



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION

REPORT: 39 Sargeant Street, Hartford, CT

For consideration: September 15, 2021

STAFF REPORT

TO: HARTFORD PRESERVATION COMMISSION
FROM: Paul Bengtson, Principal Planner
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PROJECT: 39 Sargeant Street
COMM-2021-0345
PARCEL ID: 200-266-199

ZONE: N-2-2 **HISTORIC DISTRICT:** Sigourney Square National Historic District

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

APPLICANT: Donald Hurst

OWNER: Donald Hurst

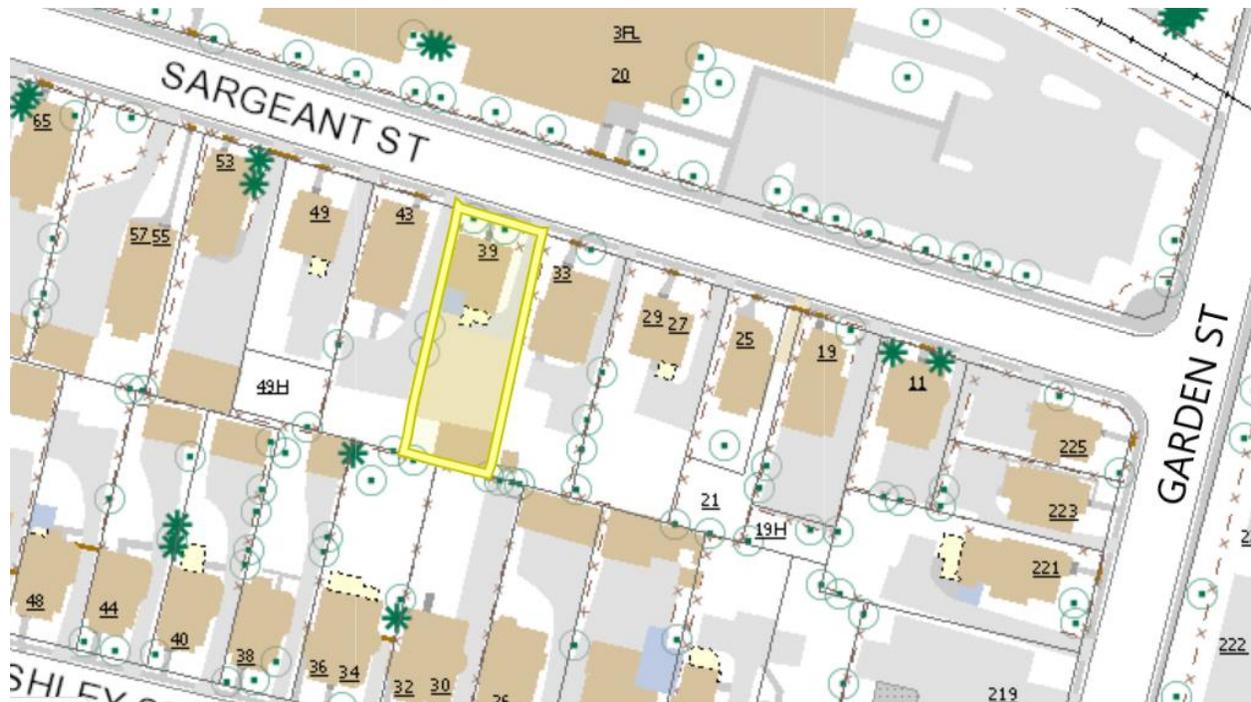


Figure 1. Location Map

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The subject site is developed with a three-family dwelling that was built in approximately 1830 and contributes to the Sigourney Square National Historic District. The application at this time concerns the detached accessory structure that formerly occupied a portion of the rear yard of the property.

The applicant demolished a two-story detached accessory structure in late 2020, without historic review or a demolition permit. Zoning Enforcement Officers issued a Notice of Violation on October 2, 2020 and a Cease and Desist Order on November 2, 2020 under the case number 8843138 for the demolition.

Staff has included in the report a google streetview image of the site from October 2020 which shows the structure no longer existing, and one from June 2019 which shows the structure. As can be seen in the photographs the structure was two stories in height and had a gabled roof oriented parallel to Sargeant Street. It appears to have been sided in wood siding with a vertical orientation. The applicant states in their letter that the roof was replaced with architectural shingles, but does not state when that work occurred.

The Commission continued the item (with consent of the owner’s representative) from the July regular meeting to the September 15, 2021 meeting. The Commission requested that the applicant submit plans for the proposed new construction.

Proposed Project: In addition to the demolition of the structure, the applicant has requested to construct a new detached accessory structure.

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:	Three Family	PROPOSED USE:	Three Family
YEAR BUILT:	c 1830	STYLE:	Vernacular

Particular Mention in historic nomination: The property is not specifically mentioned in the nomination form, but is included in the inventory as '38(sp) - 41 Sargeant St'.



Figure 2. Front (Sargeant St) Façade - Google Street View Image dated June 2019.



Figure 3. Front (Sargeant St) Façade - Google Street View Image dated October 2020.



Figure 4. Aerial Photograph of the entire block, City of Hartford Pictometry

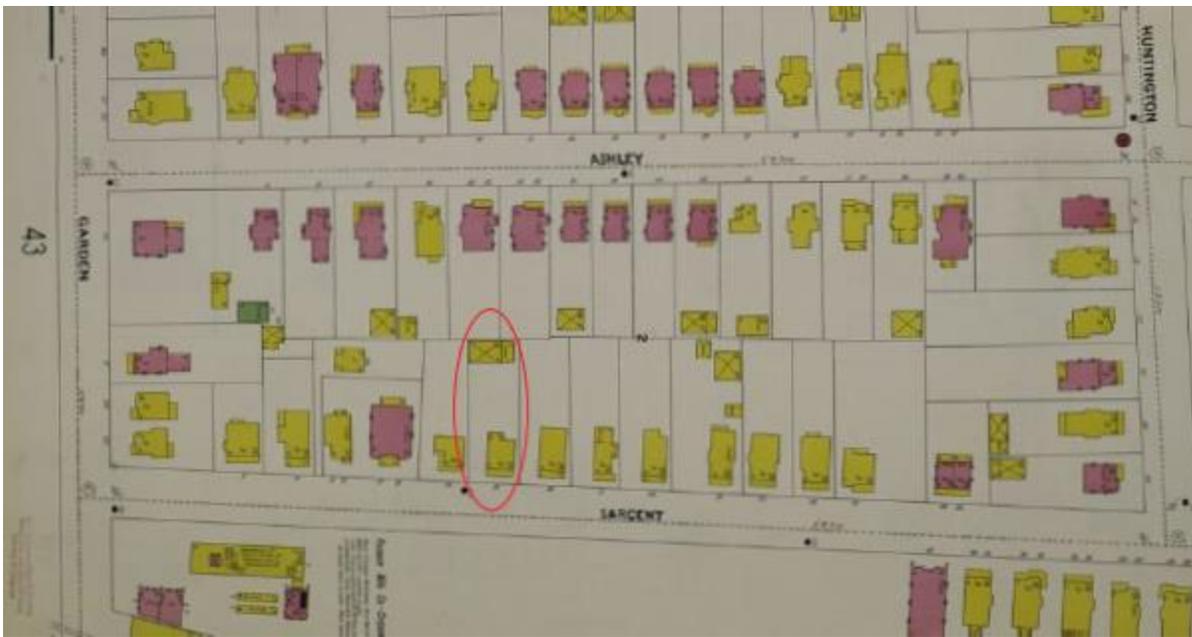


Figure 5. 1900 Sanborn Map, Sanborn Map Company, 1900, Vol 1, Page 44

Current Conditions: The principal building is clad in aluminum siding and has a mix of modern and historically appropriate windows. The detached accessory structure that previously occupied the site was completely demolished.

Condition of other properties in neighborhood: Other properties in the neighborhood are in fair to good condition. The north side of Sargeant Street is occupied by a large office building, while the rest of the structures on the south side of Sargeant Street are a mix of residential structures, many with detached accessory structures in the rear yards.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

(None received as of July 23, 2021)

ANALYSIS

The applicant has claimed that the demolition was an emergency caused by a failing structure that was stuck by a branch during a storm in August 2020. The applicant submitted photos of the structure that depict conditions prior to the storm and demolition actions. While the photos depict a structure in need of maintenance, staff finds that none of the pictures show structural faults. The applicant did not submit any photos of the alleged August 2020 storm damage.

All demolition activities were done by the applicant themselves. There was no inspection done by staff of the License and Inspection Division to determine that the building was an eminent safety concern. As such, the demolition section of the Historic Preservation Ordinance applies to the demolition of the structure.

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 an economically viable alternative, and the second is that the structure no longer contributes to the architectural or historic character of the district.

The applicant has not provided any evidence to prove that there is no economically viable alternative.

The question of contributing to the character of the district has not been addressed by the applicant. The nomination form for the Sigourney Square National Historic District describes the district as being a ‘residential district’ with a mix of materials and ‘fanciful Queen Anne design prevail(ing) throughout’. The nomination only specifically mentions outbuildings in three instances. Once is for 133 Huntington, a non-critical property, where the lot’s principal building had been demolished; another is for 33 Sargeant, where it was previously used commercially, and the final is the reference to the Alms House and Town Farm which was east of this site and all outbuildings/barns were demolished.

Outbuildings and garages are a typical form in the majority of residential neighborhoods. An aerial photograph of the surrounding area is included in the report, and it depicts a number of rear yard accessory structures of different designs and sizes. A section of the 1900 Sanborn Map for the block is also included, which depicts how common rear yard accessory structures were even when the neighborhood was relatively new.

Given the age of the structure it is likely that it was post and beam construction, and photographs confirm that it had vertical wood siding on both the first and second floors. There was at least one second story/loft opening on the north façade, a pair of small windows in the attic level of the east façade, and potentially other windows on the south and west façades. The north façade also had swinging doors, though it’s impossible to determine if that is an original condition. All pictometry available to staff depicts asphalt shingles, though its impossible to verify if that was the original condition. There does not appear to have been a specific architectural style executed in the design of the structure.

While the form of a rear yard accessory structure is common and therefore can be part of the architectural character of a residential district, the structure in question is non-descript and since the

nomination focuses on the ‘fanciful Queen Anne’ style an argument can be made that the structure does not fully contribute to the architecture or historic character of the district.

The applicant submitted new plans for a replacement structure that is similar in scale and size to the previous structure. There are a number of differences between the proposed structure and the demolished structure. The proposed structure is setback five feet from the side and rear property lines in keeping with modern zoning requirements, where the previous structure was on or close to the lot line. The proposed structure has dormers on the north and south facades, where the demolished structure was a simple gabled roof. The proposed structure would have vinyl siding and windows where the previous structure had wood siding and windows. Further, the main dwelling has aluminum siding. Finally, the street facing façade has three proposed metal garage doors. At time of zoning review the structure will need to comply with zoning regulations regarding matching the main dwelling for siding and roofing materials. A recommended condition of approval allows minor modifications at a staff level to conform to zoning requirements.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the retroactive request to demolish the rear yard, detached accessory structure at 39 Sargeant Street and approval of the new accessory structure with the following conditions:

1. Minor modifications shall be administratively approved by staff to ensure compliance with the City of Hartford Zoning Regulations.

A draft resolution follows.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Application Form(s)
2. Photographs of the Building submitted February 18, 2021
3. Email from Applicant submitted July 16, 2021
4. Detached Accessory Structure Plan by UrForm, LLC dated August 31, 2021



Paul Bengtson, Principal Planner



**CITY OF HARTFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION
39 SARGEANT STREET
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPOSAL**

Whereas, The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the proposal to demolish and rebuild the rear yard detached accessory structure at 39 Sargeant Street; and

Whereas, The property is located in the Sigourney Square National Historic District; and

Whereas, The principal structure is a Vernacular style residential building and the existing detached accessory structure was of a non-descript style; and

Whereas, The applicant demolished the existing detached accessory structure without historic review or building permits; and

Whereas, The Commission has determined that the detached accessory structure no longer contributes to the historic or architectural character of the Sigourney Square National Historic District; and

Whereas, The proposed detached accessory structure will be consistent with the City of Hartford Preservation Guidelines; and

Now therefore Be It

Resolved, The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission hereby retroactively approves the demolition of the detached accessory structure in the rear yard of 39 Sargeant Street, and the construction of a new detached accessory structure; subject to the following conditions of approval:

1. Minor modifications shall be administratively approved by staff to ensure compliance with the City of Hartford Zoning Regulations.

Be It Further,

Resolved, This 15th day of September 2021.