

Historic Preservation Design Review

December 20, 2012

HP-12-24, 14-20 N. Main St. (City)

I. THE REQUEST

Applicant: City of Sumter

Status of the Applicant: Property Owner

Request: Demolition approval for the structures located at 14-20 N. Main St.

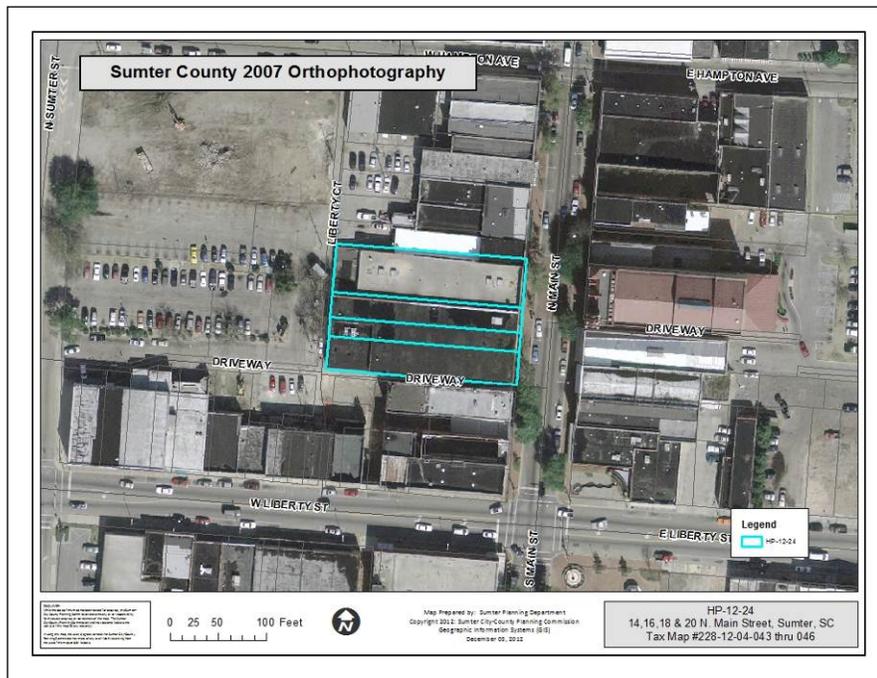
Location: 14-20 N. Main St.

Present Use/Zoning: Vacant Structure/CBD

Tax Map Reference: 228-12-04-043 through -046

Adjacent Property Land Use and Zoning: North – Commercial /CBD
South – Commercial /CBD
East – Main St & Commercial /CBD
West – Commercial Parking Lot/CBD

II. BACKGROUND



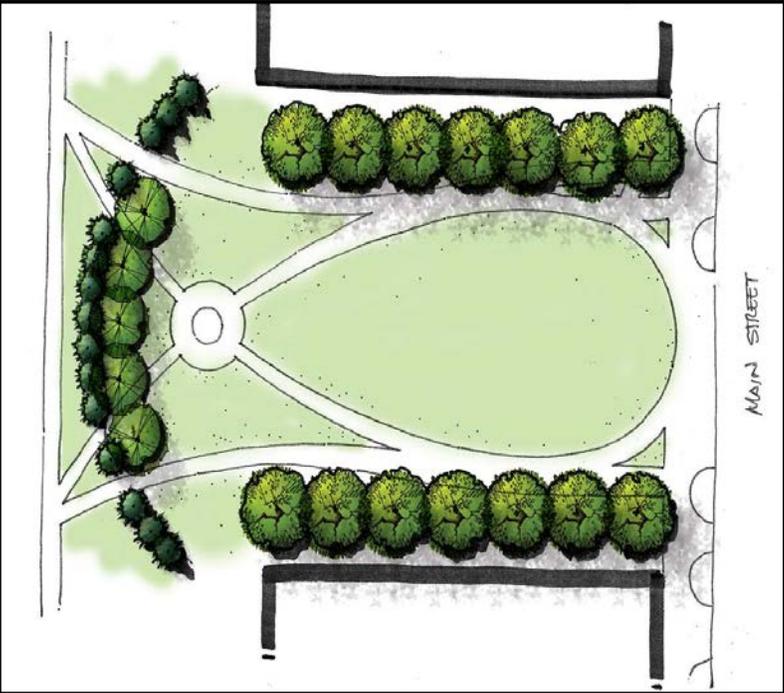
The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Demolition Permit to remove two commercial structures located at 14 – 20 N. Main St. The City acquired this property with the intent to demolish the structures to create opportunity for commercial development across from the Opera House. The properties are interior parcels on the West side of N. Main St. in the block between Liberty St. and Hampton St. The combined area of the four parcels is +/- 0.6 acres.



The City has long sought an opportunity to attract a downtown hotel and in 2011 moved to acquire the parcels across from the opera house for a potential project. In an effort to prepare the site for future development, demolition is proposed. Although there is no imminent hotel or other commercial proposal, the City believes these steps are necessary to show market availability.

In the interim, the City plans to develop an open space parcel for public use, across from the Opera House. The exact use of the space as well as design is under consideration by City Administration and City Council at this time. Several alternatives have been proposed and are attached to this report. Initial indications from the City suggest that the space could be planned for open air market use, downtown evening, and public park enjoyment. A wider view shed of the Opera House would be available under this plan.

There is no timeframe offered for this interim status and so the demolition advances the scenario to provide for the public space.



Left: One of the Downtown Park design concepts, prepared by the Land Plan Group.

Historic Status of the Structures

The building at 14 – 18 N. Main St, which currently houses the Maxway Retail Store, is of indeterminate age and was renovated, with an addition in back and a new façade, in 1950. Based on the 1985 Main Street Sumter Survey Report,

“A building or buildings on this site appear on the 1923 Sanborn maps, which would have been built after replacement of the original courthouse designed by Robert Mills. However, inspections during this survey were unable to reveal if the existing Eagle store is a renovation of one of these early buildings or is original construction, hence the estimate of 1950 as the date for renovation and/or construction.”

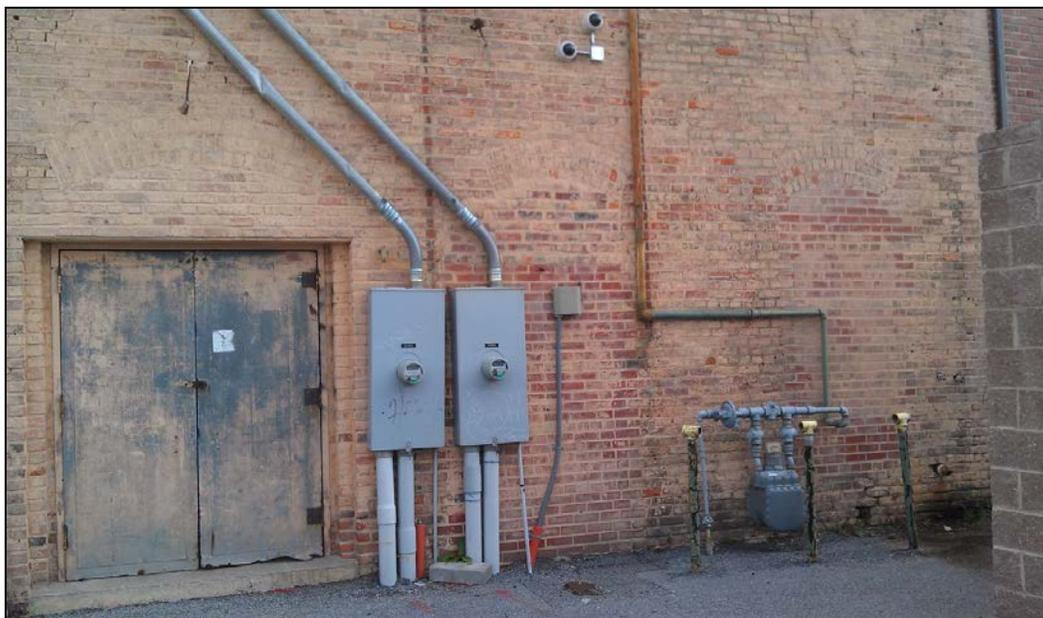


However, the pictures *Left* and *Below* indicate that the rear and side walls of the building are of an older brick than the 1950's addition and façade. Remnants of the former windows and doors are still clearly visible, as is the difference in brick between the older and newer portions of the building. Also, the rear of the older building is still visible and is taller than the newer portion.





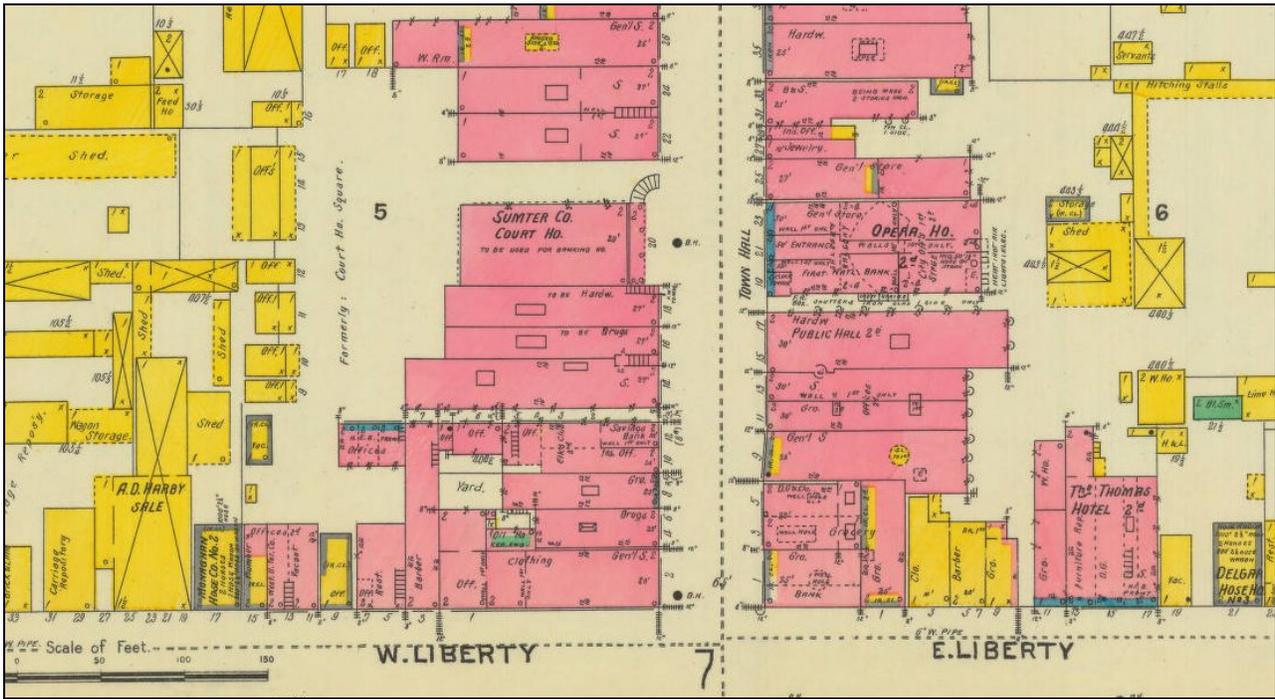
Rear views, taken from the City Parking lot

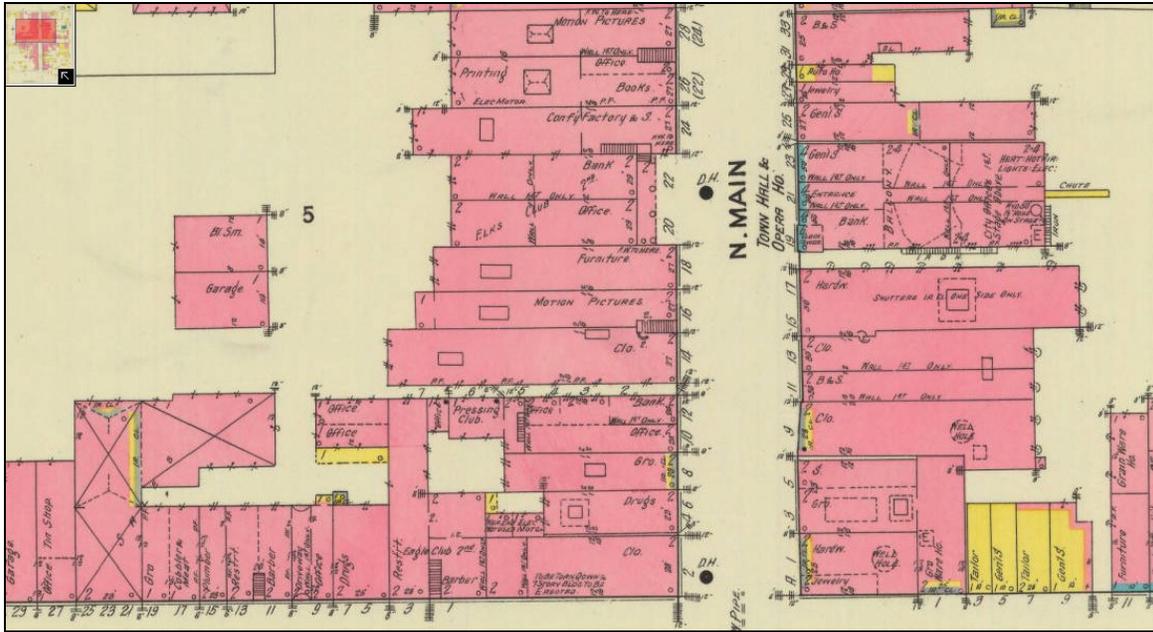




Above: The adjacent building at 20 (22) N. Main St., which currently houses Cititrends retail store, is listed in the 1985 Main Street Sumter Survey Report as appearing on the site in 1915 Sanborn Maps, and “...inspections of the building indicate that the building could be at least this old, however, renovations to the front of the building have relieved the building of any architectural or historic significance.” However the picture associated with this statement is actually of the back of the adjacent Maxway building. Therefore, it is assumed that the report confused the two properties, and is actually referring to the Maxway building (14-18 N. Main St.) with this statement. It is likely that the building that was in the location of the current Cititrends store was completely demolished when the newer structure was built, and that some portions of the Maxway store, namely the side and rear walls, remain intact from 1906 or before.

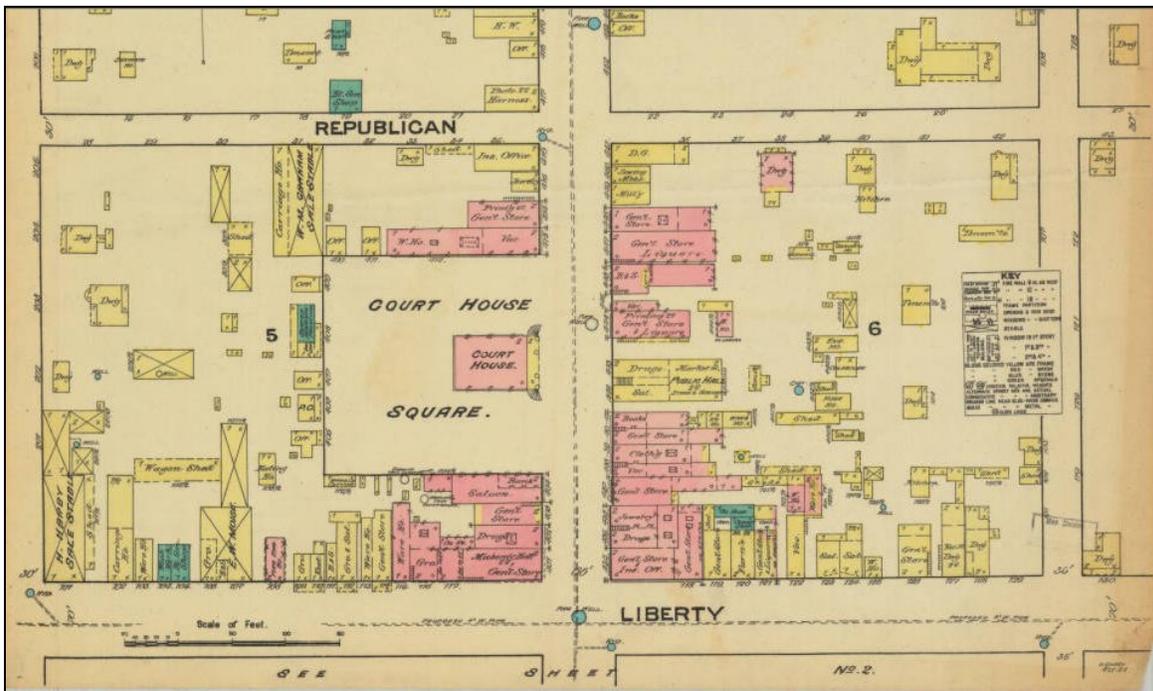
Below: The 1906 Sanborn insurance map confirms that a building was on this site matching the footprint above, and the overlay (which is from the 1912 map) below clearly shows the addition built in 1950.





Above: The space in front of the Opera House in 1912 was recessed, creating an open space across the street.

Below: Going back further, the 1884 Sanborn Map also indicates an open space along this portion of N. Main St., around the courthouse that was on the site at that time, designed by Robert Mills.



Decision Making Criteria

Design review approval is required prior to issuance of a demolition permit. When reviewing a demolition request, the Zoning Ordinance and the Design Review Guidelines Manual both speak to general review criteria.

The *Design Review Guidelines Manual* states:

#97) HISTORIC BUILDINGS SHOULD NOT BE DEMOLISHED

Normally Required

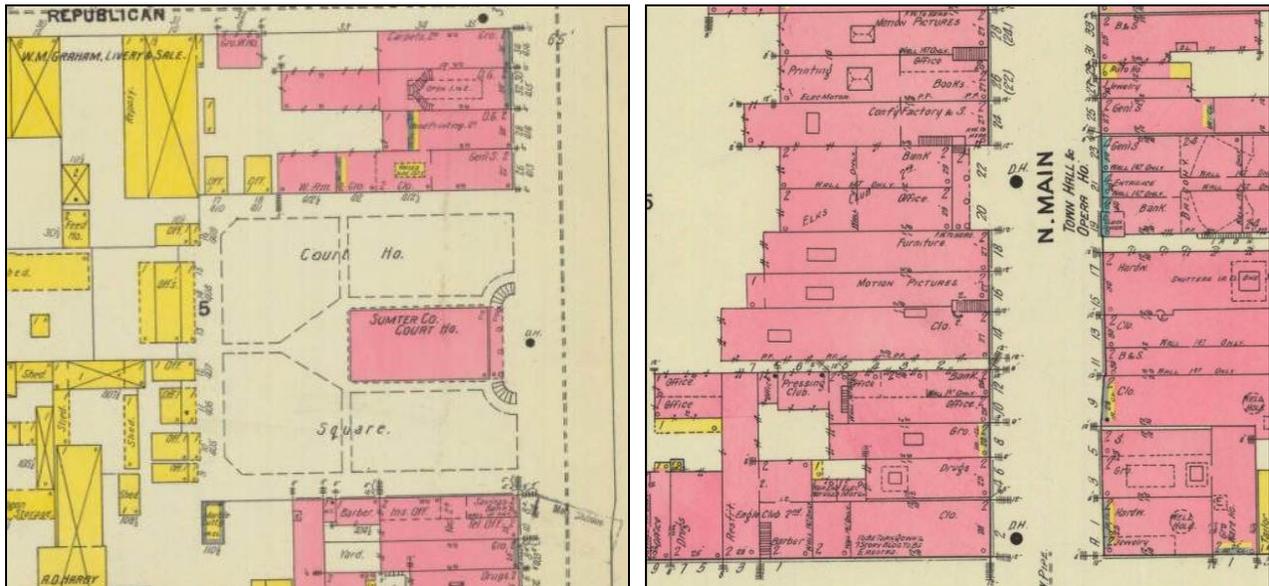
- a. **Historic buildings in Sumter's districts should not be demolished. Demolition may only be approved if one or more of the following conditions are met:**
 - **Where the public safety and welfare requires the removal of a structure or building.**
 - **Where economic hardship has been demonstrated, proven, and accepted by the Board of Historical Review.**
 - **Where the structural instability or deterioration of a property is demonstrated through a report by a structural engineer or architect. Such a report must clearly detail the property's physical condition, reasons why rehabilitation is not feasible, and cost estimates for rehabilitation versus demolition. In addition to this report there should be a separate report that details future action on the site.**
 - **Where buildings have lost their original architectural integrity and no longer contribute to the character of the district.**
 - **After a 120-day waiting period imposed by the Historic Preservation Design Review Committee to determine if the building could be saved by others.**

Site Considerations:

These two buildings were extensively renovated in 1950, particularly the front façades and interior. At that time, it is very likely that the entire structure at 20 N. Main St. was either removed or completely covered with newer facing. The façades of both buildings were completely renovated and altered at this time, obscuring or destroying any historical significance to the street front views. However, the side and rear walls of the structure at 14-18 N. Main St. are part of an older structure. Remnants of the old windows and doors are still visible, and the brickwork is obviously of an age. The building is estimated to have been built between 1902 and 1906, according to the Sanborn maps. The structure at 20 N. Main St. has no visible architecture with historic significance.

With regard to the interim public park, the site has a history of being used as open space. In 1884, the area around the courthouse was open, and later the area directly in front of the Opera House

was indented from the street to create a courtyard. (See maps below, from 1902 and 1912 respectively)



For the record, the *City of Sumter Zoning & Development Standards Ordinance* states:

1.o.4. Where a request for a demolition permit is involved in an application for a certificate of appropriateness, the Design Review Board may postpone the issuance of a demolition permit for one hundred twenty (120) days pending a thorough review of the matter. An extension of an additional one hundred twenty (120) days may be authorized when the Design Review Board is reasonably certain that an alternative to demolition can be achieved during the additional time period. The Design Review Board shall provide a recommendation to the Mayor and City Council when it is in the public interest to save vulnerable architectural, cultural, and/or archaeological resources which would be damaged or lost by the demolition or partial demolition or the moving of a building or structure.

Section 1.o.4. gives the Board the option of postponing the issuance of a COA for 120 days, with an optional 120 day extension, in order to protect a vulnerable historic property.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Planning Staff recommends approval based on the Design Review Guidelines. Specifically we find that demolition criteria #4 has been satisfied. The subject structures, in our opinion, have substantially lost their architectural integrity and no longer contribute to the character of the district.

IV. HISTORIC PRESERVATION DESIGN REVIEW – DECEMBER 20, 2012

The Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee at its meeting on Thursday, December 20, 2012, voted to approve this request based on the Design Review Guidelines demolition criteria #4 being met:

*Where buildings have lost their original architectural integrity and no longer contribute to the character of the district.