MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council
FROM: Sarah Hanzel, Planning Projects Division Manager
DATE: May 25, 2021
RE: Request for City approval to alter a secondary structure in the West Boulevard Historic District located at 916 Saint Charles Street

The property owner of 916 Saint Charles Street has applied for a permit to alter a secondary structure. The proposed project is the alternative to the original proposal, which was to demolish the structure and build new. The structure is contributing in the historic district; however, it is in need of repair and rehabilitation. While making the investment in the property, the owner requests to make other alterations including replacing the siding to match the non-contributing primary structure, relocating the garage door, and extending the roofline to create additional covered outdoor space. By State Law, the City has the final decision on issuing permits for historic property. If the City issues a permit for a project that will adversely affect a historic structure, the governing body must make a written determination based upon the consideration of all relevant factors, that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the proposal, and that the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the historic property. This determination must be sent to the SHPO office by certified mail.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) provided comments in their letter dated May 5, 2021, stating “The alterations to the siding, roof, and overhead door of the contributing garage will encroach upon, damage, or destroy a historic property which is included in the National and State Registers of Historic Places; however, the proposal is favorable to demolition and will minimize harm to the historic district.”

The Historic Preservation Commission reviewed this project at their meeting on May 26, 2021. The Commission agreed with the staff conclusion that there are no feasible and prudent alternatives to the proposal and the proposal includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the historic structure. The relevant factors for this determination acknowledge economic practicability and include: the affected structure is a secondary structure with limited visibility from the street frontage, the alterations will also result in repair of deterioration of the structure necessary for its long term preservation, the historic siding is not able to be replaced in-kind, the overhead door is located on
the portion of the site which is inundated with water during weather events, and the extension of
the roofline allows for additional use of the structure.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the request, noting the factors outlined above.