

CITY OF FLAGSTAFF HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
PZ-23-00209-05
ADDRESS: 603 W Birch Ave

DATE: March 7, 2025
MEETING DATE: March 19, 2025
REPORT BY: Lauren Clementino

REQUEST

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing garage along Birch Ave, citing that the building has been subjugated to an elevation below street and is now at risk of flooding. The garage building is also reported by the applicant to be in “dilapidated” condition. The applicant also proposes to construct a new 715 square foot accessory dwelling unit in the southwest corner of the property, set back from the existing building and the current garage location. The entrance and driveway parking for the unit would be from Birch Ave. The scope of work does not include alterations to the primary structure (603 W Birch Units 1 and 2).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed plans for a new accessory dwelling unit and demolition of the garage unit at 603 W Birch Ave.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The primary structure located at 603 W Birch Ave is contributing to the Townsite National Register District (under the address 121 N Bonito) and is noted as a distinctive representative of the Bungalow style. Per the property’s inventory form completed in 1985, it was constructed ca. 1910-1616 and the garage is listed as an outbuilding. The garage construction date is unknown. The property is within the Townsite Overlay and subject to Townsite design criteria/standards for demolition of the garage and construction of the new accessory dwelling unit.

PAST DECISIONS AND OTHER REVIEWS

In November 2024, a Certificate of No Effect was approved for work on the existing building which was classified as a duplex (603 W Birch Units 1 and 2). Work included replacing windows, reroofing, and repairing of chimney and stucco on existing duplex only. It did not include the scope of the current proposal. This certificate approval was reported to the Commission during the December 2024 Commission meeting by Sara Dechter, Comprehensive Planning Manager.

Amendments to Flagstaff City Code Section 10-40.60.030 were passed by City Council on October 15, 2024 and became effective on November 14, 2024. In compliance with House Bill 2720, the Code now allows an attached or interior and a detached accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on the same property. The Code retained that an ADU may have a “gross floor area of up to 800 square feet regardless of the size of the single-family dwelling so long as all the requirements of the ADU specific-to-use section are met.” The determined interior ADU at 603 W Birch is less than 800 square feet, and therefore, it meets the definition of a single family dwelling with an interior ADU. The new unit being proposed in this

application is therefore allowed as a detached ADU.

INTENT

The Townsite Overlay is a hybrid of a historic and character overlay that “allows preservation, restoration, new construction, remodeling and demolition. The Townsite Overlay is a hybrid of a historic and character overlay that “allows preservation, restoration, new construction, remodeling and demolition. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards are incorporated into this document by reference.”

10-30.30.060 Development of a Landmark Property and Property within a Historic Overlay Zone, Process “C”: “Prior to the granting of any required approvals or permits and prior to the commencement of any work on a landmark property or within a historic overlay zone, the Heritage Preservation Commission or the Historic Preservation Officer shall review all work proposed and approve or conditionally approve the work in the form of a certificate of no effect, certificate of appropriateness, or certificate of economic hardship”.

STAFF REVIEW

Scope of Work

The Certificate of Appropriateness is “appropriate if the proposed work alters a cultural resource but does so in such a way that is compatible with the historic or archaeological character of the resource and all major impacts are mitigated such that the work does not diminish, eliminate, or adversely affect the significance or integrity of the resource.” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060.E).

Findings

“Prior to the granting of any required approvals or permits and prior to the commencement of any work on a landmark property or within a historic overlay zone, the Heritage Preservation Commission or the Historic Preservation Officer shall review all work proposed and approve or conditionally approve the work in the form of a certificate of no effect, certificate of appropriateness, or certificate of economic hardship” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060 Development of a Landmark Property and Property within a Historic Overlay Zone).

The Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-30.30.060E states:

Criteria for Approval.

When approving a certification of appropriateness, the Heritage Preservation Commission shall find that:

- a. The proposed work is consistent with the purpose and intent of this division;*
- b. The proposed work is compatible with its context:*
 - (1) The appropriate context for a landmark or a historic property is the property itself and, to a much lesser extent, the surrounding properties and neighborhood;*
 - (2) The appropriate context of work in a historic overlay zone is the significant portions of the property itself, the surrounding properties, and the neighborhood;*

- c. The cultural resources associated with the proposed work have been sufficiently sought, identified and evaluated;*
- d. Major impacts on cultural resources are sufficiently mitigated; and*
- e. The proposed work is consistent with applicable development standards and design guidelines. See also subsection (G) of this section, Development Standards and Guidelines.*

Townsite Overlay

“The Townsite Overlay (TO) zone applies to areas of the City subject to the Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines and design review by the Heritage Preservation Commission for the development of properties located within the boundaries of the zone” (Flagstaff Zoning Code 10-40.50.030 Overlay Zones).

Flagstaff Townsite Historic Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines states “The Flagstaff Townsite Historic Residential District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 via the National Park Service (NPS). The district represents a strong historical image of time and place with mature landscaping, original road widths and block configurations.”

The following design criteria/standards apply to this case:

A . Style

1. Flagstaff Townsite developed from a natural evolution of a variety of architectural styles in smaller homes such as Craftsman, Victorian, cottage/bungalow, Queen Anne, and Edwardian. The district’s overall style is mixed in terms of landscaping and architecture. As the District exists to preserve the historic character, variations of the above mentioned styles shall be adopted to ensure continuity in the neighborhood.
2. Secondary dwellings and secondary structures/outbuildings do not dominate the main structure.

B. Site

1. Homes reflect early life in Flagstaff through small size, yards, and relationship to the street lending more to community interaction. The following shall occur:
 - a. Front doors shall have a relationship close to the street – dwellings relate to the street frontage and are not pushed back to the alleys. This preserves neighbor-to-neighbor contact.
 - b. All dwellings shall have main access from the street.
2. New driveways and parking spaces shall be located beside homes.
4. Secondary dwellings are any structures not considered the original home and in which people reside. They shall be subservient in bulk, size, scale, design and materials to the main dwelling. Historic homes shall remain the main home.
6. Interior yards or rear yards are desirable. If there are two structures on site, a central or side yard shall occur – locating the structure at the back of the lot allows for the interior yard. Excluding the front yard and driveway, a minimum of 1000 square feet of contiguous yard shall occur.

D. Development Massing, Height, and Proportions

1. Structures that exist at the time of the district designation are the primary structure. In case of multiple existent structures at that time, the structure closest to the street is the primary structure. New primary structures shall be placed forward on the site relative to all other structures.

3. For all other structures, no point shall exceed 16 feet in height, measured from existing or natural grade, excluding chimneys, towers, and similar non-habitable architectural projections. (*NOTE: This provision is no longer applicable to ADUs under the current City Zoning Code and up to 25 feet is allowed for an ADU in the Townsite Overlay per Section 10-40.50.030(C) Building form Standards*)

E. Roof Pitch

1. Pitches for main roofs in new construction shall be over 6:12. Porches, dormers, and similar lesser roofed areas may have shallower pitches.

F. Architecture, Materials, Details, and Colors

1. Materials, details, and colors shall be compatible with historic structures on an individual property and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

H. Demolition

1. If a building is over fifty years old and is to be demolished, it is required that an archival record be created with photographs taken, building construction materials and techniques documented, historical knowledge or value recorded, and a file created and deposited in a designated location (public library archive, Pioneer Historical Museum or NAU Special Collections). Follow the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office Guidelines for documentation of resources being destroyed. Documentation must be approved by the Historic Preservation Commission prior to obtaining a permit for demolition.

K. Exceptions

1. The Historic Preservation Commission may, at its sole discretion, modify the requirements of these standards and guidelines when in the opinion of the Commission, an exception is warranted based for design consistency such as in the case of alterations to existing non-conforming structures, cases 8 where an exception is necessary to accommodate an appropriate architectural style, cases where an exception is warranted based on the development of immediately adjacent properties, and other similar circumstances determined by the Commission.

The following design criteria/guidelines apply to this case:

3. Architectural details that are typical can be seen on existing historic homes and these homes can be used as models for future designs

6. Preserve neighbor views and privacy and minimize impact to neighbors. Respectful orientation to neighbors' views and privacy should be an ongoing concern throughout the design process. Look at your design from the neighbors' lots.

a. Orient windows to protect neighbors' privacy. You may not want to see them anymore than they want to see you. Placing windows higher or using translucent glass respects privacy.

b. Buildings on the lot could be sited to not block views. There is no City mandate on views – this is strictly between you and the neighbor. Visit neighbors’ houses to see the impact your new building may have on views.

c. Windows at streetside are to scale with neighborhood character in order to maintain visual continuity with respect to size, style and height.

DISCUSSION

Basis of Report:

The information in this summary discussion was derived from the application to the Heritage Preservation Commission.

Evaluation of Effects

Requiring a cultural resource study or “an archival record be created with photographs taken, building construction materials and techniques documented, historical knowledge or value recorded” for the garage would yield little information of research value as the garage is not the primary structure of the property, which will remain. Demolition of the detached garage unit would have no adverse effect on the primary structure, which retains sufficient integrity to contribute to the Flagstaff Townsite Historic Residential District.

The proposed accessory dwelling unit is subservient to the primary dwelling and compatible with Townsite Overlay criteria. The materials and colors are compatible with the Townsite neighborhood, yet also differentiate is as new construction compared to the primary historic structure. The accessory is set back from the street and subservient in mass, scale, and height. The accessory is voluntarily designed under the 16-foot height guideline at 14 feet 6 inches. An interior yard of 1,060 square feet exceeds the 1,000 square feet requirement. The accessory also meets the 6:12 slope roof minimum standard. The site meets requirements for street relationship, driveway, and parking.

COMMISSION OPTIONS

- (1) The Commission can approve the recommended motion;
- (2) The Commission can approve with additional conditions related to the standards and guidelines applicable to the case;
- (3) The Commission can request additional information and continue to a date certain; or
- (4) Deny Certificate of Appropriateness and require Certificate of Economic Hardship or submittal of an alternative design that meets all Townsite Overlay Requirements.

STAFF CONCLUSION:

The proposed new accessory dwelling unit conforms to the Flagstaff Zoning Code and Townsite Historic Design Review Overlay District Design Standards and Guidelines. Demolition of the garage unit will have no adverse effect on the existing building and a cultural resource study of the garage unit would yield little information of research value. It is appropriate for the Commission to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness based on the findings.