



PLANNING DIRECTOR  
TABITHA HARKIN

## CITY OF NEW BEDFORD DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

133 William Street • Room 303 • New Bedford, MA 02740  
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HISTORICAL COMMISSION

# MEMORANDUM

TO: New Bedford City Council

FROM: Anne Louro, Preservation Planner

DATE: October 29, 2019

RE: **BUILDING DEMOLITION REVIEW**  
**197 Seymour Street (MAP 5, Lot 105)**  
**Circa 1934, one-story wood framed residential structure and 1984 two story addition.**

CITY CLERKS OFFICE  
NEW BEDFORD, MA  
2019 OCT 30 P 3 21  
CITY CLERK

In accordance with the requirements of the New Bedford City Code, Article XI, Section 2-157 Demolition of Buildings, the Preservation Planner, designated to act on behalf of the New Bedford Historical Commission, has examined the structure located at the above-captioned site in order to determine its historical significance and whether it is in the public interest to preserve such structure.

Having reviewed the application for demolition I offer the following findings and recommendation in this matter to the New Bedford City Council:

- The structure is not located in a National Register Historic District.
- According to a Structural Engineer's Report, the structure is in poor condition due to extensive deferred maintenance and restoration efforts would be impractical due to the existing condition of the structure.
- The structure is of no notable historic significance either recorded or found with the existing condition of the structure.
- In accordance with ***New Bedford City Code, Article XI, Section Sec. 2-157.3. (q) - Procedures for Review and Approval of Demolition Permits***, prior to the issuance of a demolition permit, all approvals necessary for the future use and development of the site, including without limitation, any necessary zoning variances or special permits, must be granted, and all appeals from the granting of such approvals must be concluded.

**In light of these findings, the Preservation Planner has determined that the residential structure at 197 Seymour Street is neither a Historically Significant nor a Preferably Preserved Structure.**

Enclosure: Engineer's Report

cc: Brian Reed, Reedbuilt Properties, LLC., Property Owner  
Department of Inspectional Services  
Mayor's Office  
Councilor Joseph Lopes  
New Bedford Historical Commission



**197 Seymour Street**

# CLUNIE ENGINEERING

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September 29, 2019

City of New Bedford  
Department of Inspectional Services  
133 William Street, Room 308  
New Bedford, MA 02740

Attention: Danny Romanowicz, Commissioner

Subject: Inspection of Residential Building and Garage  
197 Seymour Street, New Bedford, MA

Dear Mr. Romanowicz:

I participated in a visual and limited tactile inspection of the visible and accessible components of the subject building on September 10, 2019 in order to determine the overall general conditions. Other participants were Building Inspector Matthew Silva of your office and Brian Reed of Reed Built Properties, LLC.

Prior to the inspection, I first reviewed the May 7, 2019 letter issued by Inspector Silva to Spectrum Field Services and the three pages of photos entitled "Comparison Photos" that you provided me. And subsequent to the inspection, I reviewed a 2-page narrative of proposed work as well as a 2-page categorization of the work that Brian Reed provided me during the inspection.

A description of conditions is contained in the inspection findings below, followed by conclusions and recommendations, with photos included on the last two pages herein to augment inspection findings. The four pages of proposed work from Brian Reed are also attached hereto.



FRONT ELEVATION – FACING NNE



FRONT ELEVATION – FACING NNW

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

Upon review of my inspection notes and photographs, I concur that deficiencies of the subject building would have to be addressed as outlined within the narrative and categorization of proposed work that Brian Reed provided me.

However, it appears that several significant structural problems have not yet been identified in Mr. Reed's proposed work. While the second paragraph of Mr. Reed's narrative indicates that damaged structural members would need to be repaired or replaced, some of the structural deficiencies and their required remediation that I described during the inspection will likely be both extensive and expensive. Mr. Reed acknowledged that such remediation would be well beyond the proposed work anticipated and the budget allocated. A brief description is as follows.

1. As shown and described in Photos 1 through 4 on Page 3 herein, the wood beam that supports the first floor joists in the basement of the front building ell has sustained various deterioration and damage. Some areas are decayed and split, while other areas contain rectangular holes that were cut through the entire width of the beam. Such a significant reduction of the load capacity of this approximately 30-foot long beam will likely necessitate that it be replaced.

Photos 5 and 6 on Page 3 also show several joists and subflooring boards that must be replaced, which are representative of similar work elsewhere. All of this work will require engineering design and construction control in addition to the cost of construction.



2. I have included Photos 7 through 11 on Page 4 herein to try to address what I anticipate may be problems with some structural components in the rear building ell that were inaccessible for inspection because they are concealed. The sagging curve of trim and wall above each of the two closet openings in the knee wall near the rear of the building indicates the possibility of problems with the load transfer along the load path between roof rafters and knee walls and second floor joists. Further investigation would be required, which would necessitate localized exploratory demolition and engineering calculation to analyze components.

Notwithstanding whether or not knee walls might impart a portion of roof rafter loads to floor joists, which would exacerbate joist stresses and deflection, I am concerned that Mr. Reed indicated that the second floor is supported by 2 x 6 joists. Such joists are marginal for residential loading and, depending upon the spans, could exceed the deflection limitations imposed by code that protect plaster and sheet rock from cracking. As noted above, further investigation and analysis would be required.

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to conditions outlined above, it is not feasible to proceed with the work as is currently proposed and budgeted. Work required to replace the beam identified in Item 1 above will be extensive and correspondingly expensive, and it may prove to be the same for whatever work may be required for roof rafters and/or knee walls and/or floor joists as described in Item 2 above.

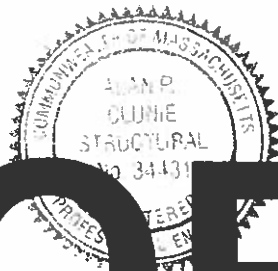
And regardless of the extent and expense of required work, the resulting rehabilitation of the existing building will yield a product that likely will not result in a market value that would be comparable to other modern buildings of similar size. The first floor ceiling in the rear building ell is low, the stairway to the basement in the front building ell is unsafe and difficult to reconfigure for reconstruction, layouts of floor plans are poor, and the garage is narrow. As such, it may not be cost-effective to rehabilitate the existing building when compared to replacing it.

Please contact me with any questions you may have regarding the information presented herein.

Sincerely,

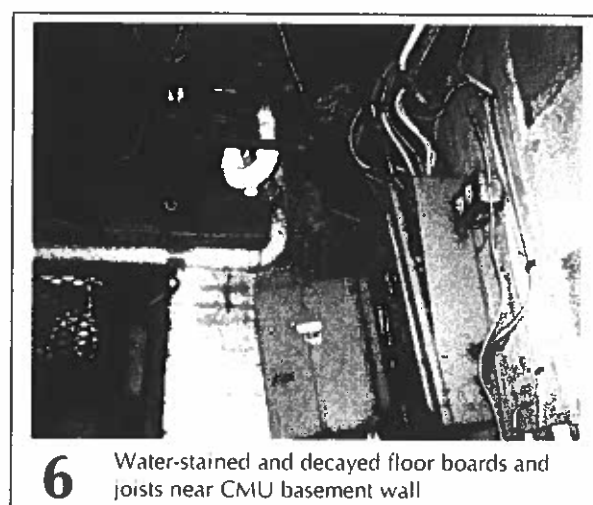
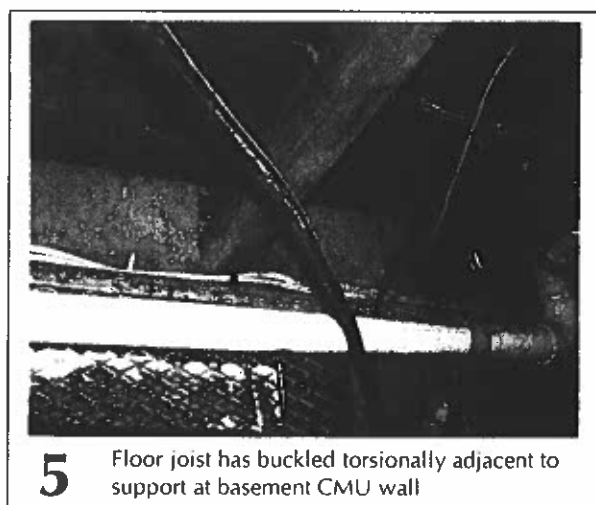
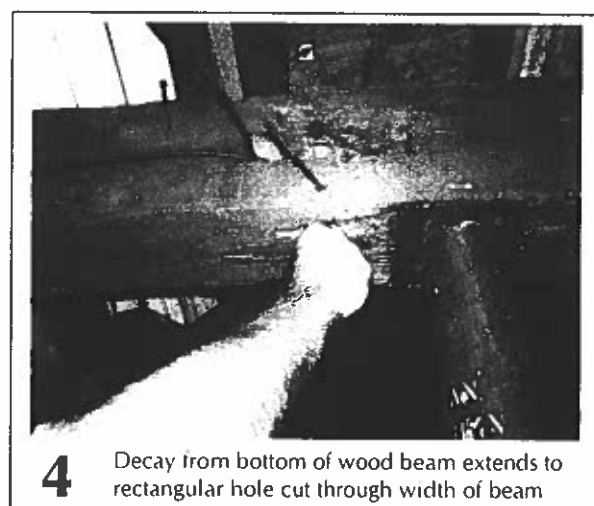
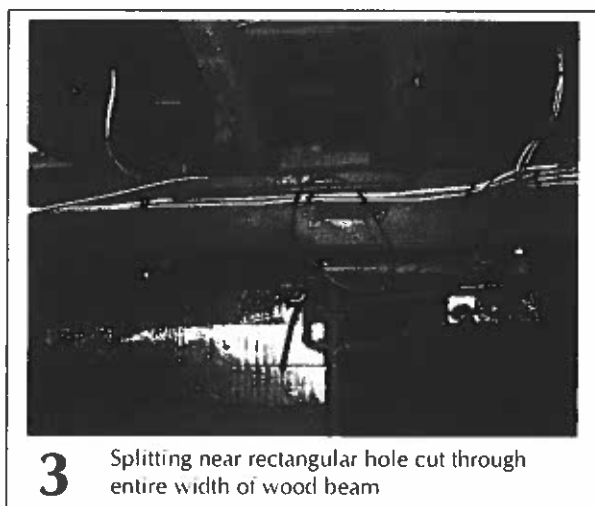
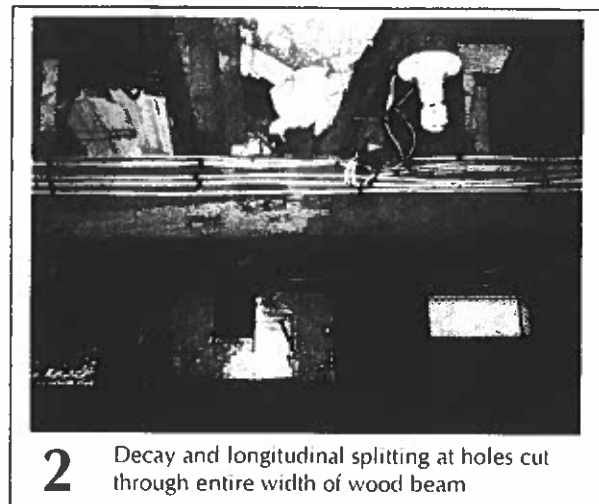
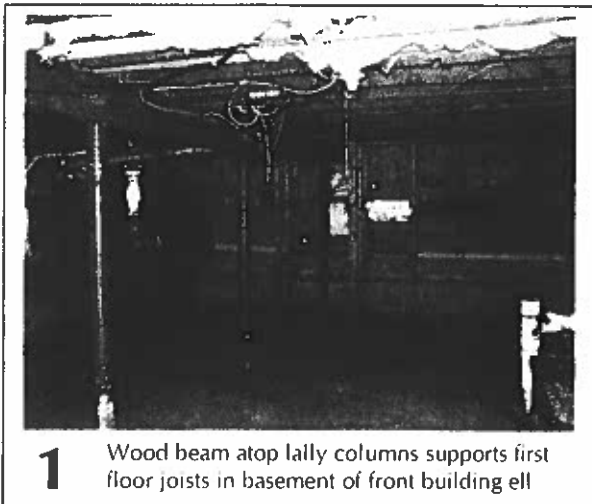
CLUNIE ENGINEERING, INC.

Alan R. Clunie, P.E.  
President

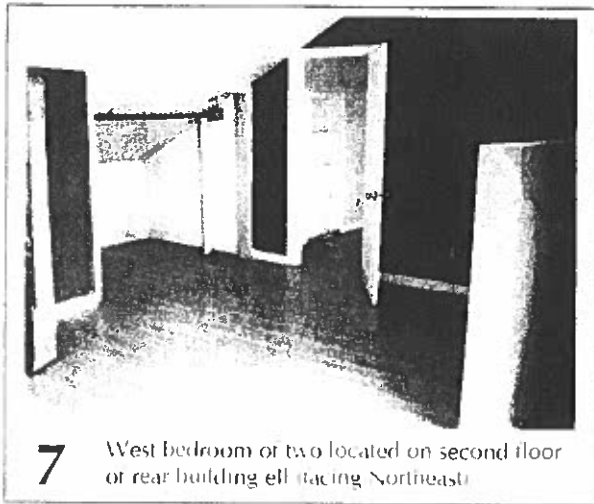


**COPY**  
9-29-19

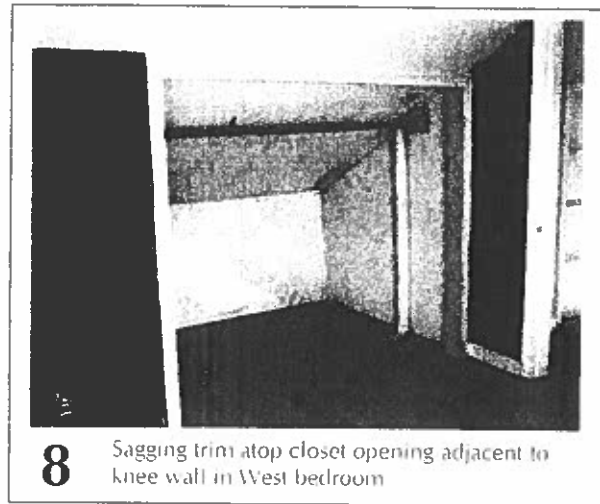
INSPECTION OF BUILDING AT 197 SEYMOUR STREET, NEW BEDFORD, MA



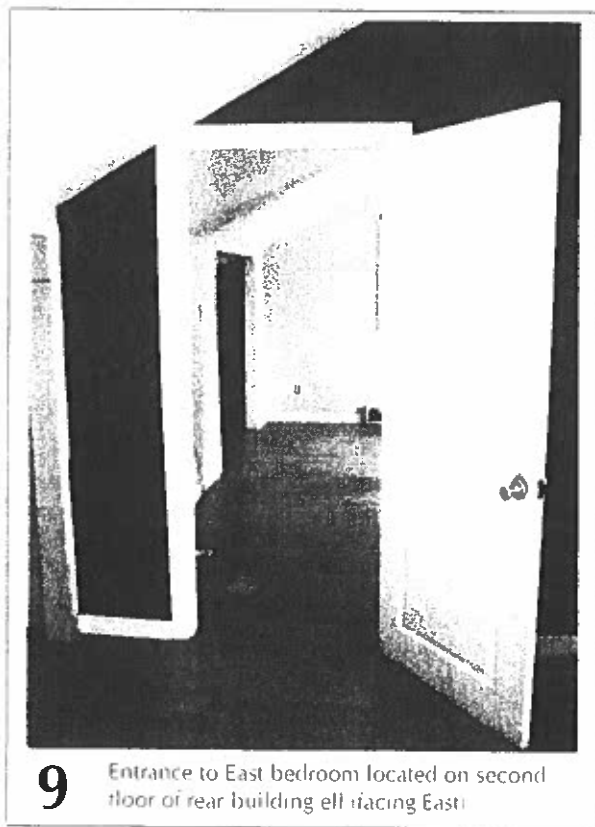
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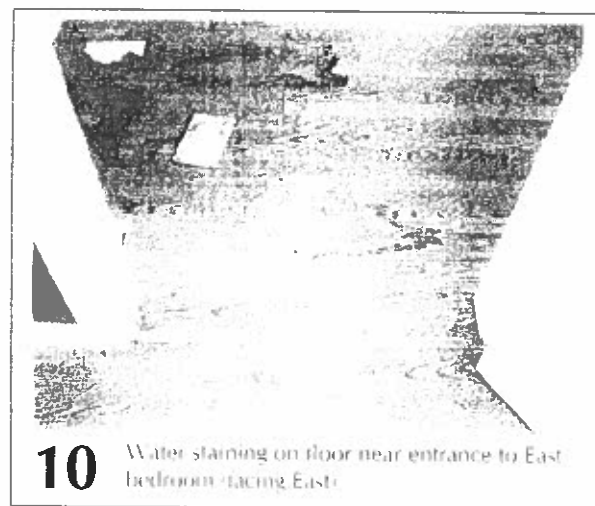
**7** West bedroom or two located on second floor of rear building ell facing Northeast



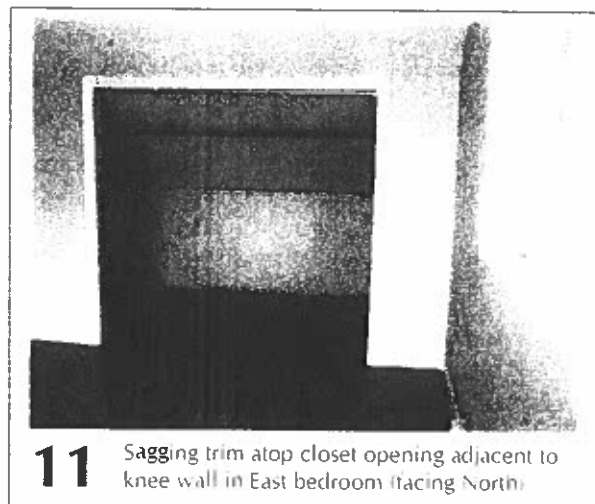
**8** Sagging trim atop closet opening adjacent to knee wall in West bedroom



**9** Entrance to East bedroom located on second floor of rear building ell facing East



**10** Water staining on floor near entrance to East bedroom facing East



**11** Sagging trim atop closet opening adjacent to knee wall in East bedroom facing North