



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

300 Martin Luther King Blvd.

March 13, 2025

TIME: 4:30 PM

1. A CALL TO ORDER

Rush Denson called the meeting to order at 4:34 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Mike Buckalew to approve the February 13, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded by Debbie Purves. All approved.

1. Approve February 13, 2025 minutes

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

(Limit comments to 3 minutes or less)

Rush Denson opened the floor for public comments. There were none.

4. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to discuss.

5. NEW BUSINESS

2. 410-472 Geneva St: Geneva Historic District

COA: Remove Brick Walls

Applicant: Cody Holly

Agenda Item #: 1

Meeting Date: 3/13/2025

Action Requested: COA: Wall Removal

Location of Property: 410-416/466-472 Geneva St; Geneva Historic District

Petitioner: Hartbrook Development, LLC

Resources:

Vacant lot facing both Geneva Street and S. 10th Street.

History: Applicant received COA on 10/10/2024 to construct twin homes. A curb cut was required to install the shared drive for these units and future units in the rear.

Proposal: The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Remove existing brick walls at curb and behind sidewalk and grade to match neighboring properties. The walls are falling in several areas. A new sidewalk will be poured and grass installed.

Proposed Guidelines:

A. THE ENVIRONMENT:

1. The environment consists of all exterior features in the designated historic districts which are visible to the public and includes structures, outbuildings, landscaping, streets, appurtenances, trees, mass and spacing between structures, scale, mass, color and materials of buildings that give a neighborhood its distinguishing character and contributes to its historic district designation.
2. Significant landscape features such as public parks and gardens, street lighting, signs, street benches, sidewalks, streets, alleys and building setbacks that have traditionally been maintained in the historic district and that contribute to its historic character should be retained. Existing streets should not be widened. paving material should not be changed to a different texture and color. Inappropriate new streets or parking lots incompatible with the neighborhood should not be constructed. (*updated 08/12/14*)
3. New plant materials, fencing, walkways, housing and other outdoor lights, signs, benches, etc. should be compatible with the character of the neighborhood in size, scale, material and color.
4. Plant material should be maintained so as not to become a hazard to the public, public property or shall not be allowed to cause deterioration to structures.
5. Existing street trees should not be removed without supporting documentation and a plan for replacement. Trees located in the city right of way cannot be removed without city approval (*updated 09/09/22*)

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Back yard Tree house, swing sets and trampolines
- Benches and other outdoor furniture and accessories
- Sculpture and another outdoor artwork
- Pools and patios
- Tree pruning, clearing of overgrown bushes, vines, saplings, etc.
- Tree removal (less than 4" diameter at breast height or diseased).
- Planting new trees, shrubs, ground cover, etc.

- Landscape edging
- Flower, vegetable and rock gardens
- Flowerpots, planters, window boxes, birdbaths, bird houses, etc.
- Adding gravel to existing driveways
- Patching deteriorated concrete or asphalt pavement, walks, steps, etc.

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Changes to stone walls and other historic site features
- New or expanded parking areas/lots
- New and expanded driveways and walkways
- Staff approval for change of materials (i.e. gravel to concrete)
- Staff approval for tree removal with supporting documentation from a Certified Arborist that the tree is either dead, in severe decline, and/or possess a high risk of failure. Trees to be reviewed by the City Arborist. A tree replacement plan must be provided. (*Updated 09/09/22*)

Appurtenances:

- a. Appurtenances related to a building (fences, walls, outdoor lighting, steps, paving, sidewalks and signs) should be visually compatible with the environment to which they are related.

b. Fences:

The size, scale, and transparent quality of the fence shall be considered in the design to minimize the impact on the historic fabric on the neighborhood. The orientation and location of the fence shall also be considered, with the structural members located on the interior of the fence (pretty side out) and the location and size such that it does not block views of the buildings from the street.

Front, side and rear yard area will be determined on a case-by-case basis from a site plan showing the footprint of house and proposed fence, due to the variety of lot and building shapes. Generally speaking, the front yard is the portion of lot between the street and the rear edge of the building; the side yard is the portion of lot behind the house, between the sidewalk and the rear corner of the building, on corner lots; and the rear yard is the portion of lot behind house. Staff approval may be granted for fences that clearly fall within the guideline specifications; particularly those pertaining to staff permissible-materials and fence heights.

1. Low retaining walls in front and side yards should be kept where they exist. If new retaining walls are required, they should match the existing or match a documented example correct for the period of the structure.
2. Existing period fencing should be maintained and repaired. Where necessary to replace period fencing, it should be replaced with compatible fencing of the same material, size and appropriate design.

3. Materials:

Where a fence is desired to be installed, it should be appropriate for the period and architectural style of the structure. Materials and size of the fence should be documented as correct for the period of the structure.

- i. Appropriate materials: wood, iron, wire, stone or plants.
 - ii. Inappropriate materials: chain link, concrete block, unfaced concrete, plastic, fiberglass, plywood, slatted "snow" fences and mesh "construction" fences
3. Chain link fences may be used in rear yards, if visible from the street, shall be camouflaged with vegetation.
 4. Staff approved fences are limited to wood dog ear and open gothic fences as pictured below. Other styles or materials require formal Commission approval.

4. Heights:

Generally, low fences should be used at the fronts and visible street side yards near public sidewalks. Taller fences and solid walls may be used in rear yards and side yards when set back from the sidewalk.

- i. front yard fences should not be taller than 4 feet. A height of up to 6 feet is permitted only if set back at least 1/3 the structure's length or 1/3 the adjacent structure's length, whichever is furthest from the street. Measurement should be taken from the structures' respective facades.
- ii. side yard fences should not be taller than 6 feet
- iii. rear yard fences should not be taller than 8 feet

Requests for new fences must have a site plan, with proposed fence heights clearly marked.

The following items DO NOT require a COA:

- Repairs to existing walls and fences and other historic site features
- Wood dog ear and wood open gothic fences that clearly fall within the setback and height requirements (staff approval)

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Changes to stone walls and other historic site features
- All new fences and walls

Staff recommendation:

1. Staff recommend approval of removing both brick walls, grading, and sodding the landscape will be consistent with adjoining properties.

Discussion:

Staff provided an overview of the request to remove retaining walls with one example of a previous wall removal that had been approved. The old concrete steps to the street were removed to put in the driveway that will serve both twin homes and future rear properties.

Debbie Purves asked if the walls could be repaired or rebuilt. The builder, Cody Holly, stated that they preferred to remove the upper wall to allow water to better drain from the houses. They would also be installing curbing on the lower street level after removing that wall.

A motion was made by Mark Grantham to approve. The motion was seconded by Linda Lanz. All approved.

3. 402 S. 9th St: Geneva Historic District

COA: Mural

Applicant: Katie Wolter

Agenda Item #: 2

Meeting Date: 03/13/2025

Action Requested: COA: Sign and Mural

Location of Property: 402 S. 9th St; Geneva Historic District

Petitioner: Katie Wolter

Resources:

Amoco Station-Baker Alternator, c. 1920 One story, enameled siding gas station, painted green in recent years. Contributing structure.

Proposal: The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. Mural on rear and wrapping around the side of the building containing a variety of flowers in multiple colors. The portion facing S. 9th Street is approximately 3ft x 12ft. The portion facing Ave C is approximately 20ft x 12ft.

Proposed Guidelines:

8. Exterior Finishes:

1. It is recommended that investigation be made into the historic paint colors and finishes of the structure and that repainting with these colors be considered to illustrate the distinctive character of the property. The painting of unpainted brick should only be considered under the following circumstances:

2. The masonry is not historic, nor is likely to become contributing in the future.
 3. The brick is soft brick or porous historic brick that was intended to be sealed. Most known brick in Opelika's historic districts have more modern bricks.
 4. A majority of the existing structure's masonry is already painted.
 5. Masonry at ground level or below needs to be waterproofed to exclude ground water.
 6. The structure has been extensively damaged by fire, natural disaster, or pre-existing alterations that the masonry no longer conveys the buildings historic character. This should not include major additions or changes that show the historic evolution of a building. *(rev. 01/19/2022)*
- b. Once painted, it is often better to repaint rather than remove paint. Removing paint and finishes down to the bare surface is not recommended. Strong paint strippers whether chemical or mechanical can permanently damage the surface and stripping also obliterates evidence of the historical paint finishes. Never sandblast a masonry building. *(rev. 01/19/2022)*
 - c. Buildings should be repainted with colors that were identified on the building or that are documented colors from the period of the construction of the structure or from the period of the last major addition or alteration to the structure. When permissible, masonry should only be painted with breathable paint, such as limewash or mineral-based pigments. *(rev. 01/19/2022)*
 - d. A Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for painting structures if paragraphs a., b. and c. above are followed. The Opelika Historic Preservation Commission will recommend appropriate paint colors if requested.

The following commonly requested projects DO NOT require a COA:

- Re-painting painted surfaces.

The following commonly requested projects require a COA:

- Painting of unpainted surfaces.

a. Murals and Public Works of Art

1. Any mural in a locally designated historic district shall either be located on a site pre-designated by the Opelika historic Preservation Commission or shall require sight approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC.
2. Murals shall not be painted on unpainted historic brick without approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HPC.

3. Murals that are not directly painted on the building wall may be attached to unpainted brick provided that the method of attachment has been demonstrated that it will not damage the building.
4. Bolts or similar attachments to brick walls shall occur in the mortar between bricks and not directly to the brick.
4. Murals shall not be applied on or obscure architectural features such as: windows, doors, pilasters, cornices, or other building trim, features bands, and other recessed or projecting features.
5. Any lighting for murals in the historic district shall comply with lighting standards for the district.
6. Murals in historic districts may replicate painted historic signs that previously existed on the proposed site. Such historic murals shall only be permitted if historic documentation is provided to support the existence of the mural on painted or unpainted historic brick.
7. Public Works of Art site locations must be approved by the HPC.
(updated 01/09/2020)

Staff recommendation:

1. Staff recommends approval of a painted mural on the rear and side of the building. This surface is currently painted.

Discussion:

Renderings for the new floral mural were presented by staff. This location is not on the pre-approved site list. The artist for this mural is the same artist who painted the umbrella on N. 8th St and N. Railroad Ave.

There was no further discussion.

A motion was made by Debbie Purves to approve. The motion was seconded by Mike Buckalew. All approved.

4. 315 N. 8th St: Northside Historic District

COA: Enclose Door on Front

Applicant: Brent Reinhart

Agenda Item #: 3

Meeting Date: 03/13/2025

Action Requested: COA: Remove Door on Front

Location of Property: 315 N. 8th St; Northside Historic District

Petitioner: Brent Reinhart

Resources:

Circa 1920. One story, wood frame Victorian cottage with hip with cross gables roof of asphalt shingles, cornice returns on gables, interior brick chimney, weatherboard siding, off centered wood door, flanking double hung sash

windows, wrap around porch with wooden porch supports, open rail balustrade. Contributing Resource.

Proposal: The petitioner requests a COA for the following:

1. The front of house has three (3) doors with two side-by-side on right side of porch. Remove far right door leading into a bedroom and install wood siding to match existing lap siding.

Proposed Guidelines:

5. Windows:

- a. Retain and repair existing windows including window sash, glass, lintels, sills, architraves, shutters, pediments, hoods and hardware. If new sashes are used, duplicate the original material, design, size and hardware of the original window. Do not change window size, sash size or windowpane size.
- b. Do not introduce or create new window openings into the front principal elevation of the structure and do not enlarge or reduce original window openings to fit new stock window sizes.
- c. The original number and arrangement of panes should be maintained.
- d. Storm windows should be visually unobtrusive and should not damage existing window frames. Storm windows should be designed so that they can be removed in the future without damage to the original fabric of the structure. Storm windows should be compatible in color and design with the original windows. For example, mill finished aluminum storm windows should not be used with painted window sash.
- e. Plastic, canvas or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not compatible with the architectural style of the structure should not be used.
- f. Where existing shutters are replaced or reinstalled when missing, the new shutters shall be sized to fit the window opening, in height and width, whether the shutters are fixed or operable. Composite materials are allowable for shutters so long as they duplicate the original in shape and texture.
- g. New window openings should not be introduced unless they match the existing window configuration and their placement harmonized with the existing rhythm of openings.
- h. Original windows should not be filled in.

Staff recommendation:

1. Staff recommends approval of removing far right door and installing wood lap siding matching the reveal of existing siding.

Discussion:

Staff provided an overview of the proposal to remove one of three doors on the front of this home. The third door leads into a bedroom and the applicant wishes to enclose this opening.

There were no questions or further discussion.

A motion was made by Debbie Purves to approve. The motion was seconded by Linda Lanz. All approved.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

5. Enforcement Report

There were no new enforcement cases to discuss.

6. Staff Report

Staff stated that she would send out a link for all to review a NAPC webinar on renovating "cheap old houses". It was a remarkable study of renovating an old church into a residential structure.

7. Next meeting DATE

1. Next meeting April 10, 2025

7. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Debbie Purves to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mark Grantham. All approved.

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

Rush Denson, Chair

Linda Lanz, Secretary