



CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
URBAN PLANNING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

STAFF REPORT

Community Planning and Preservation Commission
Certificate of Appropriateness Request

For **Public Hearing** and **Executive Action** on July 9, 2019 beginning at 2:00 p.m. in the Auditorium, The Sunshine Center, 330 Fifth Street North, St. Petersburg, Florida

According to Planning and Development Services Department records, no commissioner resides or has a place of business within 2,000 feet of the subject property. All other possible conflicts should be declared upon the announcement of the item.



Case No.:	19-90200027
Address:	1835 9 th Avenue South
Legal Description:	CLAYO SUB (HISTORIC LANDMARK SITE) LOTS 5 & 6
Parcel ID No.:	25-31-16-15804-000-0050
Date of Construction:	c.1930
Local Landmark:	Fannye Ayer Ponder Council House Site (HPC 91-03)
Owner:	Metropolitan Council of Negro Women
Request:	Review of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the alteration of the Fannye Ayer Ponder Council House, a landmark individually listed in the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places.

Historical Context and Significance

The Council building was originally a two-room frame house located at 902 19th Street South that housed the Trinity Presbyterian Church, the first black Presbyterian Church in St. Petersburg. When the congregation decided to build a new church, the old building was sold to Mrs. Fannye Ayer Ponder. Mrs. Ponder and a few women moved the building to its current location 1835 - 9th Avenue South for use as a meeting house for the Metropolitan Council of Negro Women, which had been established as a local affiliate of the National Council of Negro Women in 1942. The building's location at that time was in the middle of a growing black community. The neighborhood surrounding the Council House consisted of single-family bungalow style homes.

The purpose of the organization was to help the integration of black people into the political, educational, economic, social and cultural life of St. Petersburg by developing competent and courageous leadership among Negro women. The building not only provided a meeting place for their group, but served to fill an unmet need in the black community. It was the place where community fund-raising activities could be held and a place for black people to meet for recreation, business, and civic purposes in a segregated society.

Project Description and Review

Project Description

The COA application (Appendix A) proposes the replacement of two exterior doors on the front elevation of the structure with doors of different materials and style. The double front doors (Figure 1) will be replaced with a single door and a sidelight. Both doors will change from solid wood to half glazed fiberglass.



Figure 1: Entranceway doors proposed to be replaced with a single door and sidelight.



Figure 2: Historic photograph of entranceway to Council House, showing two half-glazed double doors.

The applicant states that the new doors will offer more security for their members by providing transparency which will allow them to see outside. The existing doors have shifted, creating a gap that allows in light, weather, and insects. The current doors, which are non-historic and installed in 2015, are difficult to open and close.

General Criteria for Granting Certificates of Appropriateness and Staff Findings

1. *The effect of the proposed work on the landmark or the property upon which such work is to be done.*

The proposed alteration will introduce a new configuration of the front entranceway to the Council House. A historic photograph (Figure 2) shows that the double doors used to be half-glazed, as the structure has undergone several changes over its lifespan. The frame house has been stuccoed over, and many fenestrations have changed on the front façade. The building was designated due to its historic value as a community meeting space and its association with prominent women in the community.

2. *The relationship between such work and other structures on the landmark site or other property in the historic district.*

This criterion is not applicable to the proposed project as there are no other structures on this landmark site.

3. *The extent to which the historic, architectural, or archaeological significance, architectural style, design, arrangement, texture and materials of the local landmark or the property will be affected.*

As stated earlier, this structure's significance is mostly tied to its use as a community meeting place and the important role it played in St. Petersburg's black community. Therefore, a physical change to the front fenestrations does not affect the importance of this structure and its site.

4. *Whether the denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness would deprive the property owner of reasonable beneficial use of his or her property.*

There is no indication that denial of a COA would substantially adversely affect the property owner's use of the subject property.

5. *Whether the plans may be reasonably carried out by the applicant.*

The proposed project appears to be appropriate under this criterion.

6. *A COA for a noncontributing structure in a historic district shall be reviewed to determine whether the proposed work would negatively impact a contributing structure or the historic integrity of the district. Approval of a COA shall include any conditions necessary to mitigate or eliminate negative impacts.*

This criterion is not applicable to the proposed project.

Additional Guidelines for Alterations

1. *A local landmark should be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*

The proposed project appears to meet this criterion as it remains in use as meeting place.

2. *The distinguishing historic qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall be preserved. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features shall be avoided when reasonable.*

The existing doors to be replaced were installed in 2015 following staff-approved COA 15-90200005, which conditioned approval upon replication of existing six-panel wooden doors. Although they replicated the units that were present prior to this 2015 alteration, they are therefore not historic material. Evidence of the configuration of doors present during the period of significance is somewhat limited, although the

undated photograph shown in Figure 2 does show half-glazed doors that are similar to those now being proposed.

Further, the historic significance of the subject property results primarily from its cultural contributions. Given the building's continued use as a Council house, staff finds that this slight change in fenestration is acceptable to further the goal of providing safe community space while still maintaining overall architectural integrity.

3. *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings without sufficient documentary evidence, shall not be undertaken.*

The proposed project appears to meet this criterion.

4. *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved, as appropriate.*

The structure has had many changes and alterations over time. Since the primary reason for designation was the building's importance to its community and its use, these changes have not gained historic significance.

5. *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

The proposed project appears to meet this criterion.

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, texture, and other visual qualities and, where reasonable, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

No historic features will be removed. While the proposed configuration is different than what has historically existed, there have been numerous changes to the structure over the years. The existing front double doors are of a different style than what has been documented historically. As stated before, the importance of this structure is not solely in its architecture, but in its use as a community meeting place.

7. *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

This criterion is not relevant to the proposed project.

8. *Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved if designated pursuant to this section. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

The proposed project does not include any ground-disturbing activity.

Staff Recommendation

Based on a determination of general consistency with Chapter 16, City Code of Ordinances, staff recommends that the Community Planning and Preservation Commission **approve** the Certificate of

Appropriateness request for the alteration of the Fannye Ayer Ponder Council House Site at 1835 9th Avenue South.

References

City of St. Petersburg. *Fannye Ayer Ponder Council House Site Designation Report*. 1991. On file, City of St. Petersburg.

Appendix A:

Application No. 19-90200027

Appendix B:

Maps of Subject Property