

Historic Preservation Design Review

February 26, 2015

HP-15-07, 16 E. Liberty St. (City)

I. THE REQUEST

Applicant:	City of Sumter
Status of the Applicant:	Property Owner
Request:	Demolition approval for the structure at 16 E. Liberty St.
Location:	16 E. Liberty St.
Present Use/Zoning:	Vacant Commercial/CBD
Tax Map Reference:	228-13-07-033
Adjacent Property Land Use and Zoning:	North – Commercial Building/CBD South – Parking Lot/CBD East – Commercial Building/CBD West – Open Space/CBD

II. BACKGROUND

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Demolition Permit to remove a 1,597 sq. ft. commercial structure located at 16 E. Liberty St. It is currently vacant and has remained so for at least a decade. The City plans the demolition of this structure in preparation for a future redevelopment project – new offices for the Sumter Development Board.

At least 4 other structures on this block of E. Liberty have been demolished since 2001 (HP 01-22, 23, 24, and HP 05-19); three resulted in new development (Clark, XDOS, and Realtors) while the fourth was unfulfilled (Joey's Seafood).

Based on the 1985 Main Street Sumter Survey, the building at 16 E. Liberty St. was constructed circa 1909. A structure is shown on the Sanborn Maps of 1912.



The structure is a rectangular shape and one story tall. The original simple brick façade has been altered and a new aluminum and glass storefront has been installed with recessed windows and entrance. On each side of the storefront, a Miami stone veneer has been inserted, along with a triangular awning structure suspended from the upper facade. The building does not contain particular historic architectural features.

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

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.

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.**

Although significant deterioration exists, there is no immediate public safety concern for the existing structure. However, the public welfare will likely be advanced with the new Development Board Project in this location.

— **Where economic hardship has been demonstrated, proven, and accepted by the Board of Historical Review.**

Economic hardship is not a specific basis for the Applicant request, although rehabilitation is thought to be significant, based on the current condition of the structure.

- **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.**

The Applicant has submitted a structural report prepared by Motley Structural Design dated February 17, 2015. The report raises a number of structural concerns related to interior and exterior water damage; deteriorated masonry conditions; advanced foundation settlement and; subterranean floor elevations in rear. The latter problem is described as a “significant concern” where repair could be “impractical.”

There is a significant future action planned for this location. The Sumter County Development Board plans to construct a new two-story downtown office headquarters, utilizing existing adjacent warehouse space for small conferences and events. Preliminary design has already begun on this project.

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

Based on the 1985 Main Street Sumter Survey Report, this structure was built circa 1909. It does not display any significantly historic architectural features and its façade has been altered extensively.

After a 120-day waiting period imposed by the Historic Preservation Design Review Committee to determine if the building could be saved by others.

The 120 day waiting period is meant to give others the opportunity to save historic buildings.

Section 1.k.2 of the City Zoning Ordinance speaks to the intent of the Downtown Historic District Overlay. Based on 1.k.2, the overlay district is intended to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public by providing a mechanism for the identification, recognition, preservation, maintenance, protection and enhancement of existing historic and architecturally valuable structure, properties, and neighborhoods which serve as a visible reminder of the social, cultural, economic, political, and/or architectural history of the City of Sumter.

When a demolition request for a structure within the overlay district is brought forward, it is both the Planning Department Staff and the Design Review Committee’s responsibility to understand the impact that granting such a request will have on the district and the community as a whole. In addition to the demolition review conditions outlined in the Design Review Guidelines Manual, other issues to consider should include how the structure’s site and setting impact its practical future and the architectural and historic significance of the structure to the community.

Site and Situation:

The building is sited on the south side of E. Liberty St. +/-100 ft. east of the intersection of N. Main St. and W. Liberty St. The structure is adjacent to three new development projects for XDOS, Clark Law Firm, and the Sumter Board of Realtors. If left to remain, it would also be between those structures and the new, two-story Development Board Project.

Architectural & Historic Significance:

Based on all available records, the structure was erected in 1909.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the request to demolish 16 E. Liberty St. The Applicant has met one or more of the conditions for demolition as set forth in the Design Review Guidelines Manual:

- **Public Welfare:** The proposal to place the new downtown offices of the Sumter Development Board in this location is a significant success story for downtown development and a positive step toward the future.
- **Structural Instability and Deterioration:** The Applicant has submitted a structural report detailing structural deficiencies and signs of deterioration.
- **Architectural Significant and Integrity:** The modest structure was constructed in 1909. Its front façade has been altered extensively. It does not display significantly historic architectural design details.

IV. DRAFT MOTION

I move that the Historic Preservation Design Review Board approve HP 15-07 based on the Staff Recommendation.

or

I move an alternate motion

V. HISTORIC PRESERVATION – FEBRUARY 26, 2015

The Sumter Historic Preservation Design Review Committee at its meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2015, approved this request for demolition.