

HDC-2022-00049**Address: 948 North Street****District: Old Allentown Historic District****Applicant: Bolivar Pena, Owner****Proposal: Demolish garage****Building Description:**

This property is a two-story row house, ca. 1892, Half Street Vernacular in style. It has been altered and is in fair condition. The roof is gable with asphalt shingles. It has a single chimney with drip ledges. The windows are 2/2 sash and there is a basement window grille. The house has three entries. The main entry is a single glazed door with transom, and it has an aluminum awning over it. The exterior walls are covered with asbestos shingles. There is a garage in the rear, also a two-story addition has been added to the rear of the house.

Project Description:

This application proposes to demolish the one-story brick garage of 948 North Street. The garage is located at the rear of the property, at the intersection of Palm and Brush Streets, with frontage on Palm Street. The roof collapsed at some point in the past, leaving the garage susceptible to the elements and causing further deterioration. On August 22, 2022, a city inspector from the Department of Building Standards and Safety designated the garage as an unsafe structure and ordered that it be razed or repaired within 30 days to abate a public safety concern. Owing to the extent of the damage, the owner is seeking to demolish rather than repair the structure.



The main structure of 948 North Street in 2019.
(Google StreetView)



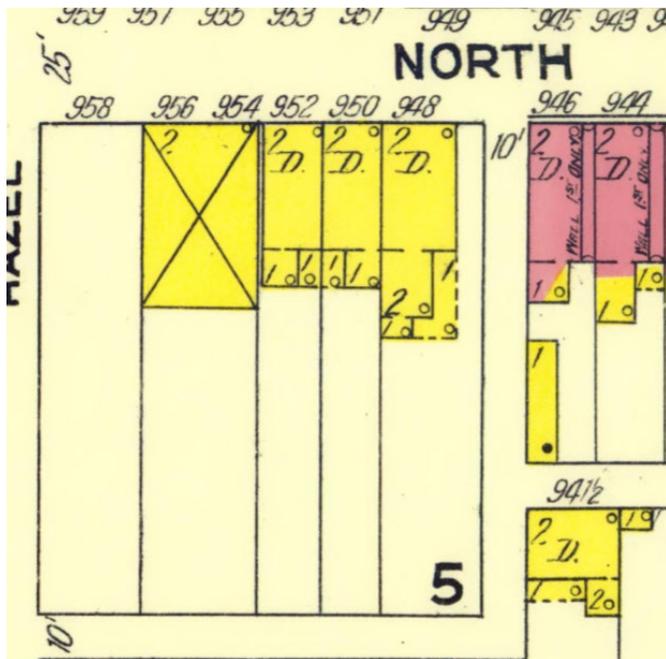
Rear garage of 948 North Street. (Applicant)



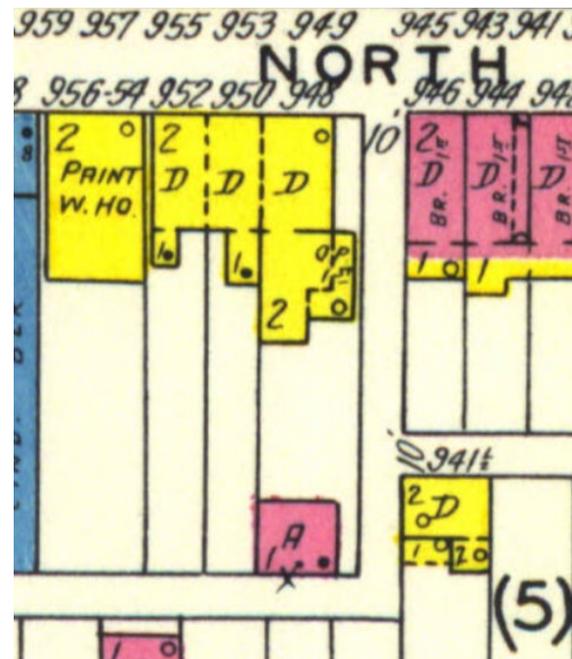
Interior of the garage at 948 North Street.
(Applicant)



Interior of the garage at 948 North Street. (Applicant)



1911 Sanborn Map showing that the garage at 948 North Street was not yet constructed. (PSU)



1932 Sanborn Map showing that the garage at 948 North Street was constructed between 1911 and 1932. (PSU)

Applicable Guidelines:

3.15 – Demolition

3.15.3 Determine if the building retains historic integrity. Evaluate the cumulative impact of past alterations. Buildings that have been altered to such an extent that they no longer convey their significance or contribute to the historic district may have more flexibility in review.

3.15.4 Evaluate the impacts of the proposed demolition on the historic district. Evaluate the impacts to the adjacent buildings, the immediate surroundings, and the historic district as a whole.

3.15.8 If demolition is proposed because the City's Building Inspector has declared a clear and present danger, provide official documentation with the application. The Building Inspector may determine that a building is in a state of collapse or has deteriorated to such a point that it is a public safety concern. This finding should be supported by documentation from a licensed structural engineer.

3.15.11 For accessory structures, determine if the structure contributes to the historic character of the building or block. Consider the relationship and historical connection of the accessory structure to the primary building. Demolition of existing accessory structures can be considered appropriate for non-historic structures that do not contribute to the historic character of the building or district or that detract from this historic character. Non-historic or non-contributing status must be determined by Staff or the HARB.

3.15.12 For accessory structures, consider the structure's spatial relationship to primary streets, secondary streets, and alleys, and its overall visibility within the district. Structures located on primary streets will have greater visibility within the district. Demolition of structures located only on secondary streets and alleys may be appropriate because of its reduced visual impact, but must also be evaluated for contributing character.

Observations & Comments:

The garage was constructed between 1911 and 1932, several decades after the main building and does not reflect the same architectural character or materials as the house. The garage is located at the intersection of two service alleys and is minimally visible from North Street. Palm and Brush Streets consist largely of rears of buildings with several non-contributing, one-story garages. One residential building is located across the intersection.

The staff finds that the garage may have once contributed to the historic district but that the structure has lost its integrity from the damage and deterioration caused by the roof collapse. The building's compromised structural integrity has been documented by the Department of Building Standards and Safety as a public safety concern. The staff finds that the demolition is necessary to abate a dangerous condition and that the demolition will not have a negative impact on the district, because the garage is not visible from a primary street.

If the wood garage doors can be salvaged despite their severely deteriorated condition, salvage is recommended for potential repair and reuse at another building. If remaining wood window frames and/or sashes can be salvaged, this is also recommended.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.15 Demolition.

HARB Discussion:

Vice Chair AJ believes the garage is important as an accessory structure, however the garage is not visible from the street and therefore may be considered for demolition.

PH agrees this structure contributes spatially to the context of the neighborhood; however, it is not visible from the public right of way and therefore not under the purview of the HARB.

GL stated the structure contributes to the fabric of the neighborhood, and agrees it is not visible and therefore outside of the HARB's review.

BH stated the structure has been identified by the City as hazardous and should come down, and feels the cost to stabilize and repair are prohibitive.

Action:

HARB member Phillip Hart made a motion to approve the application presented on *09/12/2022* for the demolition of the rear garage at *948 North Street* as submitted and finds that the application is in compliance with the following sections of the Guidelines for Historic Districts: Chapter 3, Section 3.15 Demolition, and finds that there are no circumstances unique to the property. HARB member Glenn Lichtenwalner seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.