



MEMO

To: J.M. Rayburn
Planner I, City of Dublin

From: Christine Trebellas, AICP, LEED Green Associate
Historic Preservation Consultant

Date: July 14, 2016

Re: Application #16-049, 73 S. Riverview St.

SUMMARY

The structures considered for demolition are located at 73 S. Riverview Street in Dublin, Ohio. The property contains a wood-frame bungalow dating to the 1930s as well as a detached two-car garage with two storage bays. I would consider the house a contributing element of the historic district based on its age and character. Despite several additions and alterations, it still retains several character-defining features which reflect the era in which it was built. Although the structure may be in poor condition by today's standards, it is unclear from the information presented if the building can be renovated to an inhabitable level. As such, I would recommend additional information about the dwelling before demolition is approved for this project. There are still several outstanding issues and questions remaining that need to be addressed. The garage, however, has little known architectural and/or historical significance beyond being an outbuilding to the main dwelling. According to my brief exterior visual inspection and the structural engineer's report, it is in a severely deteriorated condition and could pose a life safety issue. As such, demolition is a suitable option for the garage.

The summary below is provided to suggest issues that should be addressed before an application for demolition is approved for the house and is based upon this reviewer's understanding of Section 153.176 Demolition of the City of Dublin Zoning Code. These comments are based on the reviewer's professional experience and judgment regarding historic architecture and preservation projects. They are intended to assist in the preparation and evaluation of a revised demolition application. However, these comments do not (and cannot) identify every issue that may be of concern to the City of Dublin and its various review boards. As always, the final determination of these issues lies with the City of Dublin.

INTRODUCTION

The property at 73 S. Riverview Street is located in the Historic Residential Bridge Street District in the City of Dublin. It contains a one-and-a-half story, gable-roof, wood-frame bungalow dating to the 1930s (It was built in 1936 according to the Franklin County Auditor). The residence has rectangular plan with two rear additions as well as a hip-roof, enclosed front porch with classical square columns. It is unclear what the condition of the original porch is

under the alteration. Although vinyl siding and aluminum storm windows have been added, the building still retains many character-defining features such as three-over-one sash windows, an eyebrow dormer in the gable roof, and a brick chimney. Based on current information, I would consider the dwelling a **contributing** structure to the historic district. Even though it has lost some integrity of materials and workmanship as a result of the vinyl siding and other alterations and additions, it still has good integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. I would recommend that the City of Dublin Planning Department request a draft report from the historic district survey currently underway to help in the planning and evaluation process.

The property also contains a one-story, wood-frame, two-car garage. The structure has a metal gable-front roof and two metal shed-roof storage bays. Although it has some interesting features such as the metal roof, rafter tails, and loft door in the gable front, it has little known architectural and/or historical significance beyond being an outbuilding to the main dwelling.

COMMENTS ON THE APPLICATION SUBMITTAL

Based on the existing data presented in the demolition package, I would **not recommend demolition** until additional information is submitted to fully evaluate the condition of the main dwelling. According to Section 153.176 Demolition of the City of Dublin Zoning Code, an applicant must demonstrate economic hardship, unusual or compelling circumstances, or two out of four of the following conditions must be met:

1. The structure contains no features of architectural and historic significance to the character of the area in which it is located.

Although the applicant states that the dwelling has “marginal original detailing remaining,” the structure still has several character-defining features which reflect the period in which it was built and contribute to the character of the district. Some of the alterations, such as the vinyl siding, aluminum storm windows, and enclosed front porch, are reversible. As such, this condition is not fully met.

2. There is no reasonable economic use for the structure as it exists or as it might be restored, and that there exists no feasible or prudent alternative to demolition.

The applicant states that the residence is “uninhabitable due to structural deterioration and poor interior living conditions.” The condition assessment report provided by Richardson Engineering Consulting seems to support this statement. However, neither the applicant nor the engineer’s report fully addresses the economic feasibility of restoring the dwelling. The engineer states that the interior finishes and fixtures are deteriorated and need replacement, large areas of damaged floor joists and subflooring require replacement, wood posts in the basement need replacing, the basement walls may need repairs, the foundation drainage system may need replacing, mold remediation may be needed, new HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems are needed, and all of the windows are outdated by current energy standards and need to be replaced. However, engineer’s report does not state that the house is not sound or at risk for structural failure. Nor has the house been condemned by a government authority. Thus, it is unclear if the house can be restored or needs to be demolished.

In addition, no cost estimates were presented by the engineer to go with these recommendations. It is unclear if the cost of these renovations will make the restoration of the dwelling economically unadvisable. Although the engineer states that the interior finishes and fixtures need replacement, he does not take into account that 1) some of these finishes and fixtures may be historic, 2) the condition of the original ceiling above the drop acoustic tile ceiling (Photo 3), and that 3) many of these features would normally be replaced as part of routine maintenance (Photo 2). And while the damaged floor joists, subflooring, and wood posts in the basement require replacement, the engineer's report does not state the extent of this damage. Is it 10%, 50%, or 90%? A number or square footage assessment would give a better idea of the extent of this damage and the cost to repair it.

In addition, we should not apply today's code and standards to structures built in the past. When the house was first built in 1936, standards were considerably different compared to today. Any structure from the 1930s would need an HVAC system, new electrical and plumbing systems, and a new foundation drainage system to meet today's standards. And although the windows do not meet current energy codes, they are historic character-defining features of the building and should be maintained if possible.

Ideally, the cost of all these repairs and renovations should be compared to the cost of a new dwelling on the property to determine if restoration is a viable option. Until more information is provided by a contractor or other consultant familiar with historic renovations, we cannot fully determine the economic feasibility of renovating the bungalow. As such, this criterion is not met.

The garage should be considered separately. According to the engineer's report, the garage is "severely deteriorated and structurally unstable," "poses a life safety issue" and should be demolished. My cursory exterior inspection from the street reveals that the structure is in poor condition. It does not seem economically feasible to attempt to restore the garage when a new structure could easily replace it at a reduced cost. As such, the garage meets this condition for demolition.

3. Deterioration has progressed to the point where it is not economically feasible to restore the structure and such neglect has not been willful.

It appears that the applicant obtained the property on February 10, 2016 in this condition (Franklin County Auditor property report) so such deterioration was not willful. But, as stated above, the economic feasibility of restoring the dwelling has not been fully addressed. As such, this condition is not met for the residence. The garage, however, meets this criterion for demolition.

4. The location of the structure impedes the orderly development, substantially interferes with the purposes of the district, or detracts from the historical character or its immediate vicinity; or, the proposed construction to replace the demolition significantly improves the overall quality of the Architectural Review District without diminishing the historic value of the vicinity or the District.

Although the front porch and rear garage encroach into the setbacks, this condition in no way impeded the orderly development of the district. Rather, it contributes to the historic character of the area as an original feature and would be allowed to remain according to the current zoning code since it predates the code and is a “grandfathered” element. Once these items are removed, they cannot be re-built in their current location and the historic district could lose some of its personality. And although the design of the new dwelling is in character with the historic district, it is better to have an actual historic structure than a reconstruction. The current 1930s bungalow contributes to the residential historic district and is part of its historic makeup. Demolishing it and replacing it with a new structure would detract from the historic district and reduce the overall quality of the district. It would be replacing an original with a substitute and provide a false sense of history. As such, this criterion for demolition is not met.

In addition to not meeting two of the four conditions listed above for demolition, the applicant has not demonstrated economic hardship or unusual or compelling circumstances. Cost estimates for the dwelling’s restoration and a detailed comparison of the new work proposed by the applicant to restoration costs could provide the evidence needed for this hardship. The analysis and cost estimates for restoration versus new construction need to be prepared by an architect, engineer, and/or contractor with substantial experience in historic property restoration as opposed to new construction. The consultant must be familiar with historic properties and building techniques to determine what can be reasonably restored and what needs to be replaced. Thus, I recommend that further documentation be provided before the demolition application is approved or denied.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

According to local lore, a hoarder used to live in the house. In addition to the mold growth stated in the engineer’s report, there is a strong possibility of other biological contaminants such as urine, feces, dander, etc. from pets, rodents, insects, and other pests. The bungalow is of an age where it may contain asbestos and lead paint as well. Any renovation costs should include estimates and a description of the method for the remediation of these potentially hazardous materials by a licensed contractor who specializes in remediation.

To get a better understanding of the interior condition of the dwelling, more photographs are needed. These photographs should be in color, taken in every room of the structure, and keyed to a floor plan indicating the angle of the shot. Ideally, each room should have four photographs (or more) from each angle of the room to get a clear understanding of the layout and condition of the structure. Areas of deterioration need additional documentation; a ruler or tape measure would help provide scale. Video could also be used to show interior conditions.

Any new construction on the property needs to abide by the standards of the Historic Residential Bridge Street District in the City of Dublin. The front, rear, and side setbacks should follow those for the district. Since the property sits on a corner lot, it technically has two front yard setbacks: one on S. Riverview Street and one on Eberly Hill Lane. The applicant and/or developer need to be aware of these development standards, preferably before any demolition application is approved so there is no misunderstanding of what can be built on the property.

If demolition is approved for a structure, is there a required timeframe for new development and/or construction to occur? I would want to discourage demolition of a structure in a historic district to have the lot unused and undeveloped. This could encourage land speculation and create bare areas in the urban fabric which would detract from the overall character of the historic district.

73 South Riverview Street (OHI # FRA-8812-1):

The building at 73 South Riverview (OHI # FRA-8812-1) is a one-and-one-half-story, front-gable, bungalow-type single family dwelling with a vernacular architectural style. According to the Franklin County Auditor's Office, the house was constructed in 1936. The house has an asphalt-shingle roof with eyebrow dormer vents on the north and south roof slopes and an internal chimney located toward the southwest corner of the house. The exterior walls of the house are clad in vinyl siding with a projecting bay window on the south elevation. The windows for the dwelling appear to be three-over-one wood-frame units protected by one-over-one modern storm windows. An enclosed, hipped-roof porch supported by square wood columns with aluminum-frame jalousie windows shelters the entrance on the east elevation. The house occupies an irregular footprint, and the original portion of the house rests on a rusticated concrete-block foundation while the rear addition to the house rests on a plain concrete-block foundation. To the west of the house is a two-car, front-gable garage with a standing-seam metal roof, wood siding, and a shed-roof addition in a deteriorated condition.

The house appears to retain a good level of integrity, and although the house does not appear to be individually eligible for the National Register, it does appear to contribute to the Dublin Historic District. The contributing characteristics that the dwelling retains includes its modest height (less than three stories tall), its vernacular architectural style, space between its neighboring buildings allowing for open views of the surrounding neighborhood, an easily visible chimney, a landscaped yard, and an older outbuilding located behind the house. Although the house does not have a standing-seam metal roof and its siding material has been replaced, Commonwealth recommends that 73 South Riverview Street continues to contribute to the historic district.