



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

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STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

February 7, 2022

CASE # 2022.02: DEMOLITION REVIEW
19 Taber St (Map 40 Lot 5)

**OWNER/
APPLICANT:** Southcoast Hospitals Group
101 Page Street
New Bedford, MA 02740

CONTRACTOR: Dellbrook Construction
15 Research Road
East Falmouth, MA 02540



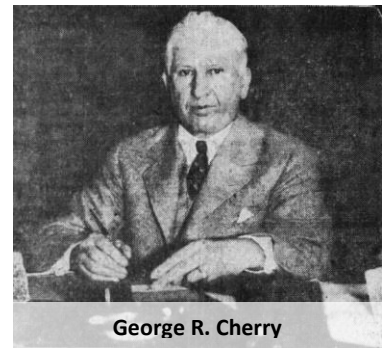
OVERVIEW: Southcoast Hospitals Group (Hospital) purchased the property, formerly known as the Royal Taber Street Nursing Home, in September 2019 when the nursing home closed. It is located adjacent to other Hospital properties and the applicant is seeking demolition of the existing building and associated garage with the intention to construct a new state-of-the-art LEED certified building for clinical care and administration purposes.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The building is located on the north side of Taber Street on nearly one acre of land. The building is set back from the street and is characterized by its front landscaping and stone walls on the west and north sides of the property. The properties adjacent to the subject property are held in common ownership by the hospital. The building was constructed in 1912 as a residence and began operating as a nursing home in 1961 at which time there were a number of substantial additions to the building including an elevator. It has been vacant since 2019 and the current property owner began interior abatement in December 2021 in preparation for demolition.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: The subject property is located directly adjacent to the western boundary of the Moreland Terrace National Register District. Prior to the late 19th century this area was predominately used as farmland and pasture and in the 1880's, the subject parcel of land was owned by Leander Plummer; part of his large estate which now encompasses the Moreland Terrace District.

The property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It is representative of the early twentieth century development of one of New Bedford's finest residential areas. This was a time when the city's textile industry continued to prosper, generating economic prosperity among a growing middle class of businessmen and entrepreneurs. The City's upper middle class were seeking suburban-style settings in the more prestigious outlying areas of the city, where they could build large homes in the latest architectural styles on spacious parcels with deep setbacks on tree-lined streets. In 1911 George and Eurilla Cherry moved from their residence on N Orchard Street to their newly constructed home at 19 Taber Street.



George Robert Cherry (1874-1946) was a founder and eventual President of Cherry and Company which established several retail stores under the name of Cherry and Webb. Founded in 1888 it began selling exclusively women's apparel and eventually added men's goods. It grew to have individual stores in New Bedford, Fall River, Providence, Lowell and Lawrence. In 1963 the business was sold to the Outlet Company which expanded the business to 50 stores but eventually filed for bankruptcy in 2000.

Caleb Hammond and Sons, a well-known New Bedford architectural firm, designed the large home built for the Cherry's. Edgar Hammond, son of Caleb, took over his father's business upon his death in 1903. His formal education included the study of structural engineering and architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the business, C. Hammond and Sons, had an office located at 177 North Water Street (no longer extant). Hammond designed many residences and city buildings, including the Taylor, Harrington, Shawmut Avenue and Phillips Avenue Schools, and several fire stations, as well as the Vocational School at Hillman and Ash Streets. An avid yachtsman, Edgar was the founder of the New Bedford Yacht Club and an expert maker of ship models. In 1915, Edgar was chosen by Emily Howland Bourne to oversee the construction of the half-scale model of the *Lagoda*, the world's largest ship model located at the Whaling Museum.

Many of Edgar Hammond's residential designs were executed in the Colonial revival style. The 1911 Cherry residence departs from this style as a clear representation of the less common Italian Renaissance style. It's villa-type architecture is characterized by its low pitched hip roof constructed of red terra-cotta tiles, deep eaves with brackets, window arches and a balustraded balcony above the entrance. The 1913 garage structure echoes a similar design in materials and execution. The original 1911 two story stucco building was constructed with two wings to the west and north from the main structure and subsequent two story additions to accommodate the use as a nursing home were sensitively incorporated utilizing flat roofs, projecting bays and terra cotta coping.



Original buildings can be identified by the red roof

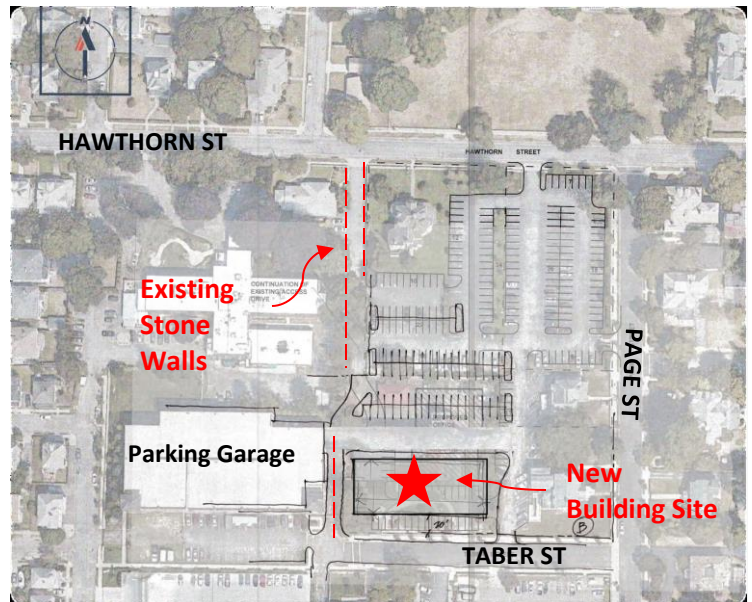
STATEMENT OF REASON FOR PROPOSED DEMOLITION: The applicant has stated that there is the presence of hazardous asbestos and mold along with the structure not being code compliant nor compliant with the Department of Public Health regulations for use as a hospital. Based on this evaluation, the applicant states that the building is not functionally or fiscally conducive for a hospital use. *See building images below.*

REDEVELOPMENT PLANS: In October 2021, St. Luke's Hospital earned official designation from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as a Level II Adult Trauma Center – the first and only Level II Trauma Center in the Massachusetts EMS Region 5 serving southeastern Massachusetts. The Applicant intends to construct a new state-of-the-art LEED certified building on the former Royal Taber Nursing Home site for clinical care and administration purposes. Relocating administrative offices from the existing hospital spaces to a new administrative building will allow the expansion of community care to patients. The building will also house a teaching lab.

The new building design has not been fully developed; however, it will be a multi-story building and the applicant has indicated that they will collaborate with the Historical Commission and the Planning Board to ensure that its scale and massing aligns with the neighborhood.

Site elements, architectural plans, traffic access, and parking will also be studied and assessed during the applicant's site design development and through the Planning Board's public review.

The applicant has not indicated whether the existing stone walls on site will remain undisturbed. Stone walls are listed in Preservation Massachusetts's *Most Endangered Historic Resources Program* as they are recognized as visible evidence of a community's agricultural heritage.



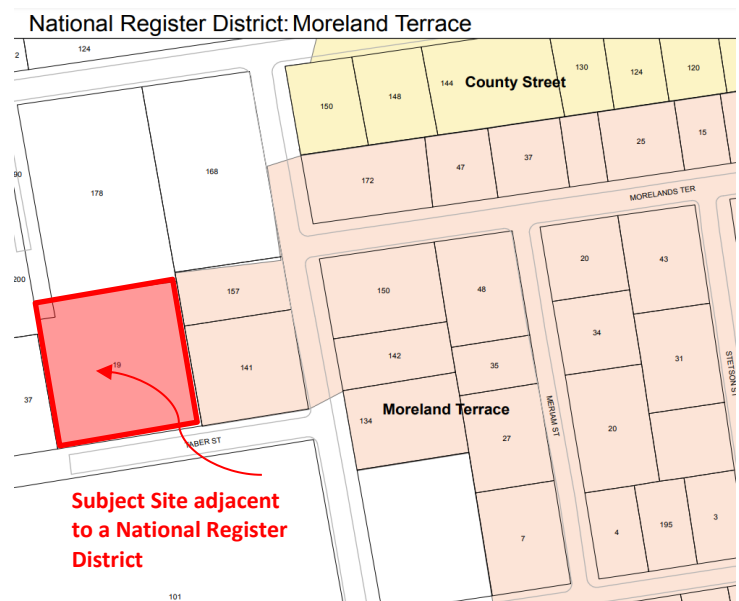
Preliminary Schematic of Site Development

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: The provisions of the Demolition Delay Ordinance shall apply only to any building or structure that, in whole or in part, was built seventy-five (75) or more years prior to the date of the application for the demolition permit, and is:

- A building or structure listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or on the State Register of Historic Places;
- A building or structure importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the city, or;
- A building or structure which is historically or architecturally significant in terms of period style, method of building construction or association with a significant architect or builder either by itself or as a part of a group of buildings, or;
- A building or structure located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of a federal, state or local historic district boundary.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The purpose of the City's Demolition Delay ordinance is to preserve and protect significant buildings and structures within New Bedford, which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the city and limiting the detrimental effect of demolition on the character of the city. By preserving and protecting significant buildings, structures, streetscapes and neighborhoods, this ordinance promotes the public welfare by making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live and work.

Owners of preferably preserved historic buildings and structures are encouraged to seek out alternative options that will preserve, rehabilitate or restore such buildings, and residents of the city are alerted to impending demolitions of significant buildings.

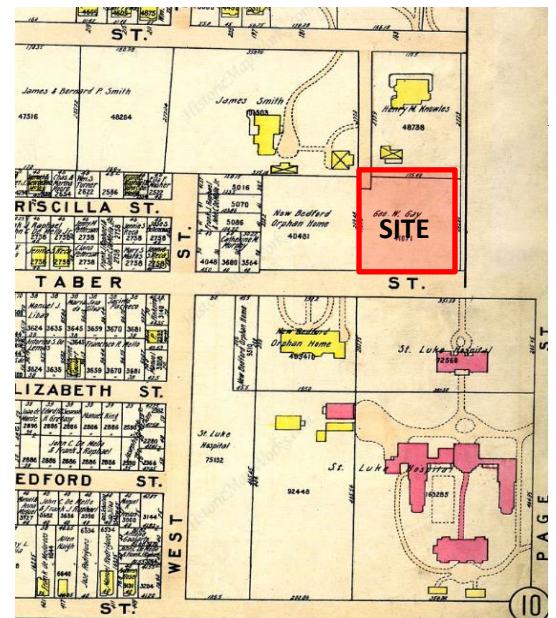


When prospecting potential sites for an administrative building, options were limited, and the applicant chose the site of the former Royal Taber Nursing Home due to its proximity to the Hospital. According to the applicant, the site is especially advantageous for future planning purposes, as the proposed site is within 250 yards of the hospital and therefore the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services will treat the location as inclusive of the hospital campus.

The applicant has indicated that the century-old building has numerous building code challenges along with deferred maintenance. A structural analysis of the building was not submitted in support of the application.

No further materials were provided relative to the exploration for adaptive re-use of the existing building as part of the hospital's redevelopment plans. An architect and/or consultant with historic redevelopment background may have been able to provide a feasibility study along with building and financing guidance as a means to adaptively reuse the historic building and site in a sensitive manner while fulfilling the needs of a modern administrative and clinical care facility.

Community hospitals are an essential part of the communities they occupy, providing necessary healthcare facilities, medical professionals, and employment opportunities to the local community. Southcoast Health, the parent organization of St. Luke's Hospital, is the leading health care provider in southeastern Massachusetts and one of the largest employers in the New Bedford area.



1911 Atlas

St Luke's Hospital was incorporated in 1884, opening in a converted residence on Purchase Street (no longer extant). In 1896, the hospital opened in a newly constructed quarters located at the corner of Page and Allen Streets. Throughout the last century, the Hospital has expanded its footprint as a medical care campus comprising parcels from Hawthorn Street to the north, the east side of Page Street, Allen Street to the south and West Street to the west.



1946 southwest ariel of St Luke's Hospital campus. Image courtesy of Spinner Publications.

The preservation of the built environment is representative of how much value is provided to a community's heritage. The Hospital's campus expansion is required to serve the healthcare needs of the community, but there may be alternatives to demolition, in this case, and perhaps in the future when further expansion may be required.

The neighborhood's distinctive architectural character and scale is incrementally lost with each demolition. The 2008 demolition of the historic Zeitz residence and two family residences at 37 and 51 Taber Street respectively, resulted in the construction of a large-scale structured parking garage on the corner of Taber and West Streets which visually impacts the neighborhood.

It is imperative that the needs of the adjacent neighborhood are met in concert with the Hospital's continued growth. If demolition is a recommended course of action, Staff encourages the Commission to seek collaboration to ensure that the new site development is not only sensitive to the historic character of the neighborhood but brings value to the site and its nearby residents.

Site looking North



Site looking Southwest





Taber Street Front Facade



Rear Facade



Garage Structure

SELECTIVE EXTERIOR IMAGES: All images can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/11Z61tVxFC6OAbkGsizAT0Ieu0XAFybt?usp=sharing>





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Image of when the site was in active use as a nursing home. [Image taken from web. Date unknown]



