



**DEVELOPMENT REVIEW
COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT
MAY 27, 2025**

Prepared by: Amy Wolfson, City Planner

DATA SUMMARY

Application Number: 25BLD-202
Subject: Plan Revision to demolish a Priority 2 category structure
Location/APNs: 603 West Main St / APN 008-331-003
Applicant: Erin Humphrey with Atmospheric Design Build
on behalf of Arthur Fellows, property owner
Zoning/General Plan: Neighborhood General 2 (NG2) / Urban Low Density (ULD)
Entitlement: Demolition
Environmental Status: Categorical Exemption

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the Historical Commission recommend that the Development Review Committee approve the proposed demolition to the historic barn as may be modified at the public meeting, and which includes the following actions:
 - a. Determine the project Categorically Exempt pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines, as detailed in the Staff Report;
 - b. Adopt Findings of Fact for approval of the Plan Revision as presented in the Staff Report; and
 - c. Approve the demolition of the barn at 603 West Main Street in accordance with the Conditions of Approval, as presented in this Staff Report.

BACKGROUND:

The existing barn is 1,023 square feet and sits behind the existing residence, facing Pleasant Street. The barn was built in 1885 and is represented as a Priority 2 structure in the city's historical inventory. Structures that are categorized as "Priority 2," are considered significant in contributing to the historic character of the area and have retained good integrity.

The historical inventory assessment for the barn indicates "that the property consists of a wood-frame, two-story, Salt-Box style carriage barn with the date 1885 applied to the exterior wall of the barn. The barn has a distinctive Cape Cod style shed roof with a frieze below the eaves, wide clapboard exterior siding, a large rectangular wood sash window in the second-story facing Pleasant Street, and a modern garage door."



Existing barn behind residence at 603 West Main Street

PROJECT PROPOSAL:

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing barn and rebuild with a similar exterior aesthetic and use the replacement building as an Accessory Dwelling Unit. The project architect has indicated that the existing structure has a dirt floor and no foundation and as such, is difficult to remodel to any productive use. The barn also currently encroaches into the city right-of-way. The replacement building would be relocated slightly in order to remedy that complication.

The applicant has provided an Updated Historic Resource Evaluation, prepared by the same historian, Dana Supernowicz, who prepared the City's 2009 historic inventory. The updated evaluation indicates, upon a more thorough and up-close review of the structure, that "while there is physical evidence of an earlier barn, circa 1885, the majority of the barn was rebuilt around 1898-1900 with later alterations and additions...." and adds that "many, if not most, of the original architectural elements or character defining features of the barn have been removed or repurposed." Supernowicz further asserts that several structural alterations have taken place since the 1910-era barn was constructed and "those alterations, such as reconstructing the west elevation wall in the past 30 to 40 years, pouring a slab inside the barn, rebuilding the stairwell to the second-story, and residing most of the barn with clapboard aluminum siding, cumulatively have diminished the historic integrity of the barn's design, workmanship, materials, and, to a lesser degree, feeling and association."

Regulatory Authority: City municipal code section 15.60.070 provides criteria for determination of historical significance. Supernowicz assessed the barn using City's criteria, shown below, with responses in italics:

1. The building or structure has character, interest or value as a part of the heritage of the City of Grass Valley.

No, the subject property has diminished integrity or loss of important character defining features.

2. The location of the building or structure is the site of a significant historic event.

No, there is no documentary evidence to support the supposition that the subject property is the site of a significant historic event in the history of Grass Valley.

3. The building or structure is identified with a person(s) or group(s) who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Grass Valley.

No, the subject property has not been identified as having an association with a significant person or persons in the history of Grass Valley.

4. The building or structure exemplifies a particular architectural style or way of life important to the city.

No, while the building is identified as a Salt Box design, it has diminished integrity having lost many of its character defining features.

5. The building or structure exemplifies the best remaining architectural type in a neighborhood.

No, the subject property does not represent the best remaining architectural example of a barn or carriage house in Grass Valley, in large part due to its lack of integrity.

6. The building or structure is identified as the work of a person whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, the state or the United States.

No, the subject property has not been identified as the work of a person of significance in history of Grass Valley, California, or the United States.

7. The building or structure reflects outstanding attention to architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship.

No, the subject property has lost many of its character defining architectural features.

8. The building or structure is related to landmarks or historic districts and its preservation is essential to the integrity of the landmark or historic district.

No, the subject property while related to other similar property types in Grass Valley, nonetheless, lacks integrity and is not essential to the surrounding neighborhood, landmark, or historic district.

9. The unique location or singular physical characteristics of the building or structure represent an established and familiar feature of a neighborhood.

No, while the barn is a visual presence at the terminus of Pleasant Street and familiar to the neighborhood, it, nonetheless, lacks integrity.

10. The building, structure or site has the potential to yield historical or archaeological information.

No, the subject property has diminished architectural integrity, and, thus, has no potential to yield historical information regarding early construction methods in regards to barns or other similar outbuildings.

Supernowicz concludes that “due to cumulative alterations and additions, [the barn structure] has diminished integrity, affecting many of its architectural elements dating from its original construction in the late-19th century through circa 1948. Therefore, the barn does not appear to represent a significant historic resource in the City of Grass Valley, individually, or as a contributor to the residence at 603 West Main Street, or as a contributing resource to the 1872 Grass Valley Townsite.”

Historical Commission: The Historical Commission reviewed the demolition application at their regular meeting on May 13, 2025 and approved it as presented. Commissioners were appreciative of the applicant’s intent to construct a similarly-designed project.

GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING:

General Plan: The Urban Low Density (ULD) designation requires between 1.01 and 4.0 residential units per gross acre. ULD is intended primarily for single family detached houses, although higher density could be accommodated, if offset with sufficient open space to maintain the gross density within the indicated range. ULD is most compatible with the following Zoning districts: Single Family Residential (R-1) and Two- Family Residence (R-2) districts.

The City of Grass Valley General Plan includes a historical element which provides a basis for historic preservation in the City of Grass Valley. The general plan includes an objective for the preservation of buildings of historic and/or architectural merit. Where historic and prehistoric cultural resources have been identified, the city shall require that development be designed to protect such resources. If found to not represent a significant historic feature, as concluded by the architectural historian who prepared the updated historical resource assessment for the property, the proposed demolition is consistent with the City’s General Plan, including the historical element.

Zoning: The primary intent of the Neighborhood General 2 (NG 2) is to strengthen the character of existing historic neighborhoods within Grass Valley. It seeks to protect and enhance the unique character of existing neighborhoods, particularly in locations where this character may be most susceptible to change. The NG-2 zone has been applied to properties previously designated within the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

The barn, originally recorded as 604 West Main Street on the 2009 Historic Resource Inventory, is associated with a wood-frame Victorian residence both of which are located at

603 West Main Street. The Victorian house is located on the front of the parcel facing West Main Street, while the barn or former carriage house, occupies the far southern end of the parcel at the western terminus of Pleasant Street.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The proposed project qualifies for a Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1, of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Guidelines. A Class 1 Categorical Exemption consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alternation of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. The project involves demolition of an existing barn, and will therefore, not expand the existing use. As prepared by architectural historian, Dana Supernowicz, the barn was evaluated under the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR) under Public Resources Code section 5024.1. and determined not to be a historic resource pursuant to section 15064.5 of CEQA Guidelines and therefore eligible for the Class 1 exemption.

FINDINGS:

1. The Grass Valley Community Development Department received a complete application for Plan Revision 25BLD-202.
2. The Grass Valley Historical Commission reviewed Plan Revision application 24PLN-41 at their regular meeting May 13, 2025.
3. The Development Review Committee reviewed the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and concluded that the project qualifies for a Class 1, Categorical Exemption in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and CEQA Guidelines.
4. Demolition of a barn is not inconsistent with the City's General Plan because it is not considered a significant historic resource.
5. Based on the criteria outlined in section 15.60.070 of the City Municipal Code, and the historic resource report prepared by Dana Supernowicz, M.A., RPA, dated, April 6, 2025, the barn located at 603 West Main Street is not considered a significant historic resource, and therefore, demolition of the barn does not compromise the historic integrity of the structure and complies with the City of Grass Valley Community Design Guidelines.

B. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

1. Any replacement structure shall feature the asymmetrical "salt-box" style form portrayed on the existing structure, whereby the eastern exterior wall is a minimum of two times taller than the western exterior wall, and features an asymmetrical roofline. The front face shall include a carriage-style garage door, and a double or single-hung window within the south-facing gable.

2. Prior to any work occurring, a building permit shall be obtained from the Community Development Department, Building Division.
3. An approved Encroachment Permit shall be obtained from the Engineering Division prior to any work being done within the City right-of-way.
4. The applicant agrees to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Grass Valley in any action or proceeding brought against the City of Grass Valley to void or annul this discretionary land use approval.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Vicinity /Aerial Map
2. Updated Historical Resource Assessment of the 603 West Main Street Barn
3. DPR 523 Site Records
4. Renderings of Proposed Replacement Structure