

**BEFORE THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD
CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA**

IN THE MATTER OF a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of a single-family dwelling that is located at 1227 NW 4th Avenue and is a contributing structure in the University Heights Historic District North.

PETITION HP-15-02.

ORDER

Statement of the Petition

The Historic Preservation Board of the City of Gainesville on February 3, 2015, held a quasi-judicial hearing on Petition HP-15-02, filed by Causseaux, Hewett, & Walpole, Inc., agent for RBL Parcel D, LLC (“Petitioner”). The petition seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness (“COA”) to demolish a vacant, existing single-family dwelling that is located at 1227 NW 4th Avenue and is a contributing structure in the University Heights Historic District North.

Decision Criteria

The Historic Preservation Board’s decision in this matter shall be in accordance with the following decision criteria specified in Subsection 30-112(d)(6)c. of the Land Development Code:

- c. *Demolition.* A decision by the Historic Preservation Board approving or denying a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of buildings, structures or objects other than those in the Pleasant Street Historic District shall be guided by:
1. The historic or architectural significance of the building, structure or object;
 2. The importance of the building, structure or object to the ambience of a district;
 3. The difficulty or the impossibility of reproducing such a building, structure or object because of its design, texture, material, detail or unique location;
 4. Whether the building, structure or object is one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region;
 5. Whether there are definite plans for reuse of the property if the proposed demolition is carried out, and what the effect of those plans on the character of the surrounding area would be;
 6. Whether reasonable measures can be taken to save the building, structure or object from collapse; and
 7. Whether the building, structure or object is capable of earning reasonable economic return on its value.

Findings of Fact

Based upon the evidence presented at the quasi-judicial hearing and included within the entire record of this proceeding, the following findings of fact are made:

1. The subject property consists of approximately 0.31 acres located at 1227 NW 4th Avenue, and is part of a proposed development area for a mixed-use infill project located on NW 13th Street that would allow for residential, commercial, and office uses.
2. Located on the subject property is a vacant, existing, three bedroom, two bathroom single-family dwelling with a reported date of construction of 1933.
3. The structure has been deemed a contributing structure in the University Heights Historic District North, and contributes in scale and character to the Fifth Avenue neighborhood.
4. The structure is a common bond brick house, masonry vernacular style, period revival cottage with classical tendencies, including the door surround made up of two Corinthian pilasters with entablature.
5. Several materials within the structure are salvageable, including the oak hardwood floors, kitchen cabinets, doors, windows, and tiles.
6. The property is not one of the last remaining examples of its kind in the neighborhood, the county or the region.
7. The Petitioner submitted a structural assessment of the house produced by Southard Engineering, Inc., a structural engineering firm, which contained a summary of recommendations stating: "In summary the cost of bringing this building up to a standard where by which it could be habitable again far exceeds the value of the entire building and most likely the cost of building an entirely new building. I strongly recommend condemnation of the building and that it tore down [sic]. In its current condition the building presents a health hazard to any occupants. This building is not a suitable candidate for building relocation."
8. The Petitioner did not submit any evidence regarding the expertise of the structural engineer to assess historic structures, including rehabilitation. Section 30-112 of the Land Development Code defines "experience in rehabilitation" as work on certified rehabilitation projects where federal tax credits for historic preservation were received, or work on a building or structure in Florida that required a local Certificate of Appropriateness.
9. The Petitioner did not submit any evidence regarding whether the structure is capable of earning reasonable economic return on its value.
10. The Historic Preservation Board offered the Petitioner the opportunity to continue this petition to a date certain in the future to allow the Petitioner to present evidence regarding both the structural engineer's expertise to assess historic structures, including rehabilitation, and whether the structure is capable of earning a reasonable economic return on its value. The Petitioner declined and requested that the Historic Preservation Board decide the matter without such evidence.

Discussion

The subject structure has historic and architectural significance and is important to the character of the University Heights Historic District North. Because of the importance of this structure to the history of the City of Gainesville and this area specifically, the Petitioner would need to provide sufficient evidence that no reasonable measures can be taken to preserve the structure and that the structure is incapable of earning a reasonable economic return on its value.

The Petitioner has provided insufficient evidence to show that the subject structure was beyond repair or could not be renovated to a livable condition with reasonable measures that would be common for a structure of this age and importance. The Petitioner's primary source of evidence was a structural assessment of the house produced by Southard Engineering, Inc., that recommended demolition. However, the Petitioner has failed to submit any evidence regarding the expertise of this structural engineer to assess historic structures, including rehabilitation as defined in the Land Development Code. An opinion by an expert in historic structures is vital because it is expected that a house of this age may need a complete rehabilitation, but could nevertheless be preserved short of demolition. In addition, the structural assessment provided focused on the interior of the home, while the Historic Preservation Board focuses primarily on external features of a structure; therefore, the Historic Preservation Board would need further evidence of the structural problems associated with the exterior envelope of the house. Also, it should be noted that the structural assessment's pictures showing plaster overspray over electrical outlets is not indicative of electrical problems as suggested.

Order

DENIED. Based upon the competent, substantial evidence received and included within the record, the Historic Preservation Board, by a vote of 5-0, denies Petition HP-15-02 and finds that the Petitioner has not met its burden of presenting sufficient evidence to allow this board to grant a COA for demolition pursuant to the decision criteria specified in Subsection 30-112(d)(6)c. of the Land Development Code.

Entered this 3rd day of March, 2015.


Historic Preservation Board, Chair

Attest:


Historic Preservation Board, Staff Liaison