



2. Undated historic photo of north elevation. The chimneys are unpainted.



3. 1904 Sanborn map showing the subject property



4. 1989 survey photo of north elevation.



5. Chimney 1 on east elevation



6. Closer view of chimney 1 and the cap that was installed and the concrete that was applied.



7. Chimney 2 on west elevation



8. Closer view of chimney 2 and the cap that was installed.

Jeffrey A. Hall, P.E.
959 Church Street
Mobile, AL 36604
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j_hall2@hotmail.com

Date: 11/04/2025

To: City of Mobile - Architectural Review Board

Subject: Evaluation and Recommendation for Potential Chimney Removal

Property Address: 959 Church Street, Mobile, AL 36604

Dear Members of the Architectural Review Board,

I have performed a site observation and structural review of the existing masonry chimneys located at the above-referenced property. The chimneys are original to the home and have experienced significant deterioration over time.

During inspection, I observed the following conditions:

Eastern Chimney:

- Crumbling and spalling of the brick and mortar joints were observed, indicating long-term material degradation.
- The chimney has been almost completely skim-coated with a concrete like material, likely applied in an attempt to seal off cracking and prevent further moisture intrusion.
- The coating is brittle, which creates concern when the contractor begins cutting and grinding along the chimney base to install new flashing.
- There is a high likelihood that the chimney could become unstable during the flashing installation process due to the compromised integrity of the underlying masonry.

Western Chimney:

- Crumbling and spalling of the brick and mortar joints were observed, indicating material degradation.
- The chimney exhibits severe mortar deterioration, particularly near the roof decking.

- Mortar joints are recessed approximately one inch from the face of the brick, indicating advanced loss of mortar and structural strength.
- This advanced deterioration makes the brickwork highly fragile and structurally weakened. Proper flashing installation would require cutting deeply into the brick, which could further destabilize the structure and create serious safety concerns.

Given the extent of deterioration, the chimneys' structural stability is questionable. The contractor has expressed intent to preserve the chimneys to the greatest extent possible during the roofing project. However, in order to properly install new roofing and flashing, it will be necessary to cut and grind along the chimney bases to integrate the flashing system correctly. Due to the fragile condition of the existing masonry, this work is likely to cause further destabilization of the chimneys.

If, during this process, the chimneys become unstable or unsafe, it will be necessary to remove them to just below the roofline to ensure structural safety and allow proper completion of the roof and flashing installation.

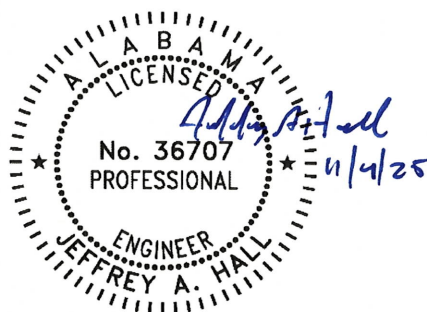
It is my professional opinion that this approach represents the most responsible balance between preservation and safety. Should conditions permit, the chimneys will remain intact above the roofline; however, removal to below the roofline may be unavoidable if instability occurs during construction.

Please feel free to contact me if further clarification or documentation is required.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Hall, P.E.
Civil Engineer



Jordan Amstutz

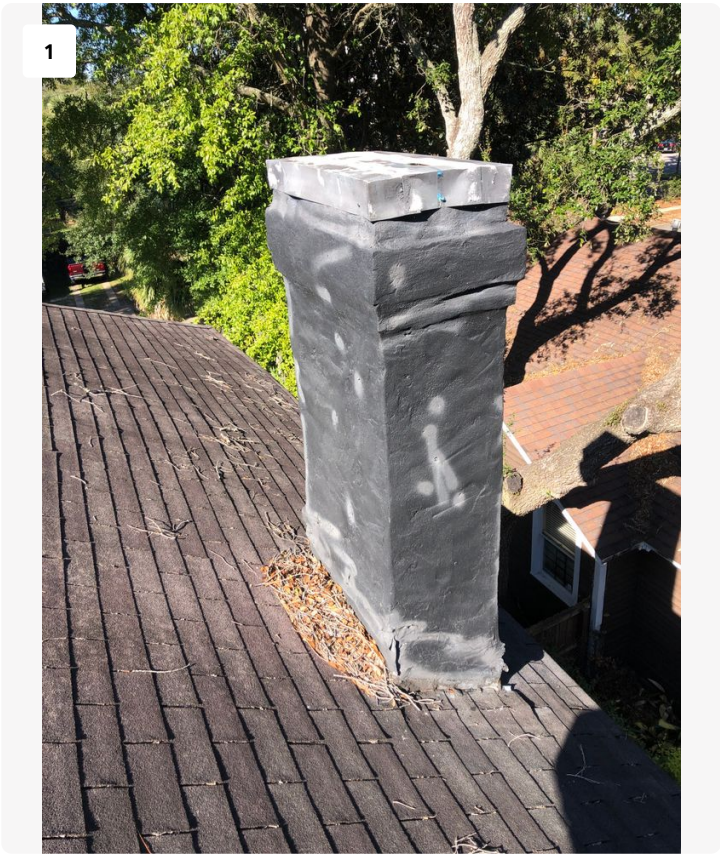
Complete Roofing, LLC

Oct 31, 2025 | 30 Photos



CHIMNEY PHOTOS JEFFREY HALL

Section 1



Chimney is in very bad shape and needs to be removed below the roofline.

Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:35 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz



Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:35 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz



Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:35 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz

Chimney is permanently capped and no longer in use.



Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:35 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz







Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:36 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz



Any chimney over 30" requires a cricket during a reroof. We cannot install a cricket and fasten it securely to this chimney without further damaged occurring.

Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:36 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz

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This chimney was previously fully coated in a layer of some sort of concrete. It is not consistent or smooth and has holes throughout. It is compromised.

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Creator: Jordan Amstutz



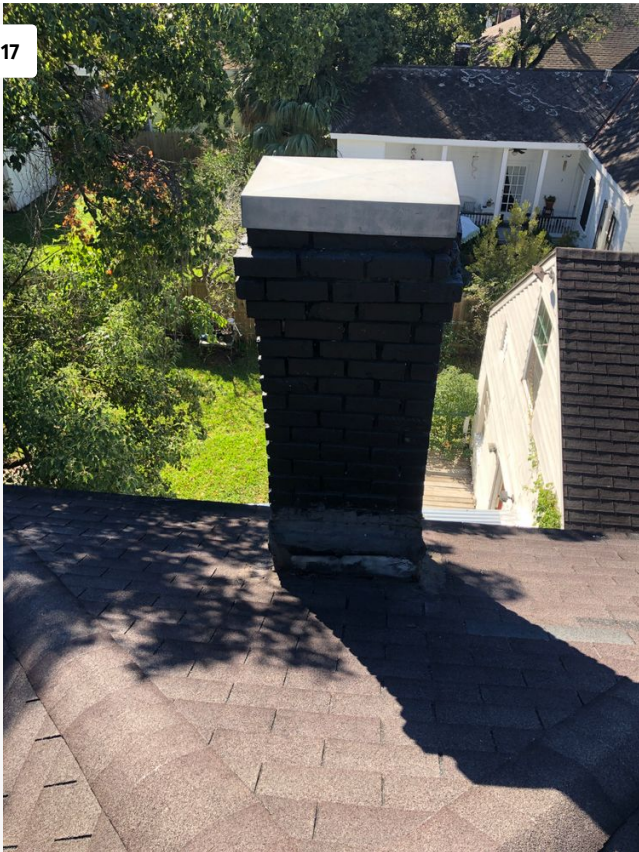
Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:37 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz



This chimney is permanently capped and serves no purpose also.

Project: Jeffrey Hall
Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:37 PM
Creator: Jordan Amstutz

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Chimney is in bad shape and needs to be removed below the roofline.

Project: Jeffrey Hall

Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:37 PM

Creator: Jordan Amstutz

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The grooves are too deep to properly cut in and set the flashing while maintaining a leak free roof.

Project: Jeffrey Hall

Date: Oct 31, 2025, 2:37 PM

Creator: Jordan Amstutz

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The mortar grooves are extremely deep. In order to set in flashing we use a diamond blade to cut and set flashing in. We would cut right through the chimney with the grooves this deep and the flashing would not set and seal.

Project: Jeffrey Hall

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Creator: Jordan Amstutz

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The previous extensive failed repairs show me it is not able to be repaired and properly flashed.

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The chimney is completely capped and not in use. It serves no purpose.

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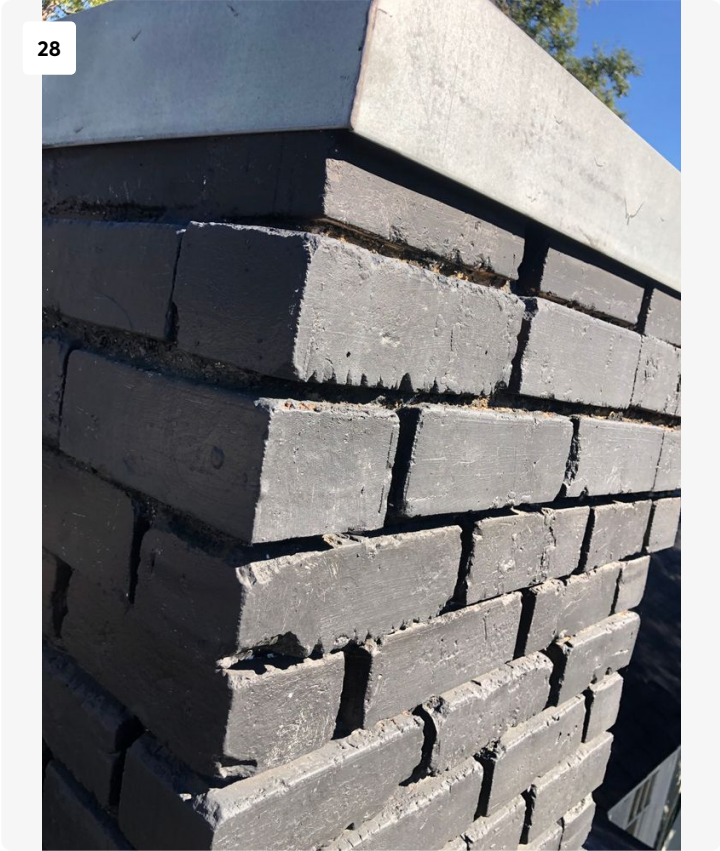
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Project: Jeffrey Hall
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Creator: Jordan Amstutz



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