

Historic Preservation Design Review

October 24, 2013

HP-13-17, 14-20 N. Main St. (City)

I. THE REQUEST

Applicant: City of Sumter

Status of the Applicant: Property Owner

Request: Approval for sidewalks, landscaping and green space

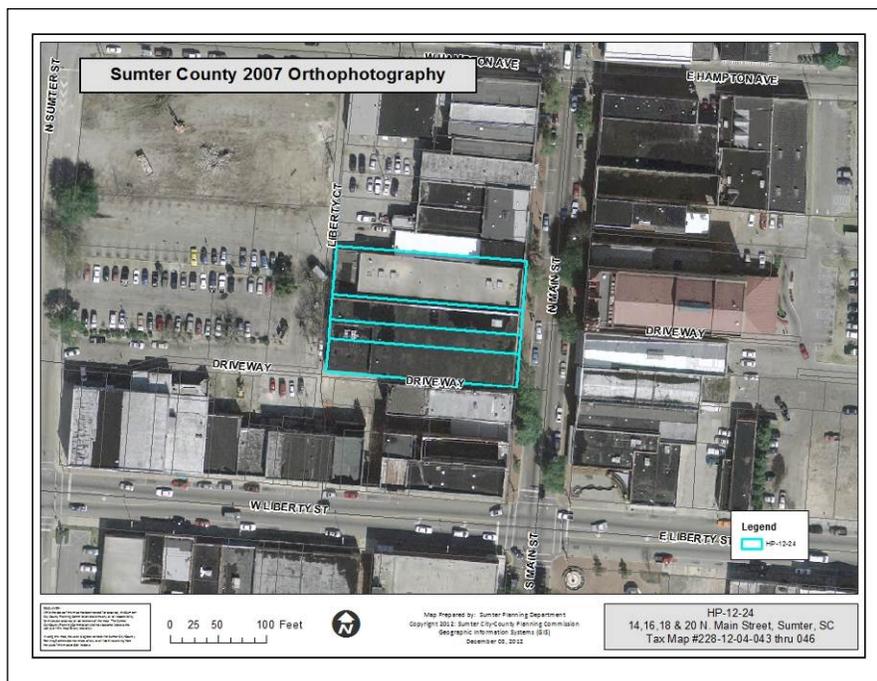
Location: 14-20 N. Main St.

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

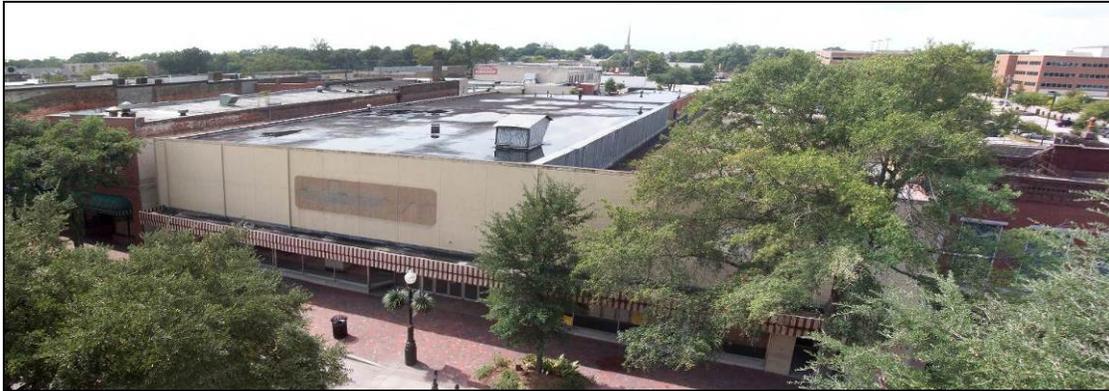


The applicant is seeking approval to construct a landscaped courtyard in the space where two buildings located at 14 – 20 N. Main St. are scheduled to be demolished, as shown on the image (*left*). These properties received a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Demolition Permit to remove the two commercial structures in December 2012.

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.



Above: The proposed town green open space will be defined on either side by these buildings: the Tavern on Main to the north (*above left*) and the vacant building at 10 N. Main St. (*above right* - also owned by City) to the south.



Above: The area in red is the proposed open space where the two buildings will be demolished.

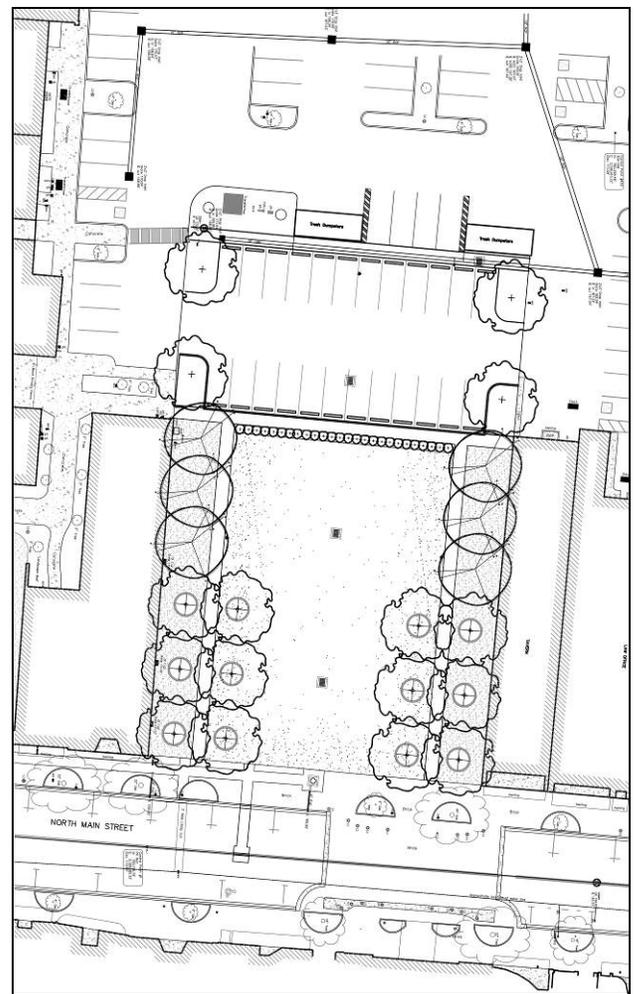
Below: The area in red is the proposed open space where the two buildings will be demolished. The Opera House (indicated by a blue arrow) is directly across the street from this site.



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, the demolition was approved in December 2012. Although there is no imminent hotel or other commercial proposal, the City believes these steps are necessary to show market availability.

The City proposes to develop an open space parcel for public use in the interim, until a commercial proposal is presented. 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.

Below: The proposed design concept, prepared by the Land Plan Group.

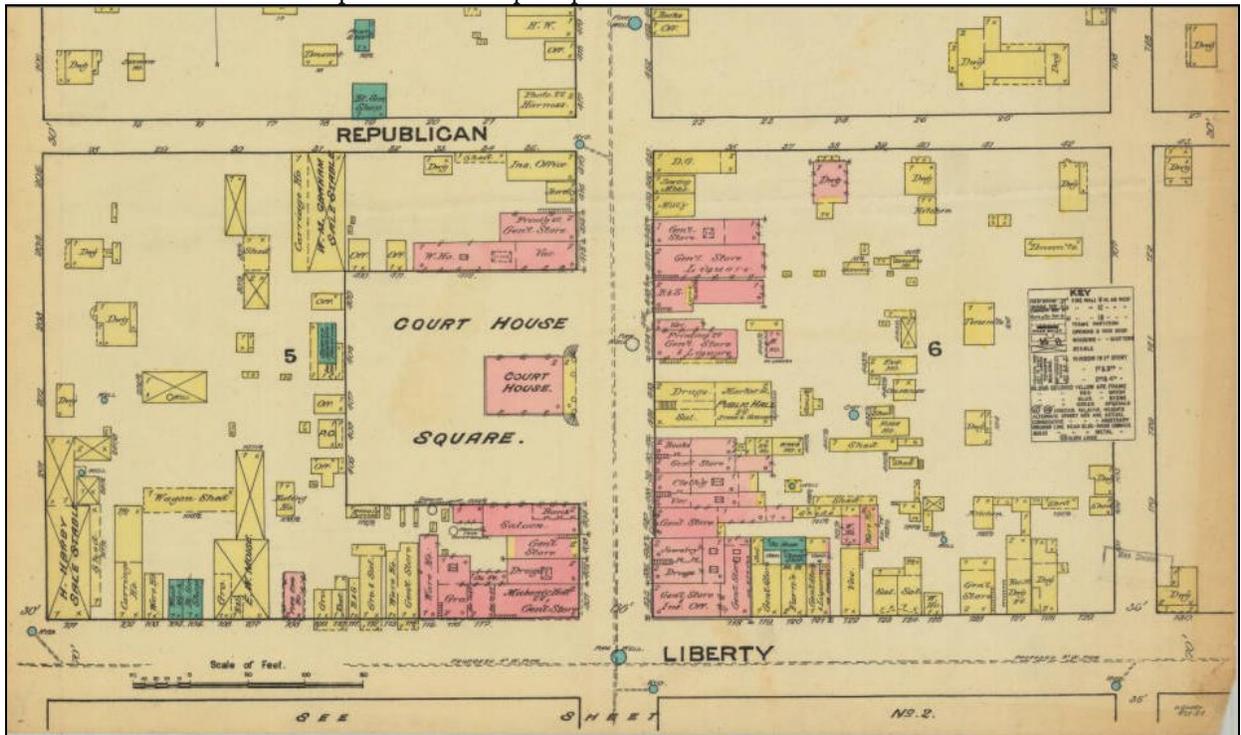


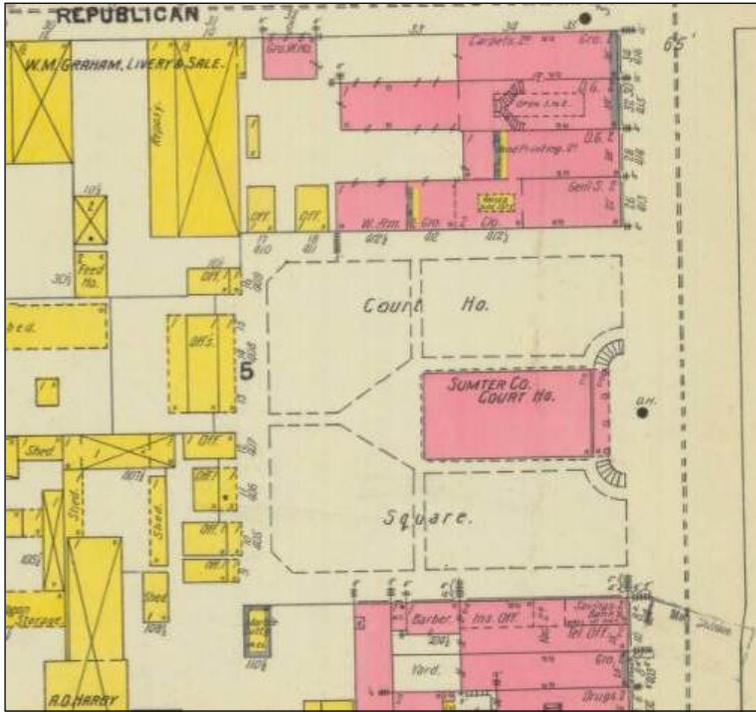
Historic Status of the Site



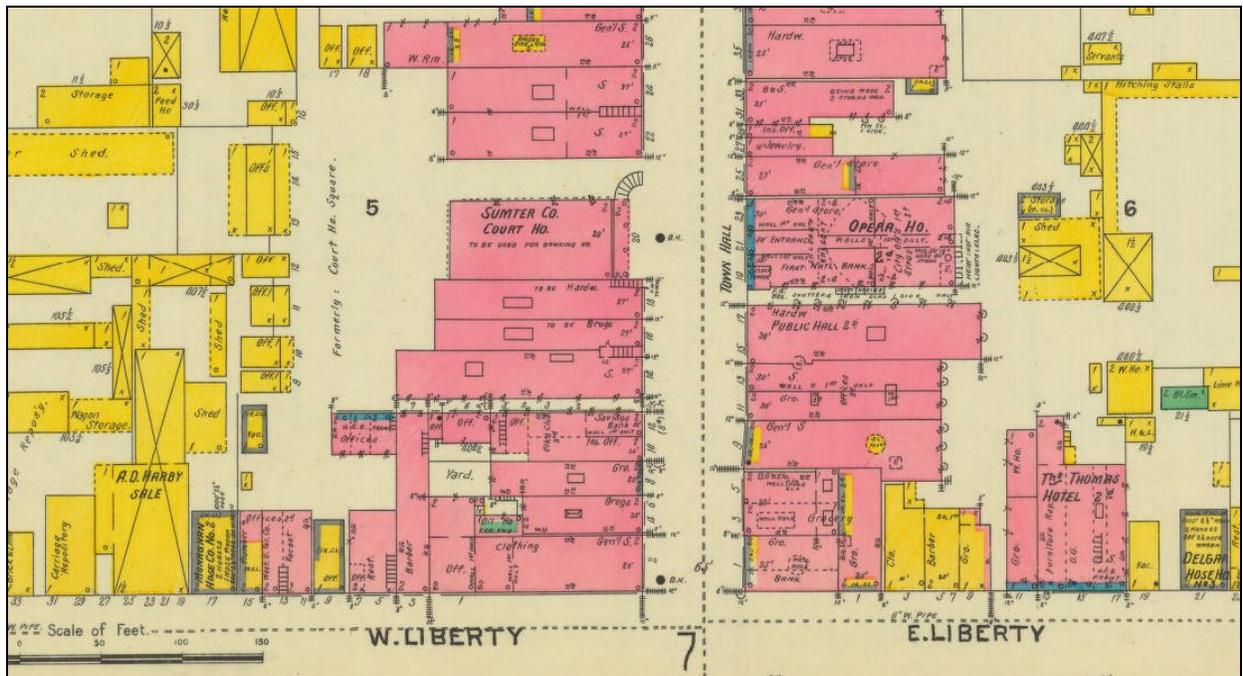
Above: The original Sumter County Courthouse, designed by Robert Mills, was located directly across from the Opera House.

Below: The 1884 Sanborn Map indicates an open space around the courthouse.



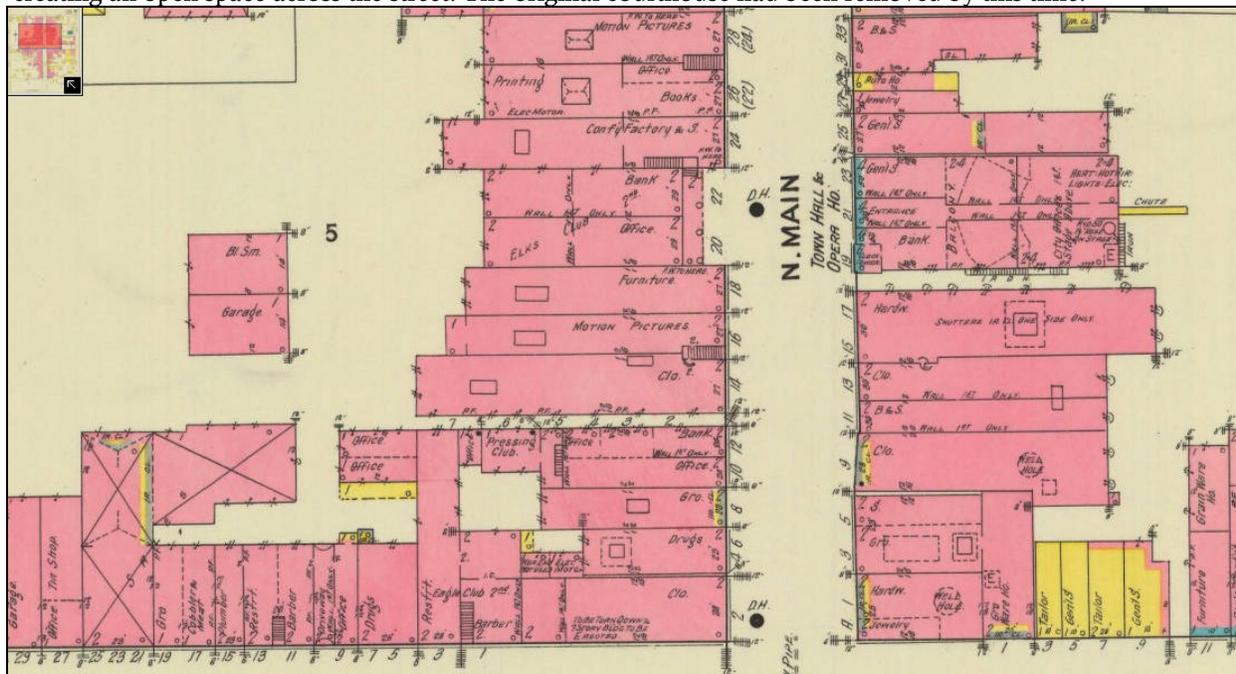


Left: The 1902 Sanborn Map indicates an open space around the courthouse as well, and presumably the dashed lines indicate a landscape design of some sort – perhaps walking areas versus lawn.



Above: The 1906 Sanborn insurance map showing the location of the courthouse. By this time much of the open space around the courthouse was being utilized by other buildings.

Below: In 1912 the space in front of the Opera House on the opposite side of Main Street was recessed, creating an open space across the street. The original courthouse had been removed by this time.



There is minimal guidance in the Guidelines referencing downtown open space design;

The Design Review Guidelines Manual states:

#3) LANDSCAPING SHOULD COMPLEMENT RATHER THAN DETRACT FROM BUILDINGS

#4) SIDEWALK AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD RESPECT DOWNTOWN CHARACTER

Recommended

a. Streetscape improvements should be in keeping with the traditional character of downtown. Appropriate improvements include the introduction of brick sidewalks or textured concrete which imitates the appearance of brick. The use of brick or textured concrete can be of particular assistance in defining pedestrian crosswalks across streets. Simple street furniture such as wood benches would also be appropriate. The addition of elements such as continuous metal or concrete canopies, oversized kiosks or gazebos, and ornate wrought iron street furniture should not occur.

b. Streetscape improvements should be selected for their simplicity and durability. Many streetscape improvements completed across the country in the 1960s and 1970s are now in varying degrees of deterioration. In many of these cases materials or construction methods were selected which were incompatible with exposure to the elements or could not withstand the constant use by vehicles and pedestrians. Before any major expenditure for street furniture, sidewalk materials, or curbing, the longevity and lifespan of the proposed improvements should be carefully studied. Once selected, street furniture should be sited away from vehicular areas and be bolted or anchored in place to discourage vandalism.

- The submitted plan meets the criteria listed above.

Site Considerations:

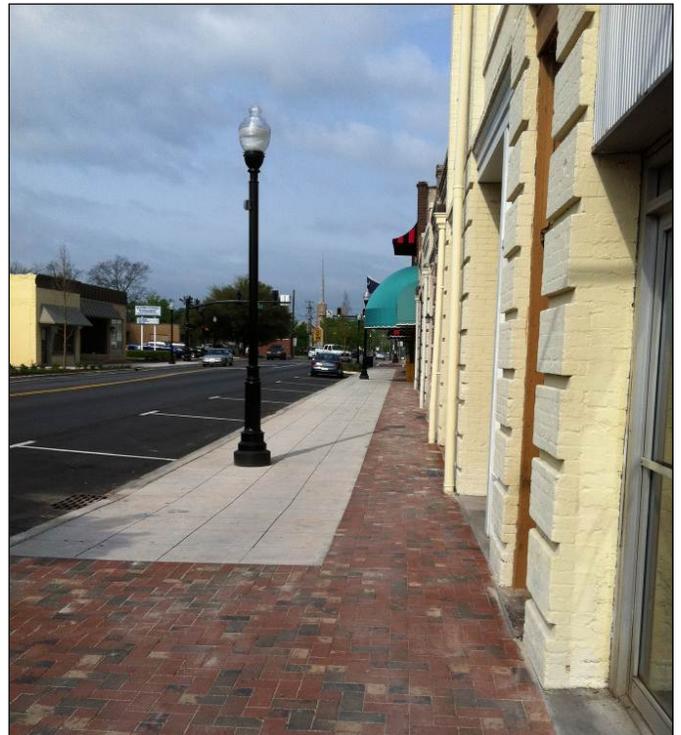
This proposal is for an interim open space / green to beautify the site until such time as a commercial development takes place on the property. The site has a history of being used as open space. In 1884, the area around the courthouse was open, and later the area directly in front of the Opera House was indented from the street to create a courtyard. We note that the City's design plan is to preserve a courtyard/open space area at the street approximately 70 x 70, consistent with historical portrayals, even at the time of development on site.

#5) LIGHT FIXTURES WHICH REINFORCE DOWNTOWN CHARACTER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

Recommended

a. The introduction of traditional light fixtures is appropriate. Many communities have reintroduced historic designs for street lighting into their downtown areas. These fixtures are generally of cast iron or similar types of metal and have globes based on historic precedents. The design of the lighting should be based on light fixtures originally used in Sumter. If such light designs are no longer available fixtures as close to the original design should be considered. The expense of such fixtures should be carefully weighed against their potential use. Downtown Sumter presently does not have extensive evening shopping or entertainment. However, if substantial pedestrian traffic evolves in the evening the use of period lighting may be a desired amenity.

- The submitted plans call for the use of the same lighting as is used elsewhere in the downtown. Likewise, the brickwork is to match existing. (See photo, **Right**)



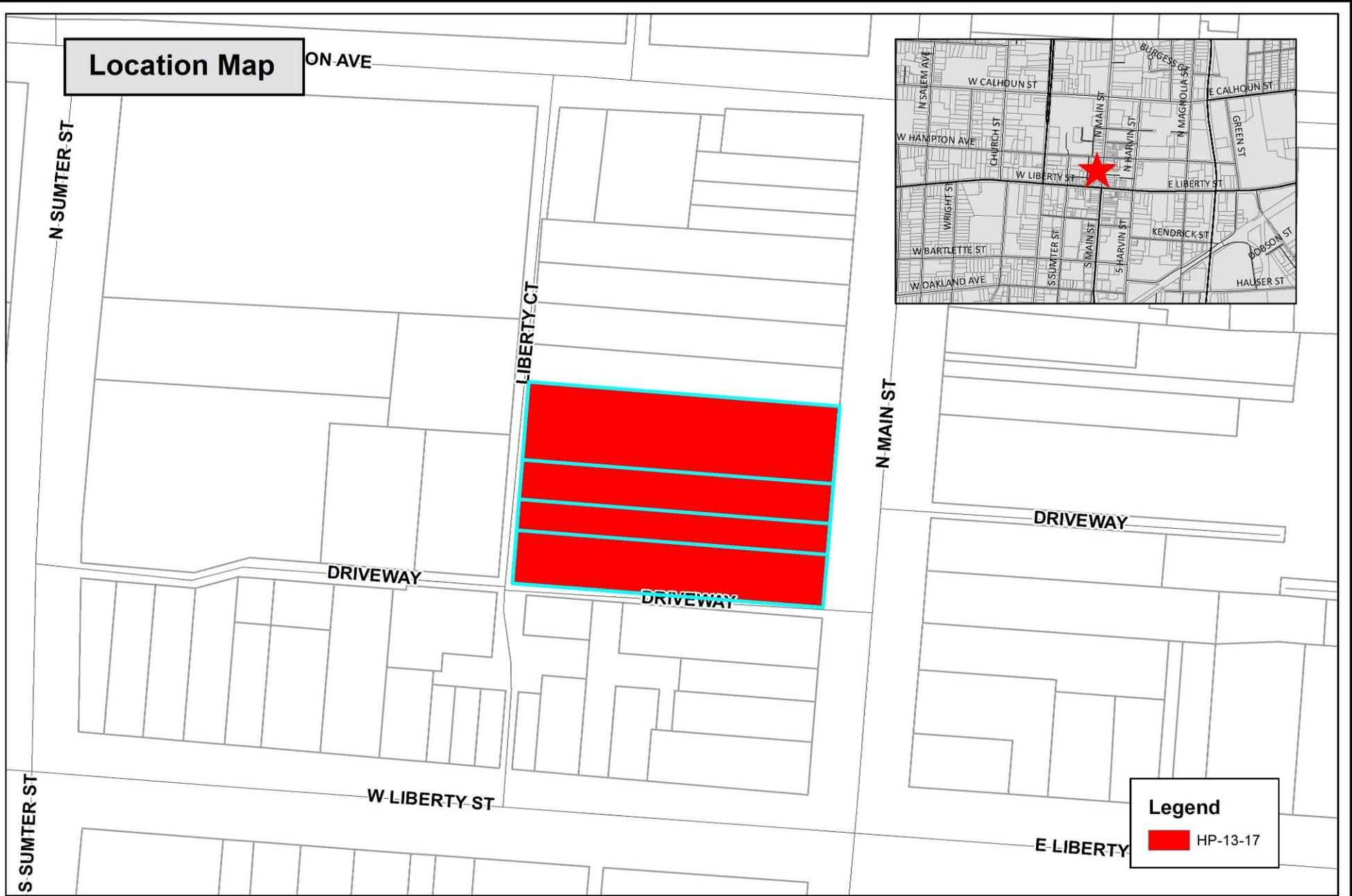
III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Planning Staff finds the request generally conforms to applicable Design Review Guidelines.

IV. HISTORIC PRESERVATION DESIGN REVIEW – OCTOBER 24, 2013

The Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee at its meeting on Thursday, October 24, 2013, approved this request in accordance with the materials, photographs, and construction details submitted and referenced in the Staff Report and based on compliance with Design Review Guidelines #s 3, 4, and 5.

Location Map

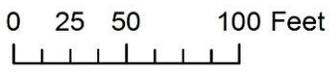


Legend

 HP-13-17

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 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)
 September 5, 2013

HP-13-17
 14,16,18,20 (22) N. Main St., Sumter, SC
 Tax Map #228-12-04-043,044,045 & 046