

MEMORANDUM

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

TO: Thomas Thomas, City Manager

SUBJECT: Appeal of Preservation Commission Decision – Old Lincoln School

DATE: April 30, 2012

On April 25, 2012, the City's Preservation Commission unanimously denied the City's request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (Case #2012-3) to demolish Old Lincoln School, 2125 7th Avenue, "because the historical and architectural significance of the building is not affected by whether or not reasonable efforts have been made to find a developer for the building."

The Preservation Ordinance's Appeals section states:

Sec. 11-115. Appeals:

- (a) When a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of Economic Hardship is approved or denied for either a landmark or a structure within a historic district, the applicant or any interested party may, within thirty (30) days, appeal the Commission's decision to the City Council. The Council may receive comments on the contents of the record but no new matter may be considered by the Council. The City Council may affirm the decision or recommend changes by a majority vote of the Council after due consideration of the facts contained in the record submitted to the Council by the Commission. The Council may overturn the Commission's decision by a majority vote of a quorum of the Council.

Based on this section, the City hereby appeals the Preservation Commission's decision to the City Council, asking the Council to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish Old Lincoln School. A report awarding a demolition bid is expected to be on the July 9, 2012 Council Agenda.

For Council's information, the following items are attached (and constitute the "record" of the case):

- Staff report to the Preservation Commission, dated April 18, 2012
- Unapproved Minutes of the April 25, 2012 Preservation Commission meeting

Recommendation:

That City Council approve a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish Old Lincoln School, 2125 7th Avenue.

Submitted by: Alan M. Carmen, Planning and Redevelopment Administrator
Robert T. Hawes, Interim Community and Economic Development Director

Approved: Thomas Thomas, City Manager

REPORT

TO: Preservation Commission

FROM: Jill Doak, Urban Planner II
Alan M. Carmen, Planning & Redevelopment Administrator

DATE: April 18, 2012

SUBJECT: Case #2012-3 – Consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness for 2125 7th Avenue, which is also known as Old Lincoln School

The Rock Island City Council directed staff to solicit bids for demolishing Old Lincoln School and present the bid results to the City Council for approval in July 2012 unless a viable developer comes forward before then. A viable developer has not yet come forward and preparations for demolition must begin in order to meet the July deadline. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required as the property is a local landmark.

As you are aware, the review of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness typically envisions alterations and additions to landmarks, not demolition. While the Preservation Ordinance provides limited guidance for reviewing a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a landmark, it does include references to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects that state:

"Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use of the property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose . . . The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible."

The City has taken appropriate steps to protect the building and to find a suitable, cost-effective reuse of the building without success. Based on the building's severely deteriorated condition, it is time to demolish the structure and begin the process of seeking redevelopment opportunities for the cleared site.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Preservation Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of Old Lincoln School, 2125 7th Avenue.

**UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE
ROCK ISLAND PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting

4:00 p.m.

April 25, 2012

Location: Administrative Services Conference Room, Basement, Rock Island City Hall, 1528 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, IL

Attendance: (X) Present () Absent

(x) Lendol Calder	(x) Italo "Lo" Milani	() Linda Anderson (Assoc.)
(x) David Cordes	(x) John Strieter	(x) Jeff Dismar (Assoc.)
(x) Kent Cornish	(x) Colleen Vollman	() Daryl Empen (Assoc.)
(x) Craig Kavensky	(x) Stephen Warren	(x) Diane Oestreich
(x) Mark McVey		(Assoc.)

Staff Present: Bob Hawes, Alan Carmen, Jill Doak, Doris Quigley

Others Present: Margaret Babbitt, Vince Thomas, and Robert Braun

Chairman Cornish called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of the March 28, 2012 Special Meeting

Staff noted that the minutes of March 28, 2012 had an error in the Approval of Minutes statement. It should read "Commissioner Cordes moved to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2011 Regular Meeting and December 16 Special Meeting."

Commissioner Calder moved to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2012 Regular Meeting as corrected. Commissioner Milani seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Introduction of new member – Colleen Vollman Commissioner Vollman lives at 709 20th Street and has an extensive background to bring to the Commission. She has degrees in Historical Archeology and Public History and worked as a museum curator in Springfield.

Certificate of Appropriateness Case 2012-2: Consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness for 3912 8th Avenue, which is also known as the Anna Olsson House

Commissioner Milani stated his conflict of interest on this case as the architect for the applicant.

Ms. Doak presented the staff report. Architect Italo Milani has submitted an application on behalf of owner Margaret Babbitt for an addition on the rear of the house at 3912 8th Avenue, which is also known as the Anna Olsson House. The family has a need for one-level living that can be easily accessible.

The addition will be 33'8" deep and 18'8" wide. It will connect to the back of the house where a door opening will be cut into the existing first floor window located to the west of the back porch. The back porch will remain intact, but the second story window will be shortened to accommodate the roof on the addition. The roof pitch is shallower than the house, but a steeper pitch would either mean losing the second story window completely or losing part of the original back porch. The roof shingles will match those on the existing house. The addition will include a laundry, pantry, bathroom and bedroom. There will be a back porch deck on the east side of

the addition, and in the future a wheel chair lift will be installed on the south side of the deck. The foundation will be poured concrete. The wall height is 10' 8" from ground to bottom of eave. The walls will be covered in wood clapboard to match the house. The addition will offset the house by four feet along the western wall. There will be two windows on the west façade, two windows on the south façade and three windows on the east façade. The new windows will be configured to the size and style of the original windows in the house and will be constructed of wood. Fascia boards and gutters will be installed on the house. The return on the eave will match the configuration of the unique returns on the main roof of the house, although they will be shorter to the shallower roof pitch. The deck will be five feet deep with a roof overhang. The deck, steps and railing system will match those on the existing back porch, including color. The image shows a diagonal porch skirt, but the one on the house is vertical and the new porch skirt will also be vertical. The design of the entry door off the deck has not been provided.

The Residential Design Guidelines say: "When constructing a new addition, minimal change should be made to the exterior of the existing original building and the overall integrity of the original design should be maintained. It is important that a new addition look as though it is recent construction... Details on additions should be plainer or possess different ornamental details than the original structure." While the design guidelines go on to say that a slight recess is often desirable, in this case the property will extend four feet from the side. A recess of the addition would move it further west, interrupting the back porch, which is somewhat ornamental. However, given the steep incline of this property from the 8th Avenue front side of the house, this will be virtually invisible. The alley behind the property is private.

The guidelines go on to say: "New additions are subordinate to the original structure in size and scale... Additions should have the same floor to floor height as the original structure." Both these elements are in keeping with the historic house.

Given the parameters of the guidelines, staff believes the addition does a good job of meeting the spirit of the requirements with the most minimal impact on the historic structure. The roof slope will be a good indicator of the newness of the addition. Details on porch skirt, entry door and window materials should be determined but should not negatively affect the recommendation.

Staff recommends the commission approve the addition to 3912 8th Avenue because it meets the spirit of the Residential Design Guidelines and is respectful of the historic details and scale of the main house.

Associate Commissioner Dimer asked if the wood siding would be used on the addition.

Ms. Babbitt said that the siding would be wood.

Commissioner Cordes said he was please that the pitch of the roof for the addition mimicked the pitch of the porch roof.

Associate Commissioner Dimer asked if the new windows would have the correct proportions and if the casements would match the existing windows.

Ms. Babbitt said the windows would be matched as closely as possible and assured the Commission that everything was being done in a manner to keep the integrity of the house as pure as possible.

Commissioner Kavensky asked why the house was so significant.

Ms. Doak responded that Anna Olson had been a daughter of Augustana College president Olaf Olson and one of the first women to graduate from the college. Anna Olson was an author, as well-known in Sweden as Laura Ingles Wilder was in the United States for her similar-topic books. Also the house's gable design is remarkable and the house is wonderfully intact.

Commissioner Strieter moved to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness as recommended by staff. Commissioner Kavensky seconded the motion and it passed on a vote of seven in favor with one abstaining.

Comment to Board of Zoning Appeals for Variance at 3912 8th Avenue

Because 3912 8th Avenue is a Rock Island Landmark, the Preservation Commission has the opportunity to comment to the Board of Zoning Appeals on the side yard variance needed for the addition that was just considered in Case 2012-2.

The request is for a variance of four feet of the eight-foot side yard setback requirement in an R-3 (one and two family residence) district. The applicant proposes to construct a one-story building addition in the south rear yard that extends to within four feet of the west side yard.

Due to the steep nature of the property, this portion of the side yard will be almost invisible from 8th Avenue. Due to a private alley and the hill leading to Lincoln Park, the rear yard is also not visible to the public. It seems as though this variance will have little impact on the property to the west.

Staff recommends the Commission comment to the Board of Zoning Appeals that the side yard variance for 3912 8th Avenue will not have a negative impact on the historic structure at 3912 8th Avenue.

Commissioner Vollman moved to comment to the Board of Zoning Appeals that the side yard variance for 3912 8th Avenue will not have a negative impact on the historic structure at 3912 8th Avenue. Commissioner Cordes seconded the motion and it passed on a vote of seven in favor with one abstaining.

Certificate of Appropriateness Case 2012-3: Consideration of a Certificate of Appropriateness for 2125 7th Avenue, which is also known as Old Lincoln School

The Rock Island City Council directed staff to solicit bids for demolishing Old Lincoln School and present the bid results to the City Council for approval in July 2012 unless a viable developer comes forward before then. A viable developer has not yet come forward and preparations for demolition must begin in order to meet the July deadline. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required as the property is a local landmark.

The review of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness typically envisions alterations and additions to landmarks, not demolition. While the Preservation Ordinance provides limited guidance for reviewing a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a landmark, it does include references to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects that state:

“Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use of the property which requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose . . . The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.”

The City has taken appropriate steps to protect the building and to find a suitable, cost-effective reuse of the building without success. Based on the building’s severely deteriorated condition, it is time to demolish the structure and begin the process of seeking redevelopment opportunities for the cleared site.

Staff recommends that the Preservation Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of Old Lincoln School, 2125 7th Avenue.

Commissioner Milani asked if the approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness would establish the commission’s approval of the demolition of Old Lincoln School.

Mr. Carmen said that was the purpose of the application and the commission’s discussion and vote.

Commissioner Kavensky asked if the staff recommendation was indeed to allow demolition of the school.

Mr. Carmen replied that the recommendation was before the commission in the report.

Commissioner Cordes asked what would happen if the commission voted to not approve the demolition.

Mr. Carmen replied that the applicant, the City of Rock Island, would appeal the commission’s decision to the City Council.

Commissioner Calder asked if the commission had ever voted to approve the demolition of a historic building.

Mr. Carmen said that had happened on more than one occasion.

Commissioner Cordes responded that, in the Broadway District, the commission had commented to the state that it would not be a detriment to demolish two houses which were unprotected non-landmarked properties.

Associate Commissioner Oestreich questioned if the vote had ever been to demolish a landmarked property.

Mr. Carmen replied that in the case of the Villa, the commission had voted to de-list the building after the fire had destroyed 2/3 of the property, which allowed the remaining structures to be demolished.

Associate Commissioner Oestreich commented that the City Council had overruled the commission on a few occasions when there was an appeal on the landmark status of a building.

Associate Commissioner Dimer stated that he could not vote for demolition. He said the building across the street – Murphy Lofts – had been in much worse structural condition than Old Lincoln School is in, and it was successfully rehabbed and is a tax-generating property at the present time.

Commissioner Kavensky asked what made Old Lincoln School historical.

Associate Commissioner Oestreich explained that the school is the only Romanesque Revival style building in Rock Island, that it was the only surviving school structure designed by architect E. S. Hammatt, the unique floor plan with the grand staircase, it was listed on the 2005 Ten Most Endangered Historic places in Illinois, and is in the class of one of the Most Endangered Classes of Buildings in Illinois – schools. These things all contribute to what makes the building special.

Commissioner Vollman added that the school is an integral part of the Broadway Historic District and that its demolition would be like cutting off a big toe.

Commissioner Strieter asked what other use the building could be put to.

Commissioner Vollman said she believed it would make a good, albeit small, hotel that would be an accompaniment to Augustana College.

Commissioner Cordes said that the artificial, City Council imposed deadline of July for the award of a contract of demolition for the building seemed to indicate that Council had already made up their minds regarding the demolition. He stated that Council had been unwilling to put forth the money to implement the recommendations of the architect that the City had hired for his opinion on stabilizing and mothballing the building. Overall it seems that City Council wants to demolish the school. He stated that he would not be able to support the request for demolition.

Commissioner Cordes said that, as Mr. Thomas representing the City, had filed the application for the Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission is obligated to take action on the application.

Vince Thomas, a city resident since 1976, said that, as a tax-payer, he does not understand why the City was allowed to let the building fall into this state of disrepair without being held to the City requirements for property owners to maintain their property. He questioned how the City raised millions of dollars to create Schwiebert Park, and they were just held accountable to pay a \$250,000 dollar settlement, but they did not have any money available to reroof the school and properly mothball it.

Commissioner Milani stated that four years ago he had been asked by the Inspection Division for an estimate to repair the roof of the building. At the time, it would have taken about \$80,000 to reroof the west face of the roof, which was the only portion that required replacement at the time. He never heard anything from the City after submitting his estimate. He estimated that the cost would easily be four to five times as much now as the damage has worsened.

(Commissioner McVey arrived at 4:45 p.m.)

Commissioner Vollman inquired, if the commission voted against the demolition, would this be the last opportunity for any of them to voice their opinions on the subject.

Mr. Carmen replied that if the commission denied the request for demolition, the applicant – the City – would take the step to appeal the decision of the commission to the City Council. The appeal would be an item on the Council agenda to be discussed and voted on at a Council meeting. Citizens would be able to attend the Council meeting and – within the limits set by Council – voice their opinions, concerns, and ideas. Council would then vote and the matter would be closed.

Commissioner McVey commented that Council usually limited the how much could be said at a meeting.

Commissioner Cordes asked for a motion to either approve or deny the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of Old Lincoln School.

Commissioner Cordes read a prepared motion:

I move to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness for the complete demolition of Old Lincoln School. This motion is based on the following reasons that I believe to be true:

The Rock Island City Council has not established that they have made every reasonable effort to find a developer to rehabilitate the building for a compatible use as stated in the Secretary's guidelines, but rather, they have rushed with an excited frenzy toward demolition.

The City has also made no meaningful attempt toward stabilization and mothballing the structure as spelled out in the Secretary's guidelines for preservation. Such efforts could halt further deterioration for a period of 20 years or more. During such time, a reasonable plan for reuse could certainly be developed.

The costs for demolition compared to stabilization are not yet known, but the assumption is that the City Council will choose to demolish the building regardless of the facts and regardless of the costs, because of the self-imposed deadline that a contract will be awarded for demolition at the July 2012 Council meeting.

The Council has ignored the advice of a highly regarded historic architect that was contracted by the City to conduct an analysis of the building and has ignored the advice of City staff in numerous different departments who made recommendation to Council during its meetings.

The Council has ignored the advice and requests of the Broadway Historic District and a long line of concerned citizens who appeared at more than one City Council meeting to speak in favor of stabilizing the structure.

Instead, the Council has chosen to rush out on its own, with a fervent enthusiasm, to demolish the building. Other than a few anecdotal accounts by a few Council members of citizens in their home wards who expressed the opinion that the building should be torn down, the Council appears to be acting completely on its own accord and contrary to all informed and expert advice. Further, they appear to be acting against the wishes of those citizens who will be most affected by the loss of this important historic landmark, the immediate neighbors and the residents of the Broadway Historic District.

Commissioner Calder seconded the motion.

Commissioner Strieter asked about the structural integrity of the building, what new windows would need to look like and if the foundation had signs of settling.

Robert Braun, SGGM Architects, introduced himself as the architect that had performed the structural analysis of the building in the summer of 2011 for the City. He stated that due to the holes in the roof the floors are damaged and there is some structural damage to the floor beams and joists. He said that tuck-pointing is needed. He confirmed that the structure was wood throughout and that there is no damage at present that is beyond repair.

Commissioner Cordes noted that all the windows at the Illinois Oil Building – Jackson Square – are all new windows, but are in keeping with the design of the building.

Associate Commissioner Oestreich pointed out the windows most recently in Old Lincoln School were not original at all.

Commissioner Kavensky questioned if the staff recommendation was based on the cost of stabilization or demolition.

Mr. Carmen said the recommendations were per the standards of the Commission.

Commissioner Milani asked if the approximate cost of demolition had been established yet.

Mr. Carmen pointed out that the costs were immaterial to the discussion.

Commissioner Milani moved to amend the motion to simply deny the application for demolition.

Commissioner Strieter seconded the motion to amend.

After discussion among the commissioners Commissioner Milani withdrew his amendment and Commissioner Strieter agreed to the withdrawal. Commissioner Cordes withdrew his motion and Commissioner Calder agreed to the withdrawal.

Commissioner Strieter questioned the need for the motion to include reasons for the denial.

Ms. Doak responded that the reasons were necessary for the motion to be legally defensible.

Commissioner Calder moved to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness for the complete demolition of Old Lincoln School because the historical and architectural significance of the

building is not affected by whether or not reasonable efforts have been made to find a developer for the building.

Commissioner Cordes seconded the motion.

The motion was restated for the commissioners and the vote was unanimous to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness for the complete demolition of Old Lincoln School.

Comment to the Planning Commission on an Amendment to a Planned Unit Development at 2101 16th Avenue (Rock Island Center for Math & Science), which is adjacent to Highland Park Historic District

The Rock Island City Planning Commission has received a request from the Rock Island Center for Math and Science to approve an amendment to the site plan for a PUD (planned unit development) district for Rock Island Center for Math & Science at 2101 16th Avenue, Rock Island.

The applicant proposes to erect an internally lighted freestanding sign that is 4' x 6' in area, 7.5 feet in total height from grade to top of sign and setback approximately 160 feet from the south property line. The proposed sign will be located adjacent to the access drive that extends northward from 16th Avenue and 22nd Street.

It will be internally illuminated and constructed of aluminum. The sign board face will be white. The face will hinge open so that vinyl letters can be inserted into the frame. A four-inch pole will be set into concrete for the base. The sign will be installed on the pole 42-inches above grade at the bottom of the sign. The sign will be on a timer and at this time the staff will ask the Planning Commission to stipulate that the timer is set to turn off at 10:00 pm, which is typical for churches and schools adjacent to residential uses.

The sign will be relatively invisible to Highland Park Historic District as it is located 160 feet inside the site and trees and shrubs run the length of 16th Avenue up to the entrance. For reduced impact on the adjacent Highland Park and Broadway Historic Districts, a sign internal to the site is optimal.

A Planning Commission public hearing will be held at 5:15 p.m., Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at Rock Island City Hall, City Council Chambers, 1528 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, Illinois.

Staff recommends the Preservation Commission comment favorably to the Planning Commission on the amendment to the site plan for the Planned Unit Development at 2101 16th Avenue because it will have a relatively low impact on the historic district.

Ms. Doak shared two emails - one from Linda Anderson, associate member of the Preservation Commission, the other from the secretary of the Highland Park executive board, Sue Swords - and one letter - from Pete Cone, 1604 22nd Street - that all expressed the thought that the sign was not in character with the history of the location and suggested brick posts support for the sign (similar to the new sign at Washington Junior High School) utilizing the colors of brick present in the school building.

Commissioner Kavensky asked if approval of the sign for the school would be inconsistent with the denial of the internally-lit sign at the daycare on 18th Avenue.

Mr. Carmen reminded the Commission that they were not approving or denying the request; that they were providing a comment to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Cordes mentioned the daycare sign was directly across the street from the historic neighborhood and the school is located outside the neighborhood, as well as the prominent location of the daycare on 18th Avenue compared to the hidden location of the school's proposed sign.

Associate Commissioner Dismer agreed with the comments received that the location was good for the low impact on the neighborhood but said he also thought the design was utilitarian.

Commissioner Warren said the school did a good job designing the 22nd Street entryway with an arch and brickwork and thought they should provide similar brickwork on the proposed sign at the 22nd Street entry.

Commissioner Milani moved to recommend to the Planning Commission that the sign should have a brick accent matching the colors of the brick in the building to keep with the style of the property.

Commissioner Strieter seconded the motion.

Commissioner Milani stated that the brick could be used for sign support pillars or in a raised planter surrounding the sign or in some other way to tie the sign design into the building.

The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

(5:25 p.m. Commissioner Warren left the meeting)

Discussion of 2011 CLG Grant: Rock Island Renovator's Assistance Website

Ms. Doak stated that five responses to the Request for Proposals had been received and that a committee needed to be established to review them. She suggested herself, Mr. Carmen, Commissioner Cornish, and Associate Commissioner Empen – as he would probably be site manager for Rock Island Preservation Society – with one additional volunteer needed.

Commissioner Vollman volunteered to serve on the review committee and said she had served on similar committees in the past.

A meeting was set up for May 3rd at 10 a.m. Copies of the proposals were distributed to the review committee. All commission members were reminded that they were expected to provide renovation contractor information and tips for inclusion on the web site.

Announcement of 2012 Brochure Reprint CLG Grant

Ms. Doak said that this brochure reprint grant was not planned for and the City has no money to contribute to the activity. The grant will cover 70% of the costs and will be administered by the City. The Broadway Mother's Day Tour of Homes, Watch Hill Tour, and Long View Park brochures were in short supply and each of those groups agreed to be responsible for funding their portion of the costs. Checks for the Watch Hill and Long View brochures have been received already.

Other Business: Glass Rotunda at First Church of Christ, Scientist (Karpeles Museum)

The recent storm damage will be covered by the museum's insurance. The glass on top of the rotunda was a chicken-wire reinforced safety glass that will be replaced 'in-kind' with tempered safety glass. No Certificate of Appropriateness is required for emergency replacement work. All the 'pieces' were recovered, but are not usable.

Commissioner Milani moved to adjourn. Commissioner McVey seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Carmen, Secretary
Rock Island Preservation Commission