



# Demolition of Buildings



Demolition of the John D. Preston house, 3015 Felix Street.

Demolition is an irreversible action that results in the permanent loss of the very resources that contribute to St. Joseph's historic districts' sense of integrity and character. Requests for authorization to demolish historic structures in the City's local historic districts should be carefully weighed before submitting an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to the Landmark Commission. Many of St. Joseph's historic residential neighborhoods have experienced years of demolition activity, some of it Federally-funded, which has disrupted the historic pattern of development on several blocks. In a few instances, nearly an entire block of structures has been removed. In the City's historic districts, however, a historic sense of time and place remains along many of the streetscapes; it is therefore a goal to retain this historic fabric and discourage demolition whenever possible. Property owners are encouraged to utilize historic resources and to adapt those resources in a sensitive manner to meet current needs. If this is not possible, finding a property that better meets the needs of the owner is recommended in lieu of demolition and subsequent new construction. When demolition appears imminent, relocation of the resource should be considered as a "last resort" option. See guidelines for RELOCATION OF BUILDINGS in this manual.

If advanced deterioration or structural instability is the reason for the request for a demolition permit, a technical report by an architect or structural engineer with experience with historic properties may be required which details the specific problems

as well as the cost estimated for stabilization and repair. In the case of demonstrated financial hardship on the part of the applicant, the Landmark Commission may elect to pay the cost associated with hiring an architect or structural engineer. The Landmark Commission may request an on-site inspection by its members in advance of the meeting in order to assess the condition of the structure firsthand. This on-site inspection may take the place of any formal structural report. If an emergency situation arises, such as after a fire or natural disaster, City staff shall make an immediate assessment of the situation and apprise the property owner and the Landmark Commission of their recommendation.

Under Article III of the Zoning Ordinance of the City of St. Joseph, the St. Joseph Landmark Commission has the authority to delay or deny demolition. A property owner may appeal the decision of the Landmark Commission to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The Board of Adjustment shall not grant relief except upon a finding of serious economic hardship.

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## Demolition of Buildings: Guidelines

1. Work with the Landmark Commission to identify alternatives to demolition.
2. Document the historic resource and its setting prior to demolition. Documentation shall take the form of black-and-white photographs of the building, structure, or site's principal elevations, architectural elements (both interior and exterior) and special site features (e.g., mature trees and plantings, pathways, fencing.) Measured drawings of the resource may also be required. The Commission shall determine on a case-by-case basis the extent of documentation required and the parties responsible for producing such documentation. The documentation shall be submitted to the Commission and become part of the permanent record of the City of St. Joseph.
3. Cooperate with the Commission in identifying architectural features and building materials that can be salvaged and reused. The Commission may require the removal of salvageable building parts as part of the authorization to permit demolition.
4. Minimize the amount of ground-disturbing activity associated with demolition to avoid damaging potential archaeological resources or other significant site features such as historic fencing, retaining walls or mature plantings/trees.
5. Leave the site properly cleaned, graded, and seeded after demolition has taken place.

