



OREGON CITY

Community Development – Planning

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In the Matter of an Historic Review of)
approval of an addition to a designated)
Structure in the McLoughlin Conservation)
District. **City File No. HR 12-06**)
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FINDINGS OF FACT, CONCLUSIONS
OF LAW AND FINAL ORDER

Introduction

This matter came before the Oregon City Historic Review Board on November 27, 2012 and after deliberation the Historic Review Board voted to approve the applicant's request to de-designate a local Landmark, the Horace Williams Residence, located at 308 18th Street.

Facts

The property is zoned "MUD" Mixed Use Downtown and the Comprehensive Plan designation is "MUD" Mixed Use Downtown. Directly west of the property is I-205. To the north is Industrial Metal World, a steel manufacturing company. To the east is a PGE substation. To the south are two other residential homes. These homes were part of the Green Point Neighborhood, once a large residential enclave of working-class homes that was largely demolished with the installation of I-205. This is the only structure within "Green Point" currently being used as a residence.

Notice of the proposal was sent to property owners within three hundred feet of the subject property and the CIC. Additionally, the property was posted with a Notice of Land Use sign with details about the proposal. Transmittals were sent to various City departments and other agencies regarding the proposed development plan. Relevant comments from City departments are addressed in this report as appropriate. The McLoughlin Neighborhood Association submitted a letter opposing the request for de-designation. The letter was submitted into the record as Exhibit A at the night of the November 27, 2012 HRB meeting

GEOGRAPHIC SETTING: Although it is addressed as 18th Street, this house is located on a street identified as the "Main Street Extension", which leads to the industrial area behind the Oregon City Shopping Center. Nearby remaining structures include the Hackett House at 415 17th Street, and the Wood House at 309 17th Street.

HISTORIC INVENTORY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: "No biographical information was found on Horace Williams, the original owner of the house. The house has significance for its age, although it is badly deteriorated, the house also has significance because it is one of the last remaining housing in the remaining in the area known as 'Greenpoint', which was a residential area mostly destroyed by the construction of the freeway. The residence was built sometime between 1895-1902."

The Sanborn maps show the house in 1925 and 1950. However, the 1900 and 1911 maps do not show a house in this location. Therefore either the house was moved onto the site before 1925 or could have been constructed on-site after 1911. A number of facts suggest that the house was likely moved to the site before 1925. The survey form indicates that given the vernacular style, it was likely constructed sometime between 1895-1902. While not unheard of, this simple vernacular house was not as common an architectural style for residences after 1911. Houses were often moved rather than demolished at this time in Oregon City's history. Further investigations would need to be performed to determine if the house was moved to this site but the Historic Review Board concluded that it is likely.

The applicant seeks to remove the landmark designation in order to demolish the house and allow for the expansion of the adjacent PGE substation. The applicant explains that there are no discernible architectural or aesthetic qualities for this house and identifies a number of other vernacular-style homes located within the city. The applicant argues that the home is no longer suitable for residential use due to an increased inundation of industrial development. As proof, the applicant cites an increase of industrial noises along with an unsuccessful attempt to sell this home over the last nine months. The applicant claims that the home is not suitable for non-residential uses because it lacks parking and the lot is too small to accommodate a retail or commercial use. The applicant explains that her precarious financial situation is likely to result in her losing the home and without a caretaker, it is likely to fall into further disrepair.

Staff Recommendation

At the November 27, 2012 HRB meeting, staff recommended denial of the application. After hearing staff presentation, applicant's rebuttal and public comments, Board members voted 4-0 to approve the de-designation request and provided staff direction on revised findings and appropriate conditions of approval.

Revised Findings

The following findings have been revised from the initial staff report by direction from the Historic Review Board.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

OCMC 17.40.050(D) sets out the criteria for de-listing and requires that the Historic Review Board consider the following criteria:

D. In preparing the recommendation or decision, the historic review board shall limit its review to:

1. Whether the proposed district or landmark would serve the purpose of the historic overlay district as stated in Section [17.40.010](#); and

17.40.010 - Purpose.

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this chapter is to:

A. Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements and of districts which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;

Finding: Complies. The HRB finds that the lack of aesthetic value within the home coupled with the loss of a majority of the 'Greenpoint' neighborhood makes this property no longer suitable for protection as a landmark. This structure retains few of the characteristics of a simple vernacular bungalow that typifies worker housing in Oregon City in that the windows have been removed and replaced with vinyl windows. In addition to its significantly deteriorated and altered state, significant changes in the character of the surrounding neighborhood have made it impossible for this home to signify the 'Greenpoint' residential area. Therefore, the HRB finds that allowing this property to be de-designated and subsequently demolished will have a negligible impact on the cultural, social, and architectural history of Oregon City in that it will have a modest impact on the overall inventory of historic resources within the City. The Sandborn maps suggest that this home was not built on the site but rather was moved there sometime before 1925. The surrounding neighborhood has been slowly transformed from a residential area to an industrial one. Given the loss of the residential neighborhood, the HRB finds that delisting for demolition is appropriate only after a good faith effort is made to give away the home conditioned on its removal, photo and site plan documentation of the structure and deconstruction of the resaleable parts rather than demolition. These items are outlined in greater detail in the conditions of approval.

B. Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage as embodied and reflected in such improvements and districts;

Finding: Complies. Allowing this property to be de-designated and subsequently demolished will have a modest impact on the cultural heritage of the city providing an understanding of the unadorned, relatively modest houses and neighborhoods that made up portions of our city. However, Oregon City has an inventory of modest houses that also meet this category. The Greenpoint neighborhood was essentially destroyed by the creation of the Interstate Highway. Removal of this house will not further affect a neighborhood that has already completely lost its integrity.

C. Complement any National Register Historic districts designated in the city;

Finding: N/A This property is located on the north end of the city and is very separated from the Canemah National Register District -2 miles away to the south.

D. Stabilize and improve property values in such districts;

Finding: Complies. Citing a lack of interest in purchasing the home, the applicant argues that the PGE expansion proposal, including demolition, would improve property values to a greater extent than leaving an empty, isolated and derelict residence. The Historic Review Board concurs and adopts this finding.

E.Foster civic pride in the beauty and noble accomplishments of the past;

Finding: Complies. A home can be plain, modest, lack ornamentation, and still be suitable for preservation as part of the city's built heritage. Workers, and the housing that service them, plays an important role for understanding the accomplishments of the city. Existing modification to the house, including the installation of vinyl windows and T1-11 porch siding, in conjunction with the amount of existing modest workers homes of higher integrity in the city, leaves this house lacking sufficient cause for retention.

F. Protect and enhance the city's attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business and industry thereby provided;

Finding: Complies. The Greenpoint neighborhood was essentially destroyed by the creation of the Interstate Highway. Removal of this house will not further affect a neighborhood that has already completely lost its integrity. The house has very little effect on tourist attractions and visitors the city. Its retention or removal will have little or no effect on the economic health of the city. Conversion to an office or commercial use is very problematic for the severe lack of off and on street parking in the area.

G.Strengthen the economy of the city;

Finding: Complies. The retention or removal of this simple one story house in a location effectively cut off from the rest of the city by the installation of I-205, will have no effect on the overall health of the city.

H.Promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, energy conservation, housing and public welfare of the city; and

Finding: Complies. Staff finds that the home does not retain sufficient landmark-eligible design qualities necessary or is located in an appropriate location to serve as a means to educate about worker housing, provides needed housing, or enhance the public welfare of the city.

I.Carry out the provisions of LCDC Goal 5. See findings discussing the City's Comprehensive Plan below.2.Conformity with the purposes of the city comprehensive plan.

Historic Buildings Outside Identified District Boundaries

There are many historic buildings outside the designated Historic Districts. Some of the buildings are among the oldest in the city, and many stand alone because they were originally built outside of "urban" Oregon City in what used to be farm and pastureland. City areas outside the Canemah and McLoughlin areas have been surveyed to identify the most significant buildings.

Present Status. Efforts to preserve individual historic buildings have been scattered. There is little public recognition of the historic value of significant buildings outside of McLoughlin and Canemah except for the more prominent and expensive estate homes. The Ely, Park Place, Rivercrest, and South End areas in particular have deteriorated, and some of the older homes have been demolished, often to the detriment of the area. Demolition and major incompatible remodeling are critical problems for historic preservation because they are usually irreversible. Private preservation and restoration efforts should be encouraged and assisted by local recognition of significant individual historic buildings throughout Oregon City.

Historic Landmarks

Historic landmarks are structures or sites with unusual historic importance and contribute to the city's identity. Maintenance costs are often returned in tourism revenues. Appreciation of local culture and history is enhanced.

Criteria for designation as a historic landmark are:

- association with a major historic person
- association with an historic event or period of time
- association with a former or continuing institution that has contributed to the life of the city
- embodiment of the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or representation of the work of a master, or possession of high artistic values, or representation of a significant and distinguishable entity where components may lack individual distinction
- association with a group, organization, enterprise in history

Finding: Complies. The applicant argues that the home has no discernible architectural qualities and there are many other homes just like it throughout the city; and (2) the neighborhood has been largely supplanted by industrial uses. While the house still retains marginal integrity and its simple construction tells an important part of Oregon City, it has functionally lost its story through its location and condition.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

For the above reasons, and based on the applicant's request for de-designation and the findings contained in the record, the Historic Review Board found at the November 27, 2012 Hearing by a vote of 4 to 0 that the criteria for de-designation has been met. The de-designation is final upon final city decision.

Revised Conditions of Approval.

Prior to a release of a demolition/moving permit, the applicant or designee shall submit the following information:

1. Notify the public that the house is available for relocation/moving at no cost short of the relocation costs being paid by the mover including:
 - a. A robust 90-day noticing plan that advertises the house as available for relocation at the mover's expense. The plan shall include the following:
 - i. The notice shall be placed in a local paper of record.
 - ii. A sign shall be placed on the property advertising relocation and provide contact information.
 - iii. The applicant shall work with city staff to send the relocation/moving notice to the following groups:
 1. Oregon City Neighborhood Associations/CIC
 2. Architectural Heritage Center
 3. Historic Preservation League of Oregon
 4. Heritage Listserve through Oregon SHPO
 5. Rebuilding Center
 6. Oregon City News, Portland Tribune
 7. Local TV affiliates (KGW, FOX, ABC, CBS)
 8. Oregonian
 9. AIA – Oregon Chapter
 - b. If an interested party desires to move the house, that party shall be given 30 additional days before demolition to coordinate and move the structure.
2. The applicant or designee shall provide the following for the City's land use files:
 - a. Photos of all four elevations
 - b. 3-5 context photos of the site
 - c. Interior photos of each room
 - d. Site plan, elevations and floor plan of house drawn to scale
3. If the house cannot be moved, the applicant or its designee shall submit an architectural deconstruction plan to city staff that shows that the salvageable pieces of the house will be removed for reuse/resale. The deconstruction plan is not intended to require full house hand deconstruction, rather is aimed at ensuring that materials that can be repurposed stay out of the landfill.