

GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject

- Request - Comprehensive Study of Historical Community Importance and Potential Long-Term Preservation Strategies
- Applicant - Toledo City Council

STAFF ANALYSIS

The Plan Commission has been asked to perform a comprehensive study of privately owned structures that have been in existence for at least 75 years and whose purpose, among other, was to be used as a regular gathering place for individuals for a common goal. Buildings of historical community importance include but are not limited to community and/or cultural centers, places of worship, or other structure that regularly gather together 20 or more individuals for a common purpose.

These structures may be significant cultural and/or architectural assets that contribute to the character and identity of the city. Recognizing the importance of preserving these structures, this ordinance proposes a one-year moratorium on the issuance of demolition permits for buildings of historical community importance within the city limits.

MORATORIUM

Council establishes a one-year moratorium on the issuance of demolition permits for such buildings within the city limits. This moratorium shall be effective immediately upon passage and shall remain in effect until July 17, 2025, or until a comprehensive study evaluating the potential for preservation or alternative use can be completed, whichever comes first.

The moratorium on demolition permits aims to safeguard not only the cultural and architectural heritage of Toledo but also the social and economic well-being of its neighborhoods. It provides an opportunity for thorough evaluation and community engagement to explore alternative strategies for preserving and/or repurposing buildings of historical community importance.

Toledo City Council has acknowledged the need to protect these structures from demolition. The moratorium will provide the city with time to assess the historical value of these structures, explore preservation or alternative use strategies, if any, and engage with stakeholders.

Toledo City Council directed the Toledo City Plan Commission to conduct a comprehensive study of the buildings of historical community importance within the city limits. The study included an assessment of the architectural, historical, and cultural significance of these structures, as well as an analysis of their current condition and the feasibility of preservation or rehabilitation. The Plan Commission was tasked with proposing potential programs for revitalization of these structures, including but not limited to zoning regulations or amendments, financial incentives, and community engagement initiatives. The initiative aimed to ensure the long-term preservation of Toledo's architectural, cultural and historical heritage and foster sustainable development practices that respect the city's community identity.

ANALYSIS

Based on the criteria outlined in the resolution, staff looked at approximately 400 privately owned structures that were built before 1949 that provided a gathering space for more than 20 individuals meeting for a common purpose. The data was found to be challenging to determine as many of the structures fitting the criteria were located in random "land use" coding groups with no consistency. In addition, the data did not distinguish between public and privately owned structures, or occupancy loads of meeting areas. As a result, staff looked at multiple data sources. The Lucas County Auditor provided a list of "Churches" that met the criteria. This list consisted of 358 data points. However, the resolution indicated that the study should not be limited to places of worship. As a result, staff conducted an independent review of the Auditor data and identified 5,729 points of interest.

The larger data set looked at specific points of interest such as the Jefferson Center, Toledo Yacht Club, Maumee Bay (Oliver House), Ohio Theater and the Toledo Club just to mention a few. The points of interest showed land use codes that ranged from "Other Commercial Structures, Marina, manufacturing to Office Building". Therefore, of the 5,729 points of interest that met the criteria of the resolution, staff had to look at the intent and narrow the data set based on their historical, cultural or architectural significance. Staff was able to identify 117 structures that were significant in one or more of the criteria. Of this reduced data set, staff looked at the current condition of the property. These properties were identified as either above average, average or poor condition. Staff found that most of the structures appeared to be in average or above average condition with only 8% identified as poor.

LOCATIONS & ZONING REGULATIONS

While staff looked at structures throughout the entire City and found that there was a heavy presence of structures in or surrounding the downtown core. The areas identified included the Downtown Overlay, Warehouse District, Uptown, Old West End and Vistula Historic Districts. These overlays were large contributors to the 117-property data set, where 67% of the properties are currently located in an overlay district.

The resolution states that there is a need to protect these structures from demolition based on their contributions to architectural, cultural and historical heritage. It is worth noting that all to forementioned districts and overlays identified above, all have municipal code that governs the demolition of structures within their respective boundary areas. Structures located in these areas are not precluded from demolition. However, standards have to be met prior and approval be granted prior to the issuance of a demolition permit. Therefore, staff interpreted the intent of the moratorium to provide the review processes to those structure not located in a location that currently has a demolition review process. Therefore, the remainder of this study will focus on properties not currently located within an established overlay district.

EXPANSION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS OR LANDMARKS

The list of 117 properties was examined carefully to identify properties that were not located in an overlay district that had demolition criteria in place. Staff was able to identify 30 properties that would be suitable for local “Landmark” designation. These properties were located throughout Toledo and ranged from historic banks, schools, clubhouses and churches. Although, the list ultimately found that churches were the most common contributor, this was due to their ornate architecture that provided gathering spaces for community members. Providing historical gathering spaces for the community established the cultural and heritage that members cherish today. Staff has provided a list of properties (See Exhibit A) that was identified as candidates for Local Designation.

Pursuant to TMC §1111.1002 - Proposals to designate or expand Historic Districts and landmarks must be initiated by resolution of the City Council, with referral to the Plan Commission and the City Historic District Commission for study and recommendation.

The reports of the Plan Commission and City Historic District Commission, containing their written recommendations to the City Council, must include information about how the proposed Historic District or landmark, or expansion, is of special historical and architectural significance. The reports must include the following:

- A. Whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated is listed on the National Register of Historic Places;
- B. Whether the district or landmark proposed to be designated provides significant examples of architectural styles of the past; and
- C. A description of the district or landmark to serve as an informational resource. The description must include, but need not be limited to, the following:
 1. A geographic description including location and its relationship to the entire City;
 2. A description of the general land uses;
 3. A general description of the building conditions;
 4. A general description of the socio-economic characteristics;
 5. A description of existing developmental plans or programs within or including the historic district or landmark; and
 6. A list of neighborhood organizations within or serving the Historic District or landmark.

REHABILITATION PROGRAMS

The resolution requested that staff look into programs that can assist with the rehabilitation and upkeep of properties meeting the criteria. The City of Toledo currently has Tax Abatement programs for both residential and non-residential uses, façade improvement grants for commercial/industrial uses as well as low interest long term financing avenues. These programs may be available depending on the end use of the structures as historic structures are often used for residential and commercial uses.

Other forms of monetary assistance for historic structures often come from State of Ohio and Federal Grants for rehabilitation. However, these grants are often subject to the property being located on the State or Federal Historic Designation Lists. Placement on these lists require property owners to make application to the State or Federal agencies respectfully. Grants from the State and Federal programs are a competitive grant program that often require detailed applications and rehabilitation plans be remitted. The Lucas County Land Bank also offers low interest loan programs that often require criteria to be met such as owner occupancy for residential applications.

Based on the age of the structures identified in this study, water intrusion is often the largest factor in the structure's deterioration. Staff recommends that City Council look into establishing a program that can assist with roofing repairs and replacement on historic structures that meet the criteria outlined in this study. This can be in a low to no interest loan or through a grant process. Staff is also working with the Assistant Prosecutors office and Housing Court to address demolition by neglect in our historic districts. This type of program could also be tailored to historic structures not located in an established overlay. This program would obligate property owners to abate any maintenance neglect that often leads to the ultimate demolition of historical structures. A program such as this could allow the City to make the repairs and place the cost on the property taxes. Less permanent solutions could also include a tarping program to assist with water intrusion.

CONCLUSION

Staff has found that based on compiled list there is a smaller number of properties not located within an overlay district that has demolition procedures in place. Therefore, it is recommended that locally designating individual properties is the best way to ensure each site is held to the same standards as a property located within an established overlay. In addition, a roof or demolition by neglect program is recommended to assist buildings that are beginning to show signs of deterioration. This can help with repurposing of historic structures and keep from having buildings torn down based on neglect.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the City Planning Commission encourages City Council to consider local designation of properties and create new programs to prevent severe deterioration of historic, architectural and cultural significant properties throughout the City.

SPECIAL STUDY
CITY OF TOLEDO PLANNING COMMISSION
REF: M-7-24
DATE: April 10, 2025
TIME: 2:00 p.m.

BH
Exhibit "A" follows