



Slaughter/Preis Apartment Development Request in Spanish Town Historic District

Key Facts:

Baton Rouge's Oldest Neighborhood Threatened

- Historic Spanish Town legally requested to become a locally designated Historic District with legal design guidelines which protect the demolition of existing structures, provide guidelines for new construction, and renovation of existing structures.
- The local Historic District Designation and the historic district design guidelines, requested by the neighborhood, became law when the Metro Council approved them in April 2008.

EBRP Historic Preservation Commission

- The city's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is responsible for the oversight and enforcement of the Historic Spanish Town District guidelines and upholding ordinance 13045.
- HPC is the governing authority of demolition and design review of the Spanish Town Historic District. As confirmed by a city parish attorney, it should not be on the August 17th Planning & Zoning Commission agenda.
- Under the law, any ruling by the city's Historic Planning Commission can be appealed to the city's Metro Council and next in the judicial system.

Background Issues:

- Slaughter/Preis developers have requested approval from the city to:
 - Demolish 7 residential structures considered by the National Park Service and the Louisiana Office of Historic Preservation to be contributing elements to the Spanish Town neighborhood National Register of Historic Places designation.
 - Build a high rise apartment complex containing 80,000 square feet, which would take up more than one half of a city square block within the Spanish Town Historic District. The size and mass of this structure would be out of character with the small cottages and bungalows, which line the streets of Spanish Town.
- The developers' proposed apartment complex design is in non-compliance with Spanish Town's historic district guidelines, as approved by the Metro Council.
- The city's Planning Commission staff has rendered an opinion recommending approval of the developer's request to tear down the 7 homes, which are occupied, to make way for the proposed apartment complex, which is in non-compliance with the Historic District guidelines as approved by the Metro Council.
- The developers have requested that the HPC approve the demolition request at its August 12 meeting, and issue a Certificate Of Appropriateness (COA) needed for them to build their new apartment complex. The meeting will be held in the Metro Council Chambers at 8:30 AM.

Key professionals in the community are saying:

Kevin Harris, AIA Architect: “I have built my practice in Baton Rouge and the region on doing residential renovation. Not a one of the 7 Spanish Town houses is in such bad shape that you cannot bring it back.”

Robert Herndon, Spanish Town resident and property owner: “Last month I purchased two Spanish Town houses to renovate, in similar to worse condition, for over \$100,000 each. The City Planning Staff’s recommendation to demolish the seven historic houses, based on condition, shows a real lack of knowledge about this historic neighborhood.”

Suzanne Turner, Landscape Designer and Planner, Property Owner, Downtown Resident: “The planning staff is obviously not very supportive of preserving the historic housing stock in Baton Rouge's neighborhoods because the criteria that they used to recommend demolition of the Spanish Town houses would probably also apply to 90 percent of the rest of the historic structures in the city.”

Mark Upton, Attorney, Foundation for Historical Louisiana Chair: “The Foundation for Historical Louisiana has publicly committed to supporting the Spanish Town Civic Association in their quest to protect and preserve the historic qualities of their neighborhood. It is the oldest and most significant historical residential area of Baton Rouge. Any construction that does not promote the historic nature is intolerable. We cannot allow seven contributing structures to be demolished and lost forever.”

Derrell Cohoon, Spanish Town Resident, DDD Board Member: “This four story, 74 unit apartment complex with its 139 space, lease-optional parking garage, is out of compliance with both the spirit and the intent of the Historic District Guidelines enacted by the Metro Council for Historic Spanish Town. Furthermore, the impact of the additional traffic and on-street parking that will result from such a large complex (particularly its tenant parking space rental plan) does not take into account the narrow streets inherent with a neighborhood dating back to 1805.”

David Brown, Historic Spanish Town Civic Association Chairman: "Our neighborhood has a voice of one. The HSTCA Board of Directors has voted unanimously against the proposed apartment complex, and we will fight to protect all historic homes from demolition. We simply seek the enforcement of existing laws prohibiting unlawful demolition and supporting our historic guidelines."

Darryl Gissel, Realtor, Spanish Town Resident, Property Owner: “People are eager to buy and renovate houses in Spanish Town. Why would the city’s planning staff encourage anyone to tear them down?”

Carolyn Bennett, FHL Executive Director: “Keep Spanish Town awesome and Baton Rouge special. Don’t “supersize” this unique historic district.”