



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION

REPORT: 100 Cedar Street, Hartford, CT 06106

For consideration: May 19, 2021

STAFF REPORT

TO: HARTFORD PRESERVATION COMMISSION
FROM: Paul Bengtson, Principal Planner
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PROJECT: 100 Cedar Street
PARCEL ID: 247-447-003
ENERGOV ID: COMM-2021-0357

ZONE: MX-1 **HISTORIC DISTRICT:** Jefferson Seymour National Historic District

TYPE: ARTICLE XII HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Sec. 28-170 through 28-221

APPLICANT: Mike Pikosky, Superior GHQ, LLC.

OWNER: Superior GHQ, LLC.



Location Map

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The commercial building at 100 Cedar Avenue was built around 1920 and contributes to the Jefferson-Seymour National Historic District. The building has had a series of additions to the rear of the structure. The structure is listed in the nomination for the district as having a critical historic assessment.

The building was long the home of the State Awning Company, though it is now vacant and owned by the adjacent property owner at 229 Buckingham Street.

This application was originally scheduled to be heard by the Historic Preservation Commission at their regular meeting on April 21, 2021. Prior to that meeting the application was continued to the May 19, 2021 meeting at the request of the applicant.

The applicant has submitted additional detail in regards to the application in the form of two photographs and a letter addressing the building condition and potential adaptive reuse. These items are attached to the report.

Proposed Project: The applicant seeks to demolish 100 Cedar Street. The applicant's narrative states:

The structure at 100 Cedar Street is a hodgepodge of six different buildings and or additions. The review of the building by the engineering firm Buck & Buck submitted with our application details its functional and structural deficiencies. It is our intention to have the building demolished given that it is not usable. According to the seller, whose grandfather purchased the building in 1930, the building when constructed was for a garage to storage (sic) wagons and a stable for horses. Subsequent additions to the building appears to have been dictated by utilitarian needs and not in conformity with the original appearance. Consequently, the building is now a collection of random structures connected by various ramps and stairs, none of which were well done and now show significant deterioration. The offer to sell the property to us was totally unexpected, but it made sense for us. Our building at 229 Buckingham Street, also in the historic district, abuts 100 Cedar Street and its acquisition provides us with land that would be required if we need to expand our space in the future to stay in Hartford.

LEGAL STANDARD

The Commission reviews and acts upon all applications for Document of Suitability. No person or entity may, without first applying and obtaining the approval of the Commission, file an application for a demolition permit, or for a building permit for any protected property as designated in the Historic Preservation Ordinance Sec. 28-219.

STANDARD SPECIFIC TO THE USE

Section 28-219 of the City of Hartford Historic Ordinance includes the following section regarding demolition of protected property:

(e) Demolition of a protected property shall be approved by the commission only if the applicant establishes, to the satisfaction of the commission, that (1) there is no economically feasible alternative to demolition or (2) the property, through no fault of any owner of the property after the

effective date of this chapter, does not contribute to the architectural or historic character of the district and its demolition will not detract from the architectural or historic character of the district.

FINDING OF FACTS

CURRENT USE:	Vacant	PROPOSED USE:	Demolition
YEAR BUILT:	About 1920	STYLE:	Vernacular Italianate

Particular Mention in historic nomination: *“The few commercial uses in the otherwise residential district include the State Anning Company, 100 Cedar Street, and the Hartford Cooperage, 174 Seymour Street”, “The last building on Cedar, #100, is a low, two-story commercial structure of brick with a wide cast iron cornice running along the flat roof. Despite its commercial use, the building’s scale and style are consistent with the rest of the structures along Cedar Street.”, “100 Cedar Street is listed as having a critical historical assessment.”*

Current Conditions: The exterior of the building at 100 Cedar is in fair condition, though the paint on the brick and trim work is failing. Many of the windows are boarded. The cast iron cornice mentioned in the district nomination is still present on the front façade and portions of the rear. Many additions made over the years may have resulted in more of the cast iron cornice being removed or enclosed. The majority of the building is brick, though the rear additions have horizontal clapboard siding. The pictures provided by the applicant paint a different picture of the interior of the structure. The interior reveals that the building as a whole has been cobbled together by a variety of additions.



Fig.1 - 100 Cedar Street Front and Side (south) façade taken on April 13, 2021

Condition of other properties in neighborhood: The site has surface parking lots on three sides, but the buildings to the north including the applicants other building, 229 Buckingham Street, are in good condition.

COMMENTS RECEIVED (None received from the HPA or NRZ as of April 16, 2021)

ANALYSIS

The historic ordinance requires one of two findings be made by the commission in order to approve a demolition. The first is that there is not economically viable alternative, and the second is that the structure no longer contributes to the architectural or historic character of the district.

The applicant hired Buck & Buck Engineers to assess the structural integrity of the building. Their conclusion was that the building is ‘unsuitable for repurposing or repair due to the layout, floor levels, roof configuration and the fact that it has been neglected for so long causing structural damage. This argument is furthered by the applicant in a letter they submitted May 5, 2021.

Staff raised the question of selective demolition to the applicant prior to the April 21, 2021 HPC meeting. The applicant responded by submitting a letter dated May 5 ,2021 furthering their arguments. Staff recognizes the difficulties of an adaptive reuse of the structure as a result of the issues raised in the Buck & Buck Engineers letter, but still finds that there is not sufficient evidence to make the finding of ‘no economically viable alternative’.

Staff also raised the question of the use of the site if the building were to be demolished with the applicant prior, and the May 5th letter addresses that question by explaining that the applicant would replace the current driveways off of Buckingham Street for their adjacent property at 229 Buckingham Street with greenspace and use this property to provide access to both properties. They also indicate that the lot will allow them to expand 229 Buckingham Street in the future.

The applicant’s letter and photographs submitted May 5, 2021 also make arguments that the building no longer contributes to the architectural or historic character of the district. They specifically mention the utilitarian style of the construction and materials, the fact that the cornice is tin wrapped over wood as opposed to the nomination’s claim that it is cast iron, and point out that 7 of the original 15 properties on Cedar Street included in the nomination’s inventory have already been demolished.

The district has experienced a number of demolitions and as a result the subject property is surrounded on three sides by surface parking lots. The loss of other historic resources should not be looked at as a precedent or an indication that demolition is an appropriate recourse. Instead, the few resources that remain should be cherished and protected. The materiality of the cornice does not reduce its visual impact and architectural style. The submitted documentation indicates that the cornice can be rehabilitated if it is appropriately secured to the façade. While the structure is not a high style building, its vernacular design connects it to the other more ornate structures in the district that are still intact.

As the applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to prove that there is no economically viable alternative nor that the building no longer contributes to the character of the district, staff recommends denial of the demolition request.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends denial of this application.

A draft resolution follows.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Application Form
2. Letter from Buck & Buck Engineers dated February 24, 2021
3. Photographs of the structure submitted March 5, 2021
4. Letter from applicant submitted May 5, 2021
5. Photographs submitted May 5, 2021

REVIEWED,

Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION
100 CEDAR STREET
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPOSAL**

Whereas, The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the proposal to demolish an existing commercial structure; and

Whereas, The property is located in the Jefferson-Seymour National Historic District; and

Whereas, The structure is a 2 story brick commercial Vernacular Italianate design; and

Whereas, The applicant proposes to demolish the existing structure based on the February 24, 2021 letter from Buck & Buck Engineers; and

Whereas, The proposed demolition is not the only economically feasible alternative, and the property still contributes to and its demolition would detract from the historic character of the district.

Now therefore Be It

Resolved, The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission hereby denies the proposed work.

Be It Further,

Resolved, This 19th day of May 2021.