



Agenda Item #2

Application 2024-04-CA

DETAILS

Location:

North side Adams Street between Joachim and Jackson streets (Parcel No. R022906120003001)

Summary of Request:

New Construction: one-story vehicle maintenance facility; site improvements

Applicant (as applicable):

HAD

Property Owner:

Gulf Distributing Co./Adams Street Property, LLC

Historic District:

DeTonti Square

Classification:

Vacant (paved parking)

Summary of Analysis:

- The proposed new construction is a one-story, brick-veneered vehicle maintenance facility.
- Though the massing and scale of the building are not compatible with the nearby historic residential properties, certain site features avoid the disruption of the established patterns and rhythm of the historic environment.
- The proposed building materials are compatible with other buildings in the district.
- The existing wall and landscape assist in diminishing the visual impact of the building and parking.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

DeTonti Square Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1972 under Criterion A for social and urban planning significance and Criterion C for significant architecture. The district was one of two historic districts created by a municipal ordinance in 1962 in an effort to halt the rapid demolition of historic buildings near the city's central business district. The district, named for the French explorer Henri DeTonti, contains a few structures surviving from the 1830s, but the majority were built in the 1850s as residences of the wealthy and influential cotton factors, merchants, and planters.

The subject parcel is currently devoid of structures; it is paved for parking with a grassy area toward Adams Street. The 1878 Hopkins ward map of Mobile shows the western half of the property as four vacant lots owned by S.B. Quigley. Five lots on the eastern end (two facing Adams and three facing North Joachim) were occupied by small, scattered buildings. Based on later maps of the area, it appears one house faced Adams, a store occupied the northwest corner of Adams and Joachim streets, and two houses faced Joachim Street to the north of the store. The northern two-thirds of the city block was mostly developed. The 1885 and 1891 Sanborn maps did not include this block, but the 1904 Sanborn map shows every lot except the southwestern corner (Adams and Jackson streets) was occupied by at least one structure. Five one-story frame residences with front porches faced Adams Street. Four of the five houses had one-story frame sheds to the rear. The one-story, frame store was extant on the southeast corner of the block, and two one-story frame residences faced North Joachim Street to the north, occupying the same parcel as the store. The city block had gained additional development with another corner store at the southwest corner of Lipscomb and North Joachim streets and a newer residence facing Jackson Street about mid-block between Lipscomb and Adams streets. The 1924 and 1955 Sanborn maps show the entire Adams streetfront between Jackson and Joachim streets developed with residences; a two-story frame house with full-width front porch had been constructed at the southwest corner, and two cinder-block residences had been constructed at the east end of the block, replacing the corner store. The two small houses north of the store also had been replaced by a single one-story, frame house. A 1967 aerial photo shows no change in development of the block.

By 1980, though, an aerial photo reveals that only four houses at the center of the streetfront along Adams remain along with a house at 357 Joachim Street. The rest of the city block had been cleared. In 1985, three of the four residences along Adams Street and the one residence on North Joachim Street were extant. A 1997 aerial photograph revealed only one house remaining on the entire block, 258 Adams Street, and by the time of a 2004 aerial photograph, the subject property had been completely cleared and paved for parking.

According to Historic Development files, this property has never before appeared before the Architectural Review Board.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Construct a one-story vehicle maintenance facility (VMF).
 - a. The structure would be located at the northwest corner of the subject property and only partially inside the parcel. A corner of the 64'-0" x 81'-4" building (measuring approximately 34'-9"x31'-4") would be located within the historic district.
 - b. The structure would stand approximately 24'-0" high and have a flat roof.
 - c. The structure would be veneered with brick and metal coping at the parapet wall, both matching the existing warehouse on the site to the northeast.
 - d. Doors and windows would be hollow metal painted to match the brick veneer.
 - e. Prefinished metal scuppers and downspouts matching those on the existing warehouse/office building would be installed on the west elevation.
 - f. Fenestration would appear as follows.

- 1) South elevation (from left to right): one single-lite fixed window measuring 3'-9" wide by 5'-0" high; one pedestrian door measuring 11'-9" wide by 15'-0" high, both located on the west end of the elevation.
 - 2) East elevation: no fenestration is proposed for this elevation.
 - 3) North elevation (from left to right): Two garage doors measuring 11'-9" wide by 15'-0" high spaced across the first two-thirds of the elevation; one pedestrian door measuring 2'-6" wide by 6'-4" high.
 - 4) West elevation (from left to right): two single-lite fixed windows measuring 3'-9" wide by 5'-0" high spaced roughly on the two ends of the second half of the elevation.
2. The existing metal fence and brick wall which currently enclose the property on the west and south would remain. The metal fence along the west property line would be repaired where needed using matching fence salvaged from other areas on the site.

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

Where applicable, design guidelines relevant to the "Commercial Corridor Context" were used.

1. **7.30** Orient a new commercial building to be similar to that of nearby historic structures.
 - Place buildings in line with adjacent historic buildings in terms of relationship to the street. If a project is flanked by non-historic structures, refer to nearby historic structures.
 - Design side setbacks to be similar to those in adjacent historic buildings. If a project is flanked by non-historic structures refer to nearby historic structures.
 - Orient façades of new commercial buildings similarly to adjacent historic structures. In most cases, new commercial structures should be oriented to directly face the street.
 - Face primary building entries toward the public street.
 - Screen ancillary buildings or place them behind the primary building.
2. **7.32** Place and orient new commercial construction on commercial corridors to be compatible with that of adjacent historic residential structures and the district.
 - Establish front setbacks similar to those in adjacent historic residential development or historic residential development on the same block.
 - Orient façades to be parallel with the street or in the orientation of historic residential structures that are adjacent or on the same block. In some cases, the orientation should be north-south depending on the historic context.
 - For corner lots, align a sidewall with historic residential structures located to the rear of project. Offset sidewalls built close to the street edge to be in line with historic residential structures at the rear of the project.
3. **7.34** Design a building to be compatible with massing and scale with historic structures in the district.
 - Design building massing to reflect massing of nearby historic structures.
 - Where the volume of new construction is larger than historic structures in the district, break down the massing into smaller components to increase compatibility.
 - Limit the height or the perceived height of buildings to be similar to heights of nearby historic structures.
 - Use vertical and horizontal articulation design techniques to reduce the apparent scale of a larger building mass.
 - Incorporate changes in color, texture and materials.
 - Use architectural details to create visual interest. » Use materials that help to convey scale in their proportion, detail and form.
4. **7.35** Design building massing and scale to maintain the visual continuity of the district.
 - Incorporate floor-to-floor heights that appear similar to those of traditional commercial buildings in Mobile.
 - Design a new structure to incorporate a traditional base, middle and cap.
5. **7.36** Maintain traditional spacing patterns created by the repetition of building widths along the street.

- Proportion a new façade to reflect the established range of traditional building widths seen in Mobile.
 - Where a structure must exceed a traditional building width, use changes in building configuration, articulation or design features such as materials, window design, façade height or decorative details to break the façade into modules that suggest traditional building widths.
6. **7.38** Design the massing and scale of new commercial construction to be compatible with historic residential structures in the district.
 - Break down building massing to create separate volumes that are similar to the massing of adjacent and nearby historic residential structures.
 - Limit the height of a building to be similar to those of adjacent and nearby historic residential structures.
 - Where the lot lines of a commercial structure and residential structure meet, step down the height of the commercial building to match that of the adjacent residential structure.
 7. **7.47** Where new commercial construction is located adjacent to historic residential structures, use building materials that are compatible with those materials used in nearby historic buildings.
 - Use a material that is reflective of nearby historic residential structures, including wood siding.
 8. **10.5** Visually connect the street and building.
 - Maintain or install a walkway leading directly from the sidewalk to the main building entry.
 9. **10.7** Minimize the visual impact of parking.
 - Locate a parking area at the rear or to the side of a site whenever possible.
 - Use landscaping to screen a parking area.
 - Minimize the widths of a paved area or a curb cut.
 - If a curb cut is no longer in use, repair the curb. In some areas, granite curbs may be required.
 - Do not use paving in the front yard for a parking area. Paving stones might be acceptable in certain instances. Do not create a new driveway or garage that opens onto a primary street.
 - Do not create a new driveway or garage that opens onto a primary street.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The application under review proposes the construction of a one-story Vehicle Maintenance Facility. In review of this application for compliance, the “*Commercial Corridor Context*” guidelines were found to be most aligned with the nature of the subject project and were used where applicable. It should be noted, however, that this project does not perfectly fit into any of the three contexts included under the *Design Guidelines for New Commercial Construction*.

The subject parcel is currently a paved parking area with a grassy area towards the south end near Adams Street. The *Guidelines* direct that new commercial buildings be oriented similarly to adjacent historic buildings, with similar side setbacks. There are no adjacent historic structures to the subject site, and the proposed building would sit behind an existing brick wall which runs along Adams Street. The closest historic structures are residential properties located across the street and are oriented towards the south side of Adams Street. The proposed building consists of a pedestrian entry door on the south elevation, which simulates a facade which faces Adams Street. (7.30, 7.32)

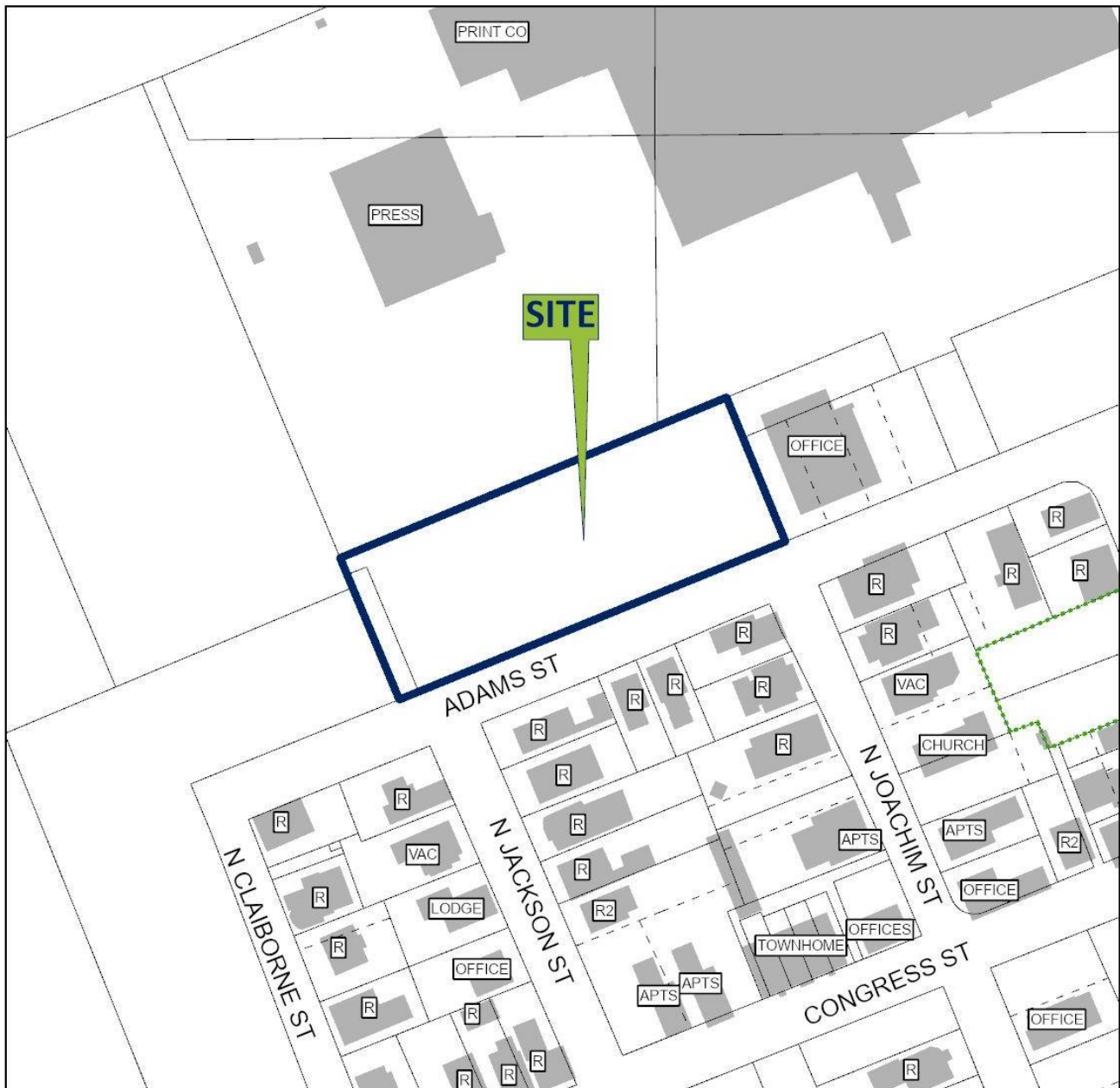
The *Guidelines* state that the massing and scale of new commercial buildings should reflect those of nearby historic structures and retain the visual continuity of the district. The massing and scale of the proposed structure is incongruent with the nearby historic residential properties. In proportion, however, it is significantly smaller than the expansive modern commercial building extant on the same site. The placement of the subject building visually connects it to this much larger building which would sit to its north, rather than to the historic residential environment on the south side of Adams Street. In addition, the proposed building would sit well behind an existing brick wall and would be further shielded by extant landscaping just behind the wall. These existing

features already serve to visually protect against the disruption of the traditional rhythms and patterns of the historic residential context that are established on the south side of Adams Street. (7.34, 7.35, 7.36, 7.38)

Although the proposed building would have a pedestrian entry door on the south elevation, which is oriented towards Adams Street, it does not provide the elements which are called for in the *Guidelines* to retain traditional entry patterns in the district. (7.43) Though there are no historic residential properties adjacent to the subject building, proposed building materials such as brick and metal are those which are seen on nearby historic residential properties and are commonly used throughout the DeTonti Square district. (7.47)

The *Guidelines* further direct that a newly constructed building be connected to the street by a walkway and that the visual impact of parking be minimized. As stated above, in the case of the subject project, the placement of the building on a paved parking area, along with the extant brick wall along Adams Street eliminate the need for a connective element to the street. Likewise, the wall and the established landscaping to the immediate north of the wall currently serve to reduce the visibility of parking. (10.5, 10.7)

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 6 DATE 1/17/2024
APPLICANT HAD on behalf of Gulf Distributing Co.
PROJECT New Construction: one-story vehicle maintenance facility; site improvements



Site Photos – North side Adams Street between Jackson and Joachim streets



1. View of site looking southwest towards Adams St.



2. View of site looking south.



3. View of site looking west.



4. View of site looking north from Adams Street.



5. View of Adams Street looking West.



6. View of historic residence across from site on the south side of Adams Street.



7. View of historic residences along the south side of Adams Street, looking West.



8. View of historic residence across from site on the south side of Adams Street.