

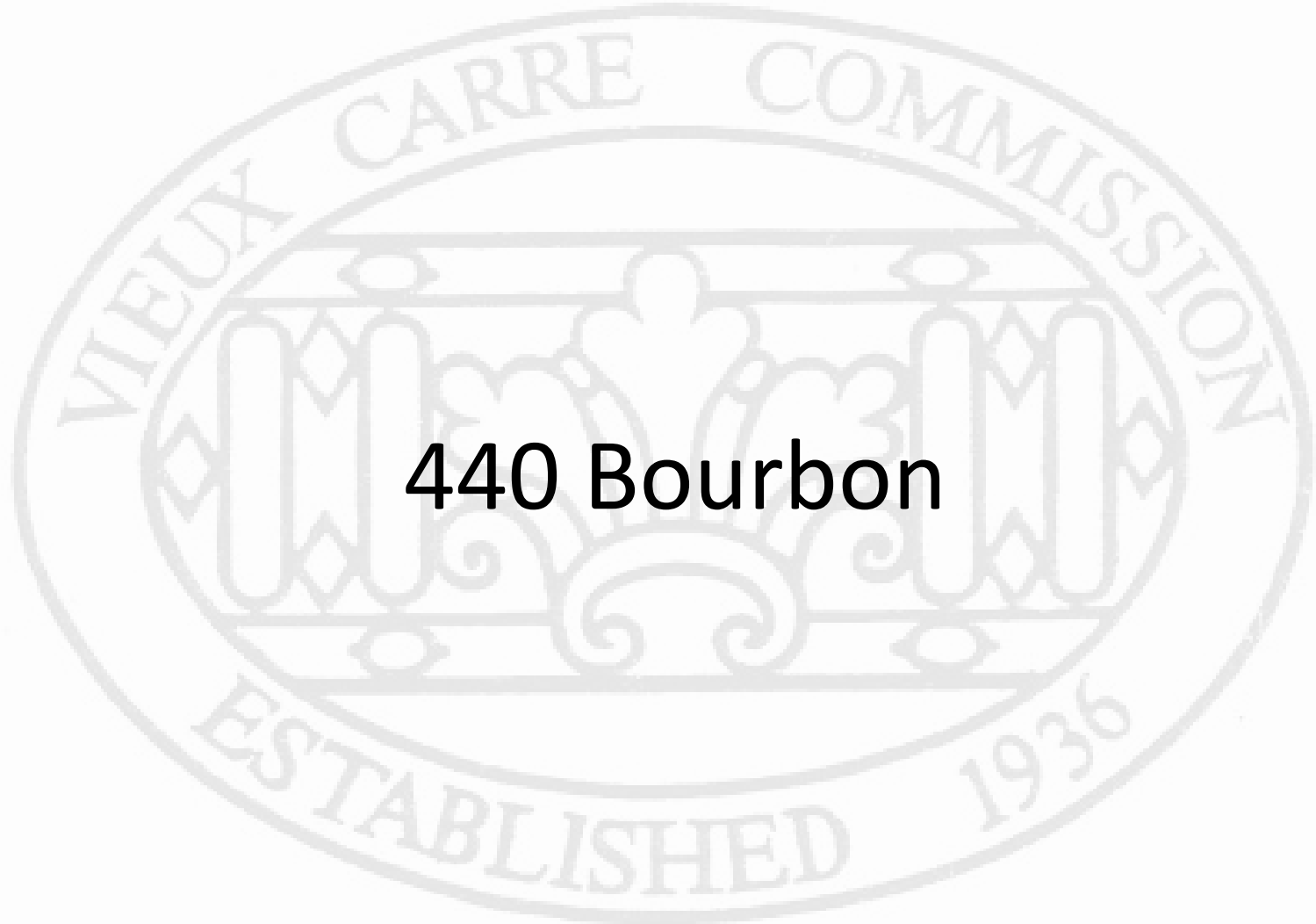


**Vieux Carré
Commission Meeting**

Wednesday, July 20, 2022



Other Business



440 Bourbon

ADDRESS:	434-40 Bourbon, 732 St. Louis		APPLICANT:	N/A
OWNER:	MDK 440 Bourbon Real Estate	LLC		
ZONING:	VCE		SQUARE:	63
USE:	Commercial		LOT SIZE:	5,494.4 sq. ft.
DENSITY:			OPEN SPACE:	
ALLOWED:	9 units		REQUIRED:	1098.9 sq. ft.
EXISTING:	None		EXISTING:	None
PROPOSED:	Unknown		PROPOSED:	None

ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:

Main building: **Green**, of local architectural and/or historic significance.
Rear additions: **Brown**, detrimental, or of no architectural and/or historic significance

Although constructed circa 1820 as part of the Pigneguy's Stables, this 3-story brick building has lost its early 19th-century appearance. In the 1870s the front building (Bourbon and St. Louis) housed a bakery and the open yard, surrounded by separate buildings, served as a stable.

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of **07/20/2022**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 07/20/2022

Lead Staff: Erin Vogt

Review of Staff and Committee recommendation to confirm entire three-story building rating as “Green,” per 07/12/2022 Committee review.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 07/20/2022

The VCC property summary report, Vieux Carré Virtual Library and VCC property map all have the main, three-story building at the corner of this site listed as **Green** rated. Only the Diboll Vieux Carré Digital Survey (hnoc.org/vcs) deviates from this, saying: “**Green Portion of building:** Front façade (Bourbon-side),” “**Brown Portion of building:** Rear portion.” Staff notes that the Diboll Vieux Carré Survey is a website hosted by the Historic New Orleans Collection which was created as a supplemental resource through a grant in 2010. It has never been under the control or administration of the VCC, and since that grant is concluded, this website is no longer updated or revised by HNOCC. Therefore, staff argues that this rating should in no way be considered official or final.

Staff fully inspected the property on 6/9/2022 and could find no reason why the survey would state that only the front façade should be green rated. The structure of all three floors, including the top floor, entresol level, and visible roof structure are all historic and of significant age. The millwork and masonry visible on the Bourbon, St. Louis, Royal and Conti elevations are all typical of the 19th century. Historic six-over-six windows on the second and third floors overlook the courtyard infill, despite inappropriate covering with corrugated metal sheets and metal screening. Furthermore, Sanborn maps from 1876, 1896, 1908 and 1940 show remarkable consistency and no significant changes for the three-story building. All exterior walls continue to be noted as 8/12/12 masonry throughout, with these numbers indicating wall thickness. Therefore, staff finds the HNOCC Diboll survey to be in error in this instance and recommends that the Commission **reaffirm** for the record that the entirety of the three-story building is a Green rated structure that is of local architectural and/or historic significance.

Regarding the single-story structures on the property, staff will need to research them further if any recommendations are to be made to adjust their ratings. They are currently noted as Brown rated structures, but some 19th century construction may remain.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION: 07/20/2022



New Business



800 N Rampart

ADDRESS: 800 N. Rampart Street
OWNER: J&R Rental Properties, LLC
ZONING: VCC-2
USE: vacant

APPLICANT: John C Williams
SQUARE: 103
LOT SIZE: 3040 sq. ft.

DENSITY
Allowed: 5 units
Existing: None
Proposed: No change

OPEN SPACE
Required: 608 sq. ft.
Existing: 151 sq. ft.
Proposed: No change

ARCHITECTURAL / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:

800-804 N. Rampart: Gable-ended, corner Creole cottage, the historic openings of which have been obliterated. Plan book drawings from 1858 and 1863 show this and the neighboring cottage at 1035 St. Ann. If the existing building is the same one depicted on the 1858 drawing, it was altered after 1863 with the addition of a steep gable end and dormers.

Rating: **Pink** - of potential local or major architectural significance, but with detrimental alterations.

806-08 N. Rampart: C. 1880 two-story frame building in the late Victorian Italianate manner.

Rating: **Yellow** - contributes to the character of the district.

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of **07/20/2022**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 07/20/2022
Permit #22-01008-VCGEN **Lead Staff: Erin Vogt**

Proposal to install wraparound gallery in conjunction with renovation to address demolition by neglect violations, per application & materials received 01/19/2022 and 07/08/2022. [Notices of Violation sent 02/28/2014, 09/14/2015, 01/31/2017, 05/01/2019, 10/30/2020, 05/24/2021, and 04/18/2022.]

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 07/20/2022

The applicant first applied in 2018 to renovate the building and add a gallery/awning hybrid. After some back-and-forth discussion regarding the appropriateness of the proposal and several extended delays between submittals, physical evidence supporting the previous existence of a gallery was found on the interior of the structure, and a permit was issued for the work in 2020.

Meanwhile, the building continued to suffer from long-standing demolition by neglect. Concerned that work had not begun while the building continued to deteriorate, staff scheduled an adjudication hearing for 06/23/2021. The morning of that adjudication hearing, staff was informed that the VCC approved design could not move forward with final permitting from Safety and Permits, as the Sewerage and Water Board denied installation of the new wraparound gallery due to the presence of an existing sewer line. The applicant then resubmitted plans for a renovation of the building *without* the wraparound gallery, which was approved by the Committee on 07/27/2021. Since no gallery was proposed, Commission review was not required for that scope of work. The permit was issued by VCC staff on 09/24/2021, following submittal of final plans.

No work has been done on the building since that permit was issued, and it has continued to deteriorate and be left exposed to the elements despite administrative adjudications and judgements.

On 01/11/2022, the applicant submitted a new application to renovate the building, once again proposing to add a wraparound gallery. The applicant informed staff that the Sewerage and Water Board was no longer objecting to the gallery due to the location of the water line. Staff requested documents from the owner and from S&WB to verify that all applicable departments were now consenting to the work, including the gallery footers in the sidewalk. These documents were provided on 07/08/2022, and the application was scheduled for Committee review. On 07/12/2022, the Architectural Committee moved to approve the renovation, including the gallery, and forward it to the Commission for consideration. Vieux Carré Commission approval lasts for 12 months, so the Committee and Commission both must review the proposal again before permits can be issued.

While a new application was required due to the amount of time that had passed, the drawings are largely unchanged from previous reviews. The building was significantly modified throughout the 20th century, including complete removal of historic millwork and a cut-corner entrance and awning. The proposal removes the anachronistic 20th century millwork and will reconstruct a wooden gallery on the N. Rampart elevation and a metal awning on the St. Ann elevation. Over multiple hearings and on-site inspections, VCC staff and the Committee evaluated the historic research and physical evidence the applicant

presented to support their argument for reconstructing the gallery and awning, which was also found appropriate and approvable by the State Historic Preservation office and National Park Service.

The gallery joists will be reinserted into existing historic joist pockets found on the interior of the N. Rampart-side wall. They are spaced at 2'-0" o.c. and are deep enough to indicate that they supported joists for the weight of occupiable gallery, not just a sidewalk covering. A 1863 plan book rendering, which shows the gallery and awning, may have been stretched when scanned, as the proportions of the roofline and millwork match the existing building and 1858 plan book rendering when the width of the image is reduced horizontally. While staff and the Committee were initially concerned that the gallery and awning may have belonged to a previously existing building, the physical evidence and historic research supports the existence of these elements at this structure.

New millwork will be installed in the existing masonry openings on the N. Rampart elevation. The St. Ann elevation will be more extensively modified, with two sets of four-lite French doors with shutters and a service door that will appear to be a shut pair of beaded-board shutters. The cut corner, commonly seen in buildings with commercial use, will remain to show how the building was modified over time. The second-floor windows on the N. Rampart elevation will remain their existing width, but will be brought down to floor length and converted to doors to allow for access to the gallery.

The N. Rampart-side brick parapet adjacent to the dormers on the St. Ann side of the roof will be rebuilt to a structurally sound condition and will match existing. The dormers will also be structurally stabilized and the tie-rod between the dormers and the parapet will be eliminated to prevent future strain on the parapet. The drawings call for all cement-based plaster to be removed and replaced with VCC stucco, with the finish and scoring to match existing. Staff notes that complete removal of all Portland cement may do more harm than good to the historic brick, and only delaminated stucco should be removed until it has naturally separated from the masonry.

The drawings state that no interior work will be undertaken as part of this scope, so no change of use is proposed at this time.

Given the severe state of demolition by neglect at this property and lack of movement to address these issues despite numerous adjudication hearings, staff's priority is the restoration of this building to prevent any further damage and avoid risk of losing the historic structure. Staff is also growing increasingly frustrated that the building has been allowed to continue to deteriorate for years despite permit issuance with a gallery, permit issuance without a gallery, and several permits with a smaller scope of work solely to address the demolition by neglect violations. The Committee recommends **approval** of the application as proposed.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION:

07/20/2022

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:

07/12/2022

Permit #22-01008-VCGEN and 22-18019-RSTC**Lead Staff: Erin Vogt**

Proposal to install wraparound gallery in conjunction with renovation to address demolition by neglect violations, per application & materials received 01/19/2022 and 07/08/2022. [**Notices of Violation sent 02/28/2014, 09/14/2015, 01/31/2017, 05/01/2019, 10/30/2020, 05/24/2021, and 04/18/2022.**]

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

07/12/2022

While a new application was required for compliance with current building code, this application is unchanged from previous reviews.

To summarize the significant history of this building over the last few years, the applicant submitted final drawings for a renovation of the property and a permit was issued by VCC staff on 11/18/2020, following years of extensive demolition by neglect and several significant delays between submittals. Concerned that work had not begun while the building continued to deteriorate, staff scheduled an adjudication hearing for 06/23/2021. The morning of that adjudication hearing, staff was informed that the VCC approved design could not move forward with final permitting from Safety and Permits, as the Sewerage and Water Board denied installation of the new wraparound gallery due to the presence of an existing sewer line. The applicant then resubmitted plans for a renovation of the building without the wraparound gallery, which was approved by the Committee on 07/27/2021. That permit was issued by VCC staff on 09/24/2021, following submittal of final plans.

No work has been done on the building since that permit was issued, and it has continued to deteriorate and be left exposed to the elements despite administrative adjudications and judgements.

On 01/11/2022, the applicant submitted a new application to renovate the building, once again proposing to add a wraparound gallery. The applicant informed staff that the Sewerage and Water Board was no longer objecting to the gallery due to the location of the water line. Staff was unable to confirm this and informed the applicant that the repeat review of this proposal would not be scheduled for Architectural Committee review until documents were submitted showing that the concerns from all other departments were now resolved.

Requested documents included:

- A maintenance agreement and gallery consent contract, which Sewerage and Water Board has indicated they will sign upon final approval. Staff is requesting that they sign the agreement following approval of the curb cut permit application and following VCC Architectural Committee and Commission approval of the gallery, but prior to final permit issuance.
- Corresponding drawings showing the locations of all subsurface conditions, so the VCC could be assured that no changes to the design will be needed based on the discovery of future issues that should have been anticipated and avoided. The drawings were submitted on 07/08/2022 and include the locations of all gallery footings and, most importantly, have been marked as reviewed by S&WB. VCC staff required this stamp on the drawings in order to confirm that all agencies are aware a gallery is being proposed, not a balcony.
- An updated engineer's report. Since the building has continued to deteriorate since the gallery was initially approved in 2018, staff requested that the engineer reevaluate. Engineer James B. Heaslip, II, P.E, of Axis Engineering provided a stamped letter stating that the building was reinspected on 06/24/2022, and "past photos show the building had a gallery at one time, therefore the building is able to support the added dead and live loading of the gallery." Staff disputes the basis of this assertion as a) the artwork Mr. Heaslip is referring to shows an awning, not a gallery, which would not have a comparable live load as there was no previous way to access the awning from the second floor and it was not intended for occupancy, and b) significant time has passed since the 1858 and 1863 plan books showed this awning, and the building has been allowed to deteriorate. However, Mr. Heaslip states that "the building is structurally sound as a whole," and "all new construction was designed in compliance with the 2015 International Building Code, ACI 318-05 Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete, and ASCE 7-10 Minimum Design Loads for Buildings and Other Structures."

Staff also noted that Safety and Permits had returned the latest drawing set to the applicant with multiple open comments. The applicant provided a letter to the VCC stating that these issues would be addressed, but it is unknown if they provided what S&P requested and if these issues were resolved.

Overall, there have been no significant changes to the design since it was initially approved by the VCC in 2018. Staff maintains the same concerns that installing a wraparound gallery at this building is historically questionable. However, staff is also growing increasingly frustrated that the building has been

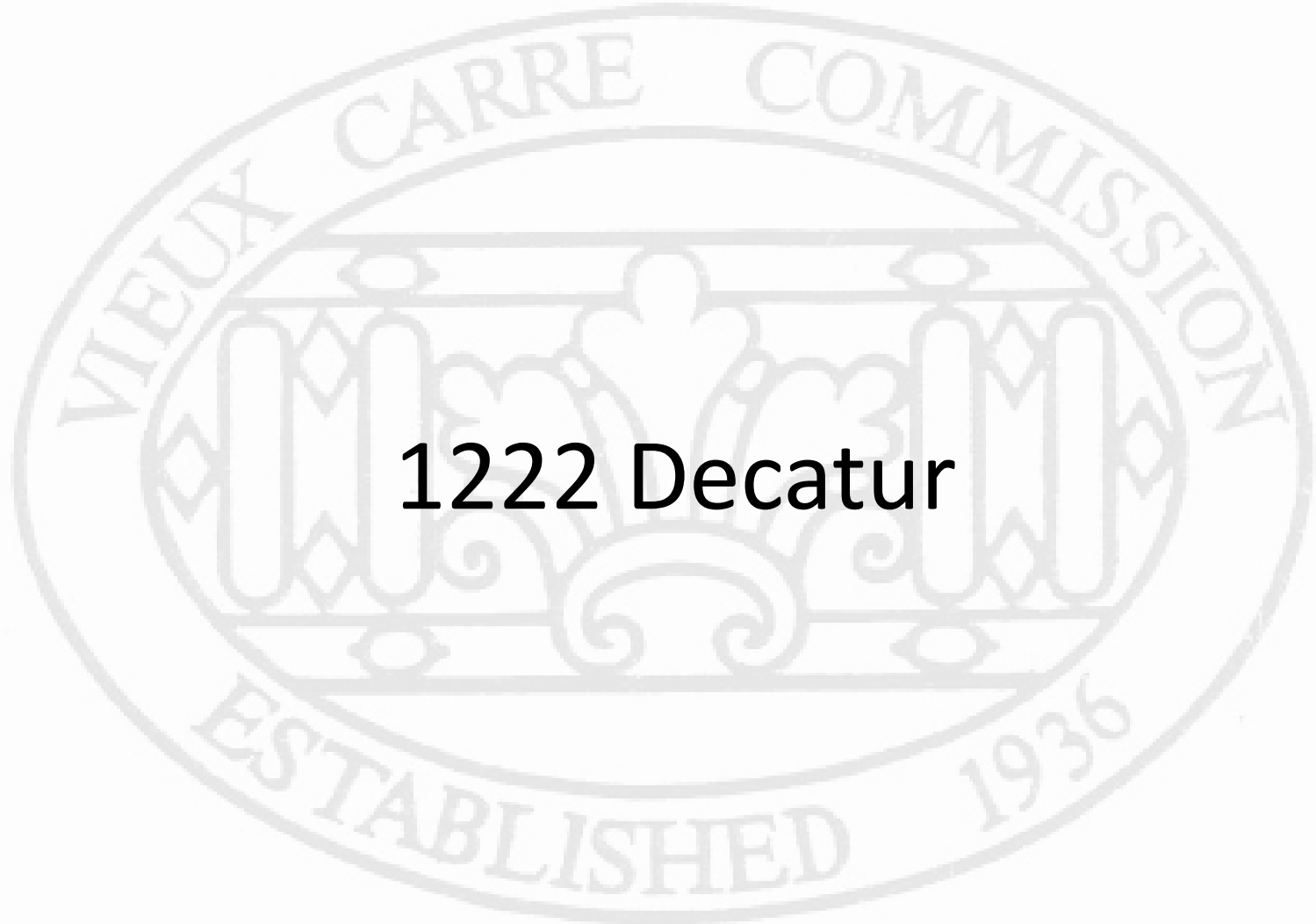
allowed to continue to deteriorate despite permit issuance with a gallery, permit issuance without a gallery, and several permits with a smaller scope of work solely to address the demolition by neglect violations. If all other departments are satisfied, VCC staff will support whichever proposal will ensure the building is renovated so it is no longer under existential threat.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

07/12/2022



Change of Use



1222 Decatur

ADDRESS:	1222 Decatur St.	APPLICANT:	NOLA Sign Shop, LLC
OWNER:	J&R Rental Properties, LLC	SQUARE:	14
ZONING:	VCS	LOT SIZE:	5,109 sq. ft.
USE:	Commercial	OPEN SPACE-	
DENSITY-		REQUIRED:	1,532 sq. ft.
ALLOWED:	8 Units	EXISTING:	0 sq. ft.
EXISTING:	Unknown	PROPOSED:	No Change
PROPOSED:	No Change		

ARCHITECTURAL / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

A plan book drawing from the 1860s documents the appearance of this 3 ½ story Greek revival townhouse, one in a row of four built in 1841 by builder Jean Fleming. Each building had three bays on each of the three full floors, a segmental arched dormer, wrought iron balconies on the upper floors and--on the ground floor--a fine Greek revival passageway entrance with a four-panel door below a plaid transom and two pairs of shop doors with night blinds.

Rating: Main & service buildings...**Green**, or of local architectural significance
 Courtyard infill...**Brown**, or of no significance

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of **07/20/2022**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 07/20/2022
Permit # 22-12838-VCSGN **Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht**

Proposal to install new exterior sign in conjunction with a **change of use** from *retail* to *personal services establishments*, per application & materials received 04/29/2022.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 07/20/2022

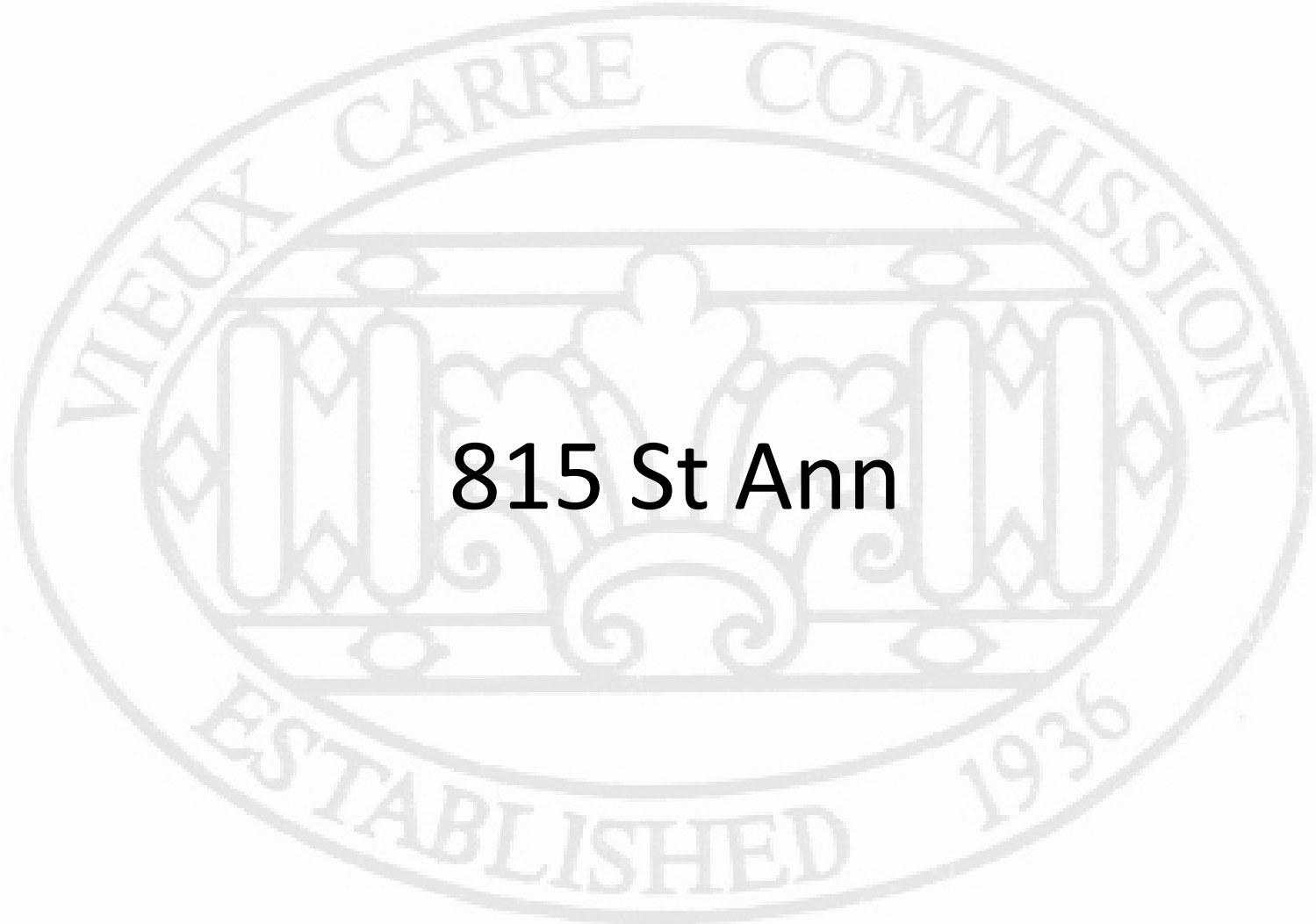
This existing commercial space is changing from a previously existing retail establishment to a new personal services establishment. Personal services are an allowable use in the VCS zoning. Staff notes that no exterior work is proposed except for the new sign. The proposed sign meets the requirements of the CZO and VCC Guidelines and is approvable.

Staff recommends approval of the proposed change of use with any final details to be handled at the staff level.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION: 07/20/2022



Appeals and Violations



815 St Ann

ADDRESS:	813-815 St. Ann	APPLICANT:	John C Williams
OWNER:	Sandra Sachs, Lisa Sindere,	SQUARE:	75
ZONING:	VCR-1	LOT SIZE:	3,672 sq. ft.
USE:	Residential	OPEN SPACE-	
DENSITY-		ALLOWED:	5 Units
ALLOWED:	5 Units	REQUIRED:	1,102 sq. ft.
EXISTING:	3 Units	EXISTING:	1,198 sq. ft.
PROPOSED:	No Change	PROPOSED:	No Change

ARCHITECTURAL / HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Ratings:

- Main building: **Green**, or of local architectural and/or historical significance.
- Rear shed: **Brown**, or of no architectural or historical significance
- Extreme rear kitchen: **Blue**, or of major architectural and/or historical significance.

This two-story brick Greek revival building, which was constructed c. 1852, has exposed brick, an entrance with a crossette enframement, a post-supported cast iron gallery, and a blue-rated brick kitchen, which dates from circa 1810. At that time, this property, along with the adjacent early 19th century building at 817-19 St. Ann, was part of the holdings of the Cazalars, a free family of color who figured in the early development of the French Quarter.

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of **07/20/2022**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 07/20/2022
Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN **Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht**

Proposal to shore the St. Ann elevation of the main building, remove the front masonry wall, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 06/27/2022, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 07/20/2022

The Architecture Committee has reviewed proposals for the front wall of this building since 08/24/2021 and the Commission previously reviewed a similar proposal at the 12/15/2021 Commission meeting. As a reminder, the applicant proposes to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation in order to pour a new concrete foundation. The wall would then be rebuilt re-using the existing bricks, millwork, trim, etc. The applicant has stated that the existing gallery could be braced and left in place while the masonry work was going on but not architectural drawings have been submitted to relate that.

At that 12/15/2021 Commission meeting, the Commission voted to defer the application to allow for consolation of the wall with a third-party engineer. Although a reasonable request, staff found that the legal requirements of securing such a third-party opinion were onerous. As such, no engineer was willing to sign the required documents and give a professional opinion regarding the situation.

Additional reviews followed at the Architecture Committee level with the Committee requesting additional materials and reports, including an updated engineer’s report based on a new inspection by the applicant’s engineer. A new report was submitted but it still referenced the inspection completed by the engineer on October 27, 2020. The Architecture Committee was hoping to determine if there had been any changes to the building since the 2020 inspection and if the current conditions are static. This cannot be determined without an updated engineer’s inspection.

Staff and the Architecture Committee view the proposed complete removal of this wall as an extreme action and one that should only be undertaken if completely necessary. Without enough documentation and analysis to support that no alternatives are available besides the proposed demolition and reconstruction; the Committee reached an impasse and forwarded the proposal to the Commission.

As the applicant and their engineer do not appear to be willing to modify their proposal and the staff and Architecture Committee agree that they have not received any information that would lead them to modify their position, this project is at an impasse. Staff recommends that the Commission either defer the matter requiring more information for their review or deny the application as proposed.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION: 07/20/2022

Architecture Committee Meeting of**07/12/2022****DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:**

07/12/2022

Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN**Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht**

Proposal to shore the St. Ann elevation of the main building, remove the front masonry wall, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 06/27/2022, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

07/12/2022

Following the deferral at the 06/16 Architecture Committee meeting with the request that the applicant investigate alternative methods for shoring and include an updated structural engineer's report, the applicant submitted some revised materials. The submitted framing and bracing plans appear to be identical to those previously reviewed. An engineer's letter dated June 27, 2022 has been submitted but it still references the inspection made on October 27, 2020. It does not appear from the letter that any new inspections were performed that might offer insight as to if there has been any movement in the wall since that 2020 inspection. Determining if this was a static or dynamic situation was one of the requests of the Architecture Committee.

Some new photographs have been submitted from where the front entrance steps have been removed that offer a view of the base of a portion of the wall beyond. However, it is difficult to gain much insight from these photographs without any kind of accompanying report.

Finally, a new annotated photograph has been submitted which notes the various locations of cracks, movements, and separations in the front wall. The photo shows a circled area under the gallery and notes, "needle beams thru wall can only be placed in this area. Would remove approximately 40% of the masonry to do so."

Staff still finds that additional information is needed including an engineer's report based on a new inspection and information on the possibility of installing interior shoring to allow for the safe exploratory demolition around the wall footing.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

07/12/2022

DRAFT

Mr. Block read the staff report and noted that it seemed an impasse had been reached. Mr. Block recommended moving this application to the full Commission.

Mr. Bergeron stated that this was an aggressive solution and moved to forward the proposal to the Commission.

Architecture Committee Meeting of**06/16/2022****DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:**

06/16/2022

Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN**Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht**

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 11/04/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

06/16/2022

At the 03/22/2022 Architecture Committee meeting the Committee deferred this application to allow for an exploratory demolition permit to be issued to investigate the condition of the footings. Since that time, the applicant has informed staff that the contractor stated that exploratory demolition work could not be performed without risking collapse of the wall. With no additional information to present, staff seeks commentary from the Committee, applicant, and structural engineer for the project.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

06/16/2022

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Capeloa, Mr. Wolfe and Mr. Avery present on behalf of the application. Mr. Wolfe stated that they could not do exterior demo to look at the footing as it would be unsafe. Mr. Avery stated that they were concerned with ANY demo without shoring. Mr. Block stated "without shoring?" He went on to say couldn't you shore to stabilize and then do the exploratory demo. Mr. Block then stated that the building should be shored now if there was this much concern. Mr. Avery

stated they could not shore from the outside because of the street. He went on to say that the foundation had completely failed and they were going to shore internally. Mr. Block stated “so we are preserving the interior to rebuild the exterior. That is not what we do here.” Mr. Avery stated again “the foundation has totally failed.” Mr. Bergeron asked about the 3rd party engineer. Mr. Block stated the staff had had an informal conversation with an engineer on site but there was no formal report due to liability concerns.

Public comment- Nikki Szalwinski, representing French Quarter Citizens noted that this is drastic. She then discussed her own home on St Philip and how she went to this site with a level which showed that the wall was close to plumb.

Mr. Fifield stated that they had no drawings- existing or proposed. He went on to say that they needed to shore from the inside and that they had just given the Committee the answer. Mr. Avery stated that they had not really considered that approach and he was still concerned about dealing with a wall that had greatly moved. He went on to say that he would have to come up with a shoring plan. Mr. Fifield stated that he believed that was a reasonable request. Ms. DiMaggio questioned what interior elements they were concerned about losing. She went on to say that it seemed to her it could all be replicated. Mr. Wolfe stated that they would have to shore 15’ back on the interior, scaffold and then do the same thing on each level. Mr. Fifield then asked, so after all that and you do determine it is the foundation, then what? Has the structural engineer been monitoring this. Mr. Wolfe stated that he was unsure and would have to ask. Mr. Fifield stated “we need to know if it is stable now.” Ms. Vogt stated “we have no report since 2020.”

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer in order to allow the applicant time to investigate alternative methods for shoring. Ms. DiMaggio asked to amend the motion to include actual materials for review. Mr. Bergeron agreed to the amendment. Mr. Fifield amended the amended motion to include an updated structural engineer’s report. Mr. Bergeron agreed to the amendment. Ms. DiMaggio seconded the twice amended motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Architecture Committee Meeting of **03/22/2022**

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION: 03/22/2022
Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN **Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht**

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 11/04/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION: 03/22/2022

In the time since this property was last reviewed staff and members of the Architecture Committee have been able to perform further observations of the wall. These observations included some exploratory interior demolition to get a better view of the interior side of the masonry wall. Staff also had the opportunity to discuss this proposal with a third-party professional engineer. The engineer stated that the building is not in imminent danger of collapse.

Upon further study, staff does not believe that a complete deconstruction of this masonry wall is necessary. The condition of the wall near the base of the wall is in poor shape, but the masonry conditions appear to improve higher up on the wall. Considerable work is required for the wall, but staff believes this can be accomplished without a complete deconstruction of the wall.

Staff requests commentary from the Committee regarding the proposal.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION: 03/22/2022

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated that their initial reports from the structural engineer and leveler suggested the deconstruction and reconstruction approach of work. Mr. Williams continued that the third party engineer suggested a reconstruction without full deconstruction. Mr. Williams thought it may be possible to hold the building at the second floor and to rebuild underneath.

Mr. Fifield asked if the footings were currently exposed. Mr. Williams stated no but that Abry thought the whole footing would need to be replaced. Mr. Fifield stated that there was quite a bit of deferred maintenance on the masonry and the intervention had not been done well. He went on to say that the second floor was in better condition. Mr. Williams stated that the last slide before the plans showed a

photograph with 1”-1 ½” separation between the bricks. He went on to say that they could work with MMI and Abry to come up with a plan but they first needed to look at the footing. Mr. Williams stated that they would be happy to do the exploratory demo and come back. Mr. Block stated that the second floor was remarkably intact, so the idea of removing a whole wall to examine a footing is a bad precedent. Ms. Bourgogne then explained the problems with the request for an independent engineer with legal. Mr. Block stated that to be fair, Abry and their engineer could come back after the exploratory demo.

Public Comment:

Erin Holmes, representing VCPORA, stated that she appreciated the due diligence being paid by the VCC and applicant and stated her concern with replicating a building element compared to renovating it.

Nikki Szalwinski, representing French Quarter Citizens, stated that she agreed with Ms. Holmes and was generally against the proposal to completely remove the wall and rebuild new.

Mr. Williams stated that he believed they should get the exploratory permit.

Motion: Ms. DiMaggio made the motion to defer to allow the exploratory demo after the permit was submitted, approved and issued by staff and to use that information to formulate a plan, with the structural engineer to be in attendance for the next time this proposal was heard. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Vieux Carré Commission Meeting of

12/15/2021

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:

12/15/2021

Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN

Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 11/04/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

12/15/2021

The Architecture Committee has reviewed this proposal to completely demolish the St. Ann elevation of the main building a few times since August of this year. Although limited documentation has been provided to date, based off of staff observations and photographs the Committee found that this proposed work was warranted and that less extreme alternatives may not be successful.

The applicant proposes to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation in order to pour a new concrete foundation. The wall would then be rebuilt re-using the existing bricks, millwork, trim, etc. The applicant has stated that the existing gallery could be braced and left in place while the masonry work was going on.

Staff had the opportunity to visit and inspect the interior of 815 St. Ann back on 11/04/2021. The interior inspection was very insightful as the problems experienced by the wall are much more evident on the interior side. There is significant cracking along the interior side of the first floor of the front wall as well as possible separation from the front wall and the perpendicular side and interior walls. The floor level immediately behind the front wall has sunk by an estimated 2” and there appears to possibly be a rolling effect of the wall below the windowsill. Similar cracking, spacing, and other damage was also observed at the second-floor level, though not to the extreme seen at the first.

Staff still requires significant documentation prior to permit issuance and final approval but overall staff has been convinced that the concept proposed by the applicant appears to be the most viable option for the renovation of this building.

The Committee found the proposal conceptually approvable at the 11/09/2021 meeting and forwarded the proposal to the Commission for review. Staff recommends conceptual approval of the deconstruction and reconstruction with the applicant to provide documentation including detailed drawings, a catalog of existing material to be salvaged and reinstalled, and a breakdown of approximate timeline and order of operations.

VIEUX CARRÉ COMMISSION ACTION:

12/15/2021

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Williams and Mr. Saxon present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated again that there was limited documentation because they wanted to make sure their strategy would be ok and get conceptual approval before they did all the drawings. He went on to say that if approved they would develop the plans for the deconstruction and reconstruction with the gallery in place and they would detail it stage by stage. Ms. Gasperecz asked if there were any questions from the Commission. Mr. Fifield stated that it was very unfortunate that this had happened and perhaps routine maintenance could have prevented this tragedy. He went on to say that the ARC was not and should not be allowed to review something as structural as this in nature and that it would be beneficial in the future to have access to an independent engineer. Ms. Gasperecz asked if the neighboring buildings and the right of way would be in jeopardy. Mr. Bergeron asked if perhaps once they started it might not be as bad as they initially thought. Mr. Saxon stated "doubtful." He went on to say that he thought it would in fact be worse and that there has been a significant amount of movement. Mr. Saxon again stated that his was from the street and sidewalk construction done not lack of maintenance. He went on to say that they had actually removed part of the building's footing when doing the street and sidewalk construction. With nothing left to discuss, the Commission moved on to the next agenda item.

Public Comment:

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed demolition of the facade at 815 St. Ann. While I was attending the Harvard Graduate School of Design, there was a problem with the historic homes in the Beacon Hill area. The water table had subsided and the original Oak pilings on the homes rotted. It would have been convenient to simply demolish the historic structures and build anew. The neighborhood association required excavation and new foundations laid beneath the homes without disturbing the original facades. One of the advantages of brick masonry construction is the ability to repoint and repair. I have been doing this work on my home and feel it is appropriate here.

Respectfully,
Terrence Patrick Jacobs

We vehemently oppose this proposal which sets a terrible precedent in an area where numerous buildings desperately need maintenance and repointing. In fact 800 Royal has already filed a similar request for the wall adjacent to 808 which collapsed in 2014 after many years of neglect.

Our concerns:

Was foundation inspected 8-10 feet down where it steps out under the public right of way?

Why not shore the facade and repoint/repair the facade and foundation in kind as others have done and as required? The building withstood Ida and we question how unstable it really is that repair is not an option. Why not test a section? Look at other buildings that repaired similar damage by repointing?

A concrete foundation will introduce differential settling relative to side and rear walls and is in conflict with the design guidelines which requires "replacing masonry that matches the historic masonry in type, color, texture, size, shape, bonding pattern and compressive strength."

What guarantees do we have that this will be completed once it is taken down and materials will be reused? Will they be required to escrow funds to guarantee work will be completed in a timely fashion?

If the entire facade is replaced how will this affect the current vcc rating?

If damage was done by Hard Rock Construction and they are in litigation have they had any structural analysis done? Why are the properties not suffering the same damage?

We agree with Comm. Fifield that it is imperative that VCC have access to independent engineers as the commission and public have no way of knowing what was actually discussed with the engineer to arrive at this drastic intervention. Please deny this proposal and ask for one that repairs rather than demolishes history.

Nikki Szalwinski

 FQ Citizens

We want to reiterate the concerns we previously submitted about this very drastic intervention. The structure has suffered deferred maintenance in the years prior to the damage from the recent construction work. The applicant seemed to immediately pursue a full deconstruction, rather than a traditional shoring and repointing remediation measure that historic property owners typically resort to. If the commission chooses to allow this to move forward, we hope that every effort will be made to repurpose all usable building materials, including the original brick, and that the façade be rebuilt in an exact manner and appearance as it was originally. Further, the disruption to the surrounding properties must be mitigated to avoid any other collateral damage to this block.

Lastly, this brings up a larger issue for the VCC and the preservation of this important district. How can this body and the city work to prevent this kind of damage to our historic inventory resulting from insensitive and destructive contract work for city services?

Erin Holmes

Executive Director

With regard to the proposed plans for 815 St. Ann please note my objection and comments. This plan will set a bad precedent for this historic neighborhood. I am aware of at least one other similar request already and this plan has not yet even been approved. Has the VCC met with the structural engineer to determine why he feels this is the only plan? Have shoring and repointing as alternatives been discussed? What will this do to the building's current rating if the entire façade is replaced? If this building is so unstable that drastic measures are required, how did it survive IDA? There are many more questions that should be answered by the VCC before this type of "overhaul" is allowed – this is a slippery slope and if allowed no doubt many more such applications are in the wings.

Angie Bowlin

French Quarter resident/property owner

Angela M. Bowlin

Good afternoon. I don't always participate in VCC meetings because the commissioners and my colleagues at VCPORA and French Quarter Citizens do such reliably good work. I joined today, however, because a concerned resident of the Quarter reached out to PRC about this project.

I want to endorse Mr. Fifield's suggestion that the commission retain a third-party structural engineer to advise on situations such as this one. Morphy Makofsky is a very respectable firm, but that may not be the case in other situations. Perhaps the VCC can coordinate with the Historic District Landmarks Commission to retain an independent evaluator to advise and consult in all the city's historic districts. I am sure the HDLC would benefit as well.

Regarding the deconstruction and reconstruction, I would advise that all historic doors, windows, trim and bricks be cataloged and reinstalled and that staff inspect the process to ensure they are retained.

Thank you,

Nathan Lott

Policy Research Director & Advocacy Coordinator
 Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans

Discussion and Motion: Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer in order for staff to consult with a third-party engineer. Mr. Fifield seconded that motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Architecture Committee Meeting of

11/09/2021

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:
Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN

11/09/2021

Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation,

and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 11/04/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

11/09/2021

Staff had the opportunity to visit and inspect the interior of 815 St. Ann following the last Architecture Committee meeting. The interior inspection was very insightful as the problems experienced by the wall are much more evident on the interior side. There is significant cracking along the interior side of the first floor of the front wall as well as possible separation from the front wall and the perpendicular side and interior walls. The floor level immediately behind the front wall has sunk by an estimated 2” and there appears to possibly be a rolling effect of the wall below the windowsill. Similar cracking, spacing, and other damage was also observed at the second-floor level, though not to the extreme seen at the first.

Given the previously submitted engineer’s report as well as staff’s own observations, staff is comfortable moving forward with the proposed deconstruction and reconstruction method suggested by the applicant. Staff still requires significant documentation prior to permit issuance and final approval but overall staff has been convinced that the concept proposed by the applicant appears to be the most viable option for the renovation of this building.

Staff recommends conceptual approval of the deconstruction and reconstruction with the applicant to provide documentation including detailed drawings, a catalog of existing material to be salvaged and reinstalled, and a breakdown of approximate timeline and order of operations.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

11/09/2021

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Williams and Mr. Abry present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated that staff had taken a lot of time to visit the site and walk through the building. Mr. Bergeron stated that he had been hesitant to approve this application as he was not sure this was completely necessary however, after seeing the photos he felt more confident that this was the correct path. Mr. Abry stated that they could keep the gallery in place and do the work around it. Mr. Williams that they wanted to start and work through the process together. Mr. DiMaggio thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She went on to thank staff as the photos were a “huge help.” With nothing left to discuss, the Committee moved on to the next agenda item.

Public Comment:

Nikki Szalwinski

FQ Citizens

While there is no denying that this building is in dire need of maintenance which has been absent for decades, we still believe this is a drastic intervention: One that not only sets a bad precedent but also raises concern that additional changes will be offered along the way of this proposal, resulting in a significantly different building.

The existing foundation for a building of this type is typically a number of feet below street level and likely steps out, in this case under the public right of way. Today’s presentation does not make clear how the foundation will be rebuilt given the depth of the historic foundation, if it will be rebuilt in kind and how they will deal with the public utilities below the sidewalk. We are also extremely concerned that this proposal will result in damage to the existing foundations of the rest of the building and the eventual loss of the entire structure. If this proposal is allowed to go forward what guarantees do the VCC and more importantly the public have that the work will use salvaged or period materials AND be completed versus abandoned or drawn out over many years, causing significant disruptions?

We note numerous properties throughout the city have suffered settling and have been restored and kept in use without tearing down a facade. The applicant could stabilize and rebuild only the failing cracks and instead repair the interior to account for the settling as numerous other properties owners have done. Please consider another approach to this issue than what is offered currently.

Discussion and Motion: Ms. DiMaggio moved to conceptually approve the proposal to be forwarded to the Commission for review. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Architecture Committee Meeting of

10/12/2021

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:

10/12/2021

Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN

Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 09/27/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

10/12/2021

This proposal was last reviewed at the 08/24 Architecture Committee meeting where the Committee noted that much more information was needed in order to review a proposal this extreme. The applicant has arranged for a structural engineer to be on the call and has submitted an engineer's letter which states the following:

“At the time of our inspection, Tuesday, October 27, 2020, we could see displacement of the front façade wall and cracking in the masonry wall. The lower section of the wall tilts outwards, and the masonry towards the Dauphine Street side has cracked and begun to separate. The front wall has actually buckled which occurred when the footing under the front wall was undermined and likely rotated. Above the second floor we can also see significant horizontal movement across the wall resulting in large cracks above and adjacent to the windows. In addition, the front wall is separating from the side and central walls.

In consideration that the lower half of the wall needs to be removed to allow for the total replacement of the footing, and theoretically, significant sections removed to allow for needle beams to be installed to support the upper portions and finally portions of the upper wall need to be removed and rebuilt to restore the integrity; the portion that would remain is insignificant and would be very difficult to maintain during all the renovations. In view of this extent of work, the entire front façade will need to be removed and rebuilt. This also provides the safest means of restoration of the front façade...”

Despite requests from staff, no additional drawings have been submitted besides the engineer's drawings that were present at 08/24/2021 meeting. Given the extreme nature of this work staff is hesitant to make any recommendations until a full scope of work can be reviewed so that it becomes clear how this work will proceed. This is much more complicated than if it were simply a solid brick wall as this front elevation contains windows, doors, trim, a cast iron gallery, etc. Staff is concerned how all these elements will be treated to ensure a rebuilt condition would be indistinguishable compared to the previously existing.

Additionally, staff considers this demolish and rebuild strategy essentially an option of last resort and questions if there are any less extreme alternatives that may offer long term stability for the building. Staff requests commentary from the Committee regarding the proposal.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

10/12/2021

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Williams, the architect, Mr. Saxon, the structural engineer, and Mr. Abry present on behalf of the application. Mr. Williams stated that he had all parties present and that they were looking for conceptual approval before he went through and did all the drawings. Mr. Saxon stated that the wall was very buckled- 5'-6' above grade. He went on to say that all the windows and doors would have to come out. He then stated that they were going to shore the roof, floors and gallery. Mr. Abry stated that he agreed with Mr. Saxon and that they just felt there wasn't enough material left at the end so to rebuild seemed the right way to go. Mr. Fifield asked Mr. Williams if he would supply all the drawings. Mr. Williams stated yes and method and means. For clarification Mr. Fifield asked Mr. Williams if he was looking for an agreement that this concept was ok. Mr. Williams stated yes. Mr. Bergeron asked if the building was in imminent danger of collapse. Mr. Saxon stated that given the right circumstance, yes. Mr. Fifield stated that he was in this building a decade ago and at that time he was concerned. Mr. Block stated that that they needed to figure out if this needed to go to the full Commission. Mr. Fifield stated that that was a procedural issue for staff. Mr. Block agreed. Mr. Williams stated that he was fine going to Commission. With nothing left to discuss the Committee moved on to the next agenda item.

Public Comment:

Erin Holmes

Executive Director

Vieux Carré Property Owners, Residents and Associates

We echo the Review Committee's concerns regarding the drastic nature of this request. If dismantling the full facade and reconstructing it in place is the only possible solution, we would hope that the applicants will submit a component catalogue, or something similar, indicating all historical elements that will be salvaged, repaired, and reused.

Nikki Szalwinski

FQC

This building has arrived at this unfortunate state due to lack of maintenance over many decades but this request is an extreme and drastic request which lacks prepared drawings to truly evaluate. While we do not deny that this building needs masonry repairs and repointing, a complete facade demolition is a harsh approach which sets a terrible precedent. After all numerous buildings in the district could use this same approach rather than simply preserving what exists. Demolition shouldn't be a substitute for repointing.

The current owners purchased units in 2013 and 2015 and are only now claiming this is a necessary intervention. We note that one of the present owners was cited and fined \$3000 by the city short term renting Unit 1. One stop shows this fine remains unpaid.

Lastly granting conceptual approval when the applicant has provided NO drawings has been used by others in the past gain approvals from other city agencies as well as advantages in litigation. Please deny.

Motion and Discussion:

Mr. Bergeron made the motion to defer the application in order to have the opportunity to ask the applicant further questions. Ms. DiMaggio seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Architecture Committee Meeting of

08/24/2021

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION:

08/24/2021

Permit # 21-21655-VCGEN

Lead Staff: Nick Albrecht

Proposal to completely deconstruct the St. Ann elevation of the main building, construct new foundation, and reconstruct St. Ann elevation, per application & materials received 07/27/2021 & 08/18/2021, respectively.

STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION:

08/24/2021

The applicant has submitted limited engineering drawings and have discussed completely demolishing the St. Ann elevation of the main building in order to pour a new concrete foundation. The wall would then be rebuilt re-using the existing bricks. The plans also include several references to masonry repairs utilizing helical ties but it is unclear where these repairs are being proposed.

The proposed deconstruction and reconstruction is obviously a major act for the c. 1852 building and staff questions why such a major intervention is needed. The Guidelines note that, “*once a historic resource or building that contributes to the community’s heritage is destroyed, it is generally impossible to reproduce the design, texture, materials, details, special character and interest of the resource in the Historic District.*” (VCC DG: 14-20) Staff questions if all alternatives to the proposed demolition and reconstruction have been explored by the applicant.

If the Architecture Committee finds the proposal conceptually approvable, staff requests that architectural drawings are provided that completely document the existing conditions and details as well as the plans and details for the reconstruction.

Staff seeks the advice of the Committee regarding the proposal.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE ACTION:

08/24/2021

Mr. Albrecht read the staff report with Mr. Williams present on behalf of the application. Mr. Fifield commented that the drawings appeared to be out of order. Mr. Fifield stated that there didn’t seem to be much to talk about here. He asked the applicant if there was a collapse here. Mr. Williams stated no, that it was from the street construction. Ms. DiMaggio stated that she would like to hear from a structural engineer in order to determine if this was the only course of action. Mr. Fifield asked the Committee if they agreed there was not enough information presented by the applicant. Mr. Bergeron agreed. Ms. Bourgoigne asked that the motion include a staff inspection. The Committee agreed. With nothing left to discuss, the Committee moved on to the next agenda item.

Public Comment:

Nikki Szalwinski, FQ Citizens

We agree with the staff report that this is a drastic intervention.

Discussion and Motion: Ms. DiMaggio moved to defer the application noting that much more information was needed before something this extreme could be approved. Ms. DiMaggio noted that structural engineer reports or letters need to be submitted and that the engineers should be present for future meetings. Finally, staff will perform an inspection in the interim. Mr. Bergeron seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.