

NEW ORLEANS HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Helena Moreno
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Tuesday, June 09, 2026

Honorable City Council
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: 538 First Street

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Attached, please find a report regarding an appeal of the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission's vote to uphold the previous Commission motion to grant approval of the demolition of the two rear additions and deny the demolition of the front structure.

Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Yvette Jett
Principal Architectural Historian



Permit Number: 25-03440-HDLC

Owner: Foster Thomas Jr

Applicant: Troy Hamm

Description: Applicant is requesting demolition of a Contributing-rated, multi-unit residential building to grade, in full control Irish Channel.

HDLC Decision: Uphold the previous Commission motion to deny the demolition of the front of the structure but grant approval of the demolition of the two rear additions.

Staff Recommendation: Staff respectfully request that the City Council uphold the decision of the Historic District Landmarks Commission to deny the demolition of the front of the building but allow the demolition of the two rear additions.

HDLC Guidelines:

Section 12, Pages 23-24 of the Guidelines for New Construction, Additions and **Demolition** states that the demolition of all or portions of historic resources within a local Historic District or Landmark site are considered drastic actions, since they alter the character of the area. Once historic resources or buildings that contribute to the heritage of the community are destroyed, it is generally impossible to reproduce their design, texture, materials, details and their special character and interest in the neighborhood. When reviewing demolition applications at properties located within a Historic District or at a Landmark site, the HDLC uses the following criteria in its evaluations:

DEMOLITION

The demolition of all or portions of historic resources within a local Historic District or Landmark site are considered drastic actions, since they alter the character of the area. Once historic resources or buildings that contribute to the heritage of the community are destroyed, it is generally impossible to reproduce their design, texture, materials, details and their special character and interest in the neighborhood.

As a result, the HDLC rarely considers the demolition of Significant or Contributing buildings or structures within a local Historic District or on a Landmark site to be an appropriate option.

- **The historic or architectural significance of the building or structure as designated by its “rating”:** Contributing
- **The importance of the building or structure to the tout ensemble of the area:** Based on Sanborn map and FEMA research the building was constructed between 1840-1850 and first appears on the 1887 Sanborn map, within the period of significance for the district. The building retains its original massing and footprint, as well as



wood trim, and large brick chimneys. However, most of the original wood windows and doors have been removed, though the historic openings appear to be unchanged.

- **The alternatives to demolition that have been explored by the applicant:** A renovation permit application was submitted in 2022, but the permit was never issued, and has since expired.
- **The difficulty or impossibility of reproducing such a building or structure because of its design, texture, material or detail:** The massing and footprint of the building would not be difficult to recreate. However, the detailing and craftsmanship would not compare to the historic building.
- **The special character and aesthetic interest that the building or structure adds to the local Historic District:** This building is one of four historic one and two-story residential buildings on the block and continues to contribute to the character of the neighborhood in its massing, form, and detailing. Though it is the last unrenovated building of the four.
- **Current condition of the building or structure:** A supplemental interior and exterior inspection occurred on May 21, 2026. Overall, the structure has remained uninhabitable due to the unsecured building envelope. The findings from this second inspection are consistent with the conditions documented during the initial inspection conducted in 2025. The older portion of the building did not appear to have deteriorated since the time of the previous inspection. However, the rear portion, which was previously approved for demolition, is still existing and remains in a severely deteriorated state.
- **Previous condition of the building or structure:** An interior and exterior visual inspection of the property took place on March 25, 2025. The building was found to be in poor condition and the rear portion of the building appeared to be in very poor condition. At the exterior, the building had vinyl siding, missing gutters and downspouts, and some evidence of termites indicating structural deficiencies. The building appeared to be straight and plumb and the roof appeared to be in good condition. At the interior, some remediation work had happened including new sheetrock that was not complete. Where the structural members are exposed there were signs of termites and water intrusion. Areas of the floor were soft and joists appeared compromised. Overall, the inspector found that the building appeared to be salvageable. However, certain areas of the building would need to be completely replaced or restructured. The oldest, front, portion of the building appeared to be in significantly better condition than the rear portions. The rehabilitation of the building, including the demolition of the rear and majority of the interior would likely be an expensive undertaking.

Commission Actions

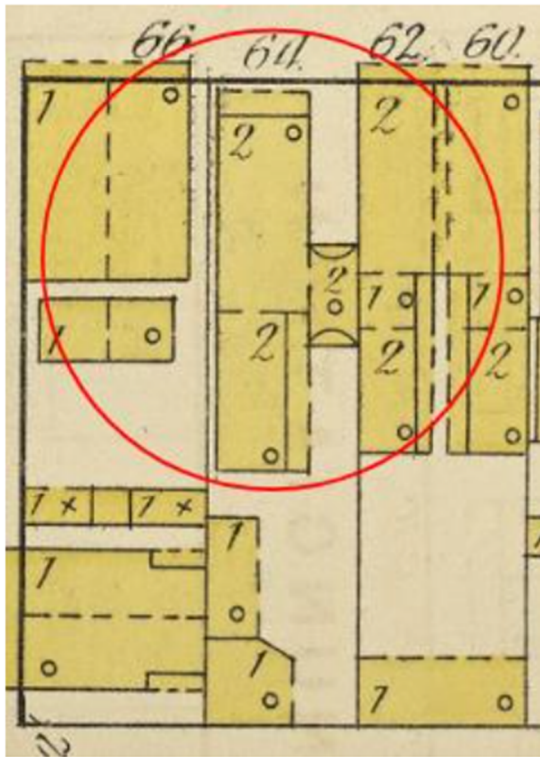
At the April 4, 2025 Commission hearing, the Commission voted to deny the application for demolition to grade but grant approval of the demolition of the rear of the building. Since that hearing, the owner of the building passed away and his children have taken possession of the property and are requesting the demolition to grade

At its meeting of May 6, 2026, the Commission reviewed the proposal and the applicant's testimony. A motion by Commissioner Greg Hackenberg to deny the appeal failed to pass 5-4. A second motion

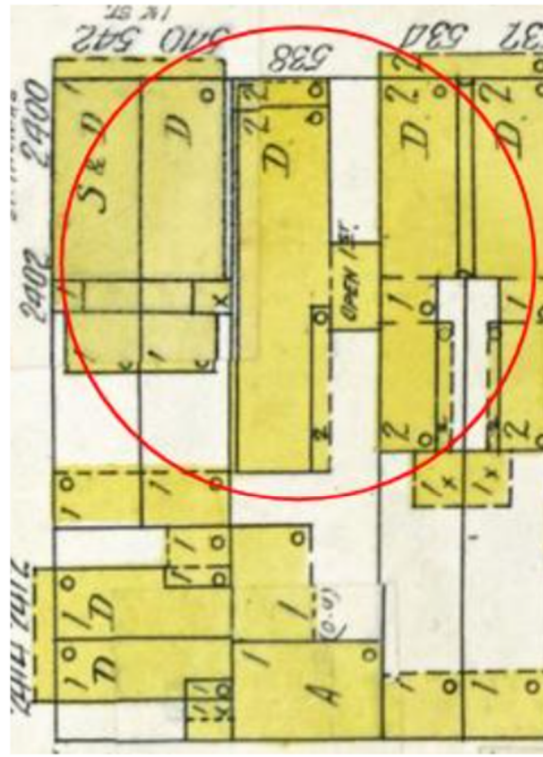
by Commissioner Ross Karson to approve the appeal failed 5-4 resulting in no action being taken on the application.

At its meeting of June 3, 2026, the Commission heard the proposal again. Commissioner Greg Hackenberg made a motion to uphold the previous Commission vote to deny the application for demolition to grade but grant approval of the demolition of the rear of the building. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Jim Ashbee. The motion passed with a 5-2 vote, with Commissioners Jason King and Ross Karson dissenting.

Sanborn Maps:



1887



1950

The full Staff Report may be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/no-cmm-060326/new-demolition-applications/538-first-st>

A link to the meeting video may be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/zmRIVDg68bs?si=nleuTC5FfmkK-Gle>