

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

	Number:	19-473	Meeting:	November 4, 2019
	Agenda Item:	55	Roll Call:	19-473
	Submitted by:	Chris Johansen, Community Development Director		

AGENDA HEADING:

Consideration of a request from 3750 Grand, LLC, 400 Locust Street, Suite 790, Des Moines, IA 50309, represented by Harry Bookey, to demolish a portion of the Church of Christian Scientists building located at 3750 Grand Avenue pursuant to Section 58-70 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

SYNOPSIS:

The applicant is proposing to demolish the sanctuary and tower portion of the Church of Christian Scientists building. The northeast and northwest wings would be renovated as part of a redevelopment project that includes the construction of an 8-story residential building. The existing building meets the criteria for landmark designation set forth in Section 58-58 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Section 58-70 of the code requires the City Council to determine if the proposed demolition of a landmark eligible property should be referred to the Landmark Review Board (LRB) for future study. Staff recommends that the City Council not refer the item to the LRB given the level of review the proposal is receiving through the applicant's request for economic development assistance.

FISCAL IMPACT: NONE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The Church of Christian Scientists building was constructed in 1931 and displays Gothic Revival architecture characteristics. It was designed by the Proudfoot, Bird, Rawson, Souers & Thomas architecture firm, which was the premier Iowa firm at the time.
- This property was determined eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places by the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office based on its distinctive architectural character on March 2, 2010. City staff concurs with this determination and believes that the building meets the City Landmark designation criterion 1.

Sec. 58-58 Designation Criteria

(a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;*
- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;*
- (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;*
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.*

- The City Council is charged with determining if the request should be referred to the LRB for further study or if no additional evaluation is necessary. The LRB is made up of the members of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Urban Design Review Board. Section 58-70(d) of the City Codes states that “the City Council will consider oral and written comments from all interested parties and determine whether or not to refer the application for proposed demolition or related plumbing work to the LRB for further study and review.”
- If the application is not referred to the LRB, the owner will be required to document and photograph the exterior and interior of the building and provide the City with a copy in coordination with Community Development Department staff. The owner is also required to salvage for re-use as many fixtures and as much material as possible from the building. Provided that the owner has conducted the documentation and salvage processes to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director, then issuance of a demolition permit in accordance with Section 26-303 and related plumbing permit in accordance with the Plumbing Code shall be authorized.
- If the application is referred to the LRB, the board shall hold a meeting and work with the owner to determine, within 90 days, whether any alternatives to demolition are feasible. Such alternatives to be considered may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (1) The building or structure can be considered for landmark designation.
 - (2) Rehabilitation of the building or structure with the assistance of federal or state tax incentives or other private financial assistance.
 - (3) Adapting the building or structure to a viable new use.
 - (4) Finding a new owner who is interested in purchasing, preserving and rehabilitating the building or structure.
 - (5) Incorporating the building or structure into the owner’s plans for redevelopment of the site.
 - (6) Assisting the owner in finding an alternative site for its proposed redevelopment.
 - (7) Moving the building or structure to an alternative site.
- If the Board and the owner do not reach an agreement on a feasible alternative to demolition, the owner will be required to document and photograph the exterior and interior of the building and provide the City with a copy in coordination with Community Development Department staff. The owner is also required to salvage for re-use as many fixtures and as much material as possible from the building. Provided that the owner has conducted the documentation and salvage processes to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director, then issuance of a demolition permit in accordance with Section 26-303 and related plumbing permit in accordance with the Plumbing Code shall be authorized.

- Staff recommends that the City Council not refer the item to the LRB. The applicant is seeking development assistance from the City. Therefore, the proposed project is subject to a higher level of review than a typical project that involves demolition. The building has been vacant for an extended period and suffered substantial water damage. There does not appear to be a feasible reuse for the sanctuary space given its size, configuration and condition. The project proposes to preserve approximately 10,036 square feet of the existing church buildings and would demolish the sanctuary building, which is approximately 10,831 square feet.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: September 23, 2019

Roll Call Number: [19-1502](#)

Action: [Preliminary](#) terms of an Urban Renewal Development Agreement with BH 3750 Grand, LLC (Harry Bookey, Developer) for the partial preservation and construction of an 8-story residential building with approximately 42 condominiums and 36 indoor parking stalls at 3750 Grand Avenue. ([Council Communication No. 19-417](#)) Moved by Gatto to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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