
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	426 3rd Street, NE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	June 30, 2011	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	11-319	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The Heritage Foundation requests Board approval to demolish the vacated church building located at 426 3rd Street, NE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

The Heritage Foundation acquired the property in 2004 from the Unity Baptist Church. Sited on a primarily residential street, the building was constructed in 1919 for the Trustees of the Northeast Baptist Church. The gable-roofed, one-story masonry church was designed by Roscoe Vaughn and built by Cloyed Tavenner.

During the 1960s and 1970s, front and rear additions were constructed. A small rear addition was constructed in 1964, followed by a two-story front addition in 1974. The latter addition involved removing much, if not all, of the front wall of the original church building. As a result, the 1919 structure is effectively “sandwiched” between two later additions that date beyond the period of significance for the Capitol Hill Historic District, with the original church now missing its character-defining facade. Due to these substantial alterations, the HPO has determined that the building no longer contributes to the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Proposal

The applicants request Board approval to demolish the church building in its entirety, citing structural issues that necessitate its swift removal to prevent uncontrolled, partial collapse. The HPO conducted a site visit of the property, which confirmed the findings of a structural engineer that movement in the masonry side walls and the roof trusses of the original 1919 portion of the building have led to serious problems. The north-facing side wall of the sanctuary is being supported by tie rods anchored to the south-facing wall and the roof structure, a temporary solution that has pulled the south wall in the same direction. The most imminent safety concern is the vulnerability of the apartment building to the north, which is separated from the leaning side wall by only a few feet. The roof trusses in the sanctuary are largely being supported by a bracing system mounted on scaffolding, and the owners report that further deflection of the roof framing has occurred even after these bracing efforts in 2008.

Evaluation

Due to the non-contributing status of the building, demolition is permissible under the historic preservation law. Although the Board typically prefers to review demolition requests in the context of proposals for new construction, immediate safety issues merit action before plans for a new building come forward. The applicants will fence the area and plant it with grass to ensure that it does not become an ad-hoc parking area, as has been a problem in this square in recent years. They have indicated in their narrative to the Board that an architect has already been employed to begin work on plans for a new residential building on the site, with this proposal coming before the Board later this year or early next in an effort to minimize the time that the lot remains vacant.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the proposal as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act.