

MINUTES

**September 29, 2022
Historic Landmarks Committee
Regular Meeting**

**3:00 pm
Hybrid Meeting
McMinnville, Oregon**

Members Present: Mary Beth Branch, Eve Dewan, Christopher Knapp, Mark Cooley, and John Mead

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Heather Richards – Community Development Director, Adam Tate – Associate Planner, and Bill Kabeiseman – Legal Counsel, Bateman Seidel

Others Present: Sal Peralta, Council liaison

1. Call to Order

Chair Mead called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. He was not able to attend in person and Vice Chair Branch would run the rest of the meeting.

2. Citizen Comments

None

3. Action Items

A. Quasi-Judicial Public Hearing: Gwendolyn Hotel

Request: Request to demolish three historic resources and build a new five-story hotel with ground floor commercial, roof deck and underground parking structure.

Docket: **HL 6-22**, (Certificate of Approval for Demolition, 609 NE Third Street) - Property Owner – Jon Bladine, Oregon Lithoprint Inc.

HL 7-22, (Certificate of Approval for Demolition, 611 NE Third Street) - Property Owner – Jon Bladine, Bladine Family Limited Partnership

HL 8-22, (Certificate of Approval for Demolition, 619 NE Third Street) - Property Owner - Philip Frischmuth, Wild Haven LLC

DDR 2-22, (Downtown Design Review – New Construction)

Applicant: Mark Vuong, HD McMinnville LLC

Disclosures: Vice Chair Branch opened the public hearing and read the hearing statement. She asked if any Committee member wished to make a disclosure or abstain from participating or voting on this application. There was none. She asked if there was any objection to the jurisdiction

of the Committee to hear this matter. There was none. She asked if any Committee member needed to declare any contact prior to the hearing with the applicant or any party involved in the hearing or any other source of information outside of staff regarding the subject of this hearing. There was none.

Staff Presentation: Community Development Director Richards gave a presentation on the Gwendolyn Hotel proposal. She explained the HLC's role, quasi-judicial decision making, public hearings process, subject property, McMinnville Downtown Historic District, historic resources inventory, and structures requested to be demolished. She reviewed historic significance vs. historic integrity in the context of the histories of the properties. There were concerns about underground gasoline storage tank leaks at 609 NE Third Street. The tanks were removed in 1985, however there was still concern regarding demolition and reconstruction and a condition was included regarding the management of those. For 611 NE Third Street, the applicant said there was not a lot of integrity left in terms of the architecture, but a condition was added to get more details about what remained. For 619 NE Third Street, Community Development Director Richards showed the modifications to the building over time. The historic significance from 1919 to 1940 was that this area was part of the motor boom in downtown, although the buildings did not look the same today. She then discussed state and local compliance for demolition. Staff found that more information was needed for the condition of the property, historic integrity, age of the property, known contamination on the property, support for the applicant's claim that it was too expensive to rehabilitate the existing structures, analysis for the physical condition of the structures, showing how the applicant's planned improvement program could not be achieved by preserving the existing buildings, and financial hardship. She then described the proposed Gwendolyn Hotel project, height study, parking, and landscaping. More information was needed for the waiver request from Section 17.59.050(B)(1). This had to do with the building massing and configuration which should be similar to nearby historic buildings and that the building should appear to be two story in height if it was situated at street corners or intersections. The Downtown Design Guidelines were not met for Section 17.59.050(B)(2). The proposed building would be 180 feet in length and the bays were not proportional. She explained the public testimony that had been received so far and request for continuance from the applicant. Staff concurred with the continuance request. She explained how this was a balancing act, balancing preservation, rehabilitation, public safety, building codes and lease rates. It was a difficult and complex decision.

There was discussion regarding other examples of buildings in McMinnville that were the same height as what was being proposed, historic significance of the sign on 619 NE Third, adoption of the Historic Preservation Plan, and threshold for how many buildings could be demolished in the historic district.

Applicant's Testimony: Gary Reddick, representing the applicant, read a statement about the request for a continuance to December which allowed them time to gather the information requested.

Garrett Stephenson, legal counsel for the applicant, clarified they were asking for 90 days, not 60 days as originally requested, and they would extend the 120 day deadline accordingly. They planned to provide rebuttal at the continued hearing.

Mr. Reddick presented on the proposed project. He discussed the subject site, existing buildings, study of the neighboring buildings, floor plans, elevations, railings, flower boxes, color palette, awnings, brick façade, and renderings.

The Committee asked questions regarding the cement panel façade on the ground floor, railing on the third story balcony, why they were proposing all hotel rooms and no condos, cost to rent a room, timeline for the detailed information to come back, number and type of jobs this would create, analysis of the loss of the original masonry beneath the applied stucco render on the 609 NE Third building, feasibility of removing the stucco render to recover the masonry detail, inflow and infiltration and dust issues with the storage tank contamination, how long the properties had been owned by the current owners, if the owners received any financial benefits because of the historic designation or location in a historic district, how much time had these buildings been occupied by tenants versus time they had been vacant, current condition of the buildings and public safety, if they had considered rehabbing the buildings in this process, how the applicant thought it was cost prohibitive and not the highest and best use to rehab, remedies for the water table, archeologic resources uncovered during demolition, economic analysis for the proposed use, and impact to the scale and feel of Third Street.

The Committee took a short break.

Public Testimony:

Proponent: Duncan Scott, McMinnville resident, had worked in these buildings. They were essentially auto garages and the second floors were in terrible condition. He thought a multi-story building to replace a one story office space would bring economic vitality to downtown. There was no other site on Third Street that would be feasible for this project, and other sites in the downtown would be too expensive. He did not think parking would be a concern. Being on the north side of the street and the way the sun would come into the street and the way the building was situated was ideal for a tall building.

Opponents: Phyllis Bradner, McMinnville resident, owned an art gallery nearby and was a retired historic restorationist. She agreed it was less expensive to demolish an old building and replace it with a new one that met code and promised a good return on investment. However, these buildings were in a historic district. The quaint streetscape had made McMinnville not only a tourist destination but also a pleasant place to live. She thought the historic designation should be protected. The 611 NE Third building was the most aesthetically relevant and would be a significant loss to the district. She thought responsible restoration could be done and she gave examples of recently refurbished buildings. A property owner who was not willing to make the investment should consider building in a non-historic area. A large hotel had no place in the streetscape of historic Third Street.

Nathan Coopridger, Portland resident, had grown up in McMinnville. He thought demolishing a large area of historic buildings ran counter to the general purpose of McMinnville's historic design standards. The historic district did not need to be revisioned or transformed, but to be protected and preserved. This proposal was a dramatic change in height, massing, width, articulation, and did not resemble anything else in the historic district. This area had a delicate ecosystem and the code was in place to protect it and nurture its health, not alter its pattern or character. These buildings deserved renovation and the changes needed to fit in the pattern of what already existed.

Miriam Reed, McMinnville resident, thought approving the project would set a dangerous precedent for the City. She compared the development to other cities in California and in Portland where due to high end development, the cost of living and property taxes increased so much she was priced out and had to move.

Mike Hill, McMinnville resident, had grown up in McMinnville. The older buildings had character, even though they needed work. He thought this hotel should be constructed somewhere else in McMinnville. He thought it would ruin the heart of downtown.

Katherine Hewitt, McMinnville resident, noted how stories were important to the historic context of the City. Third Street was the family room of the City and needed to be protected. All of the buildings had intangible value that offered a glimpse into the era of McMinnville's history that began on this block. The three buildings under consideration for demolition served the emerging automobile industry, but also McMinnville's early light industrial area. She gave a history of each of the buildings and owners. She thought wiping out portions of the downtown district would affect the affordability of local residents and inspiration to young people to value their community.

Florence Tramoni, unincorporated McMinnville resident, did not think the hotel should be in downtown. Once the buildings were gone, they could not come back and it would forever change the character of the City.

Ty Walsh, McMinnville resident, was not in favor of demolishing the history, quaintness, and beauty of downtown that brought people to the area.

Christopher Anderson, McMinnville resident, thought the hotel would ruin the historic value and small town atmosphere of downtown. He was concerned about how it would affect infrastructure, inflation, the service industry, rental prices, crime, and parking. This type of growth would not be a benefit to McMinnville.

John Harbor, McMinnville resident, discussed the changes to downtown in the 15 years he had lived in McMinnville. The residents would be left behind while the wealthy took over. Third Street was the historic district and once the buildings were gone, they could not get them back. He did not think the infrastructure could handle the vehicles from the parking garage and pedestrians. Third Street was not the place for the proposed hotel.

Ann Durley, Independence resident, was a business owner in McMinnville. She thought this was too large and the design, windows, and streetscape were not appropriate for the historic district. She encouraged the Committee to make sure that the application met the code.

Alice Vinten, McMinnville resident, thought the hotel was too big for Third Street. Downtown was special and needed to be preserved. She thought the hotel should go somewhere else.

Phyllis Radner, McMinnville resident, discussed downtown Juneau, Alaska, and how the cruise ships had affected downtown. She thought this hotel and tourists would crowd out local residents with busy streets and the local businesses would give way to more tourist businesses selling souvenirs.

Richard Smith, McMinnville resident, had worked at the Atticus, and now owned a business on Third Street. Guests at the Atticus enjoyed downtown because of its quaint, small-town vibe. He worried that this project would destroy the historic nature on Third Street and he could be priced out or evicted from his building for a different development. They should view Third Street as a historic unit. Demolishing the buildings for the new hotel would destroy the quaint, historic nature and lead to losing the appeal and charm and could lead to negative impacts.

Daniel Kiser, McMinnville resident, did not think there was good argument to demolish the buildings. He thought the public interest and resources preservation outweighed the financial

hardship. He thought the scale of the building would affect the charm and integrity of the historic district. He suggested they only allow four stories and limit the square footage. The brick detailing proposed was flat and the architectural details were clumsy. The façade was busy and not in keeping with the other buildings on Third Street.

The Committee discussed the next hearing date.

Andrew Clark, representing the applicant, agreed to extending the 120 day timeline by 70 days.

Committee Member Mead MOVED to CONTINUE the hearing for HL 6-22/HL 7-22/HL 8-22/DDR 2-22 to December 8, 2022 at 4 p.m.; SECONDED by Committee Member Knapp. The motion PASSED unanimously.

4. Committee Member Comments

None

5. Staff Comments

None

6. Adjournment

Vice Chair Branch adjourned the meeting at 6:52 p.m.