

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
APRIL 27, 2015
APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS
C14H-2000-2182
Mueller-Danforth
1400 West Street

PROPOSAL

To document the structure utilizing digitally rectified and dimensioned photography to allow for possible reconstruction in the future, as well as to provide a record of the historic resource then demolish the structure and salvage and store character-defining features as possible.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

The structure is a three-level, cedar-framed gazebo/pagoda-like structure that displays both rustic and fine carpentry details. It was constructed sometime between 1935 and 1965 (likely prior to 1948) as shown in Sanborn Maps. Located at the rear of the Mueller-Danforth property, the front of the structure is two levels and sits on the ground, with the back of the structure having three levels suspended over the steep cliff and supported by rough cedar posts. The lowest level has simple plank flooring and open sides. The next level, accessible from the property's yard also has cedar plank flooring, squared posts that support the top level, and railings and built-in benches with decorative diamond pattern. The rear of this middle level originally had a pergola structure that is now severely deteriorated with none of the railings remaining. There are fan-shaped brackets at the top of the square posts on this level. The upper level, accessible from an exterior stair on the north side, has a gabled roof with scalloped fascia board and exposed decorative rafter ends. The walls are screened with decorative details in the framing. A scalloped skirt is located between the upper and lower levels, with a large "D" on the front-center for the "Danforth" family. The structure was painted white with dark green trim. The structure is in a very deteriorated condition and was in such a condition when it came into the possession of Doug and Margaret Danforth upon the passing of Doug Danforth's mother.

The structure has been assessed by Tere O'Connell, a licensed architect, and Joe Pinelli, a general contractor. Both have extensive experience restoring and rehabilitating historic properties. Per the attached letters from these professionals, "the structural framing members at the roof and upper level floor framing have completely failed, and it is not safe at all for occupancy," and, "even with unlimited funding, it will not be feasible to preserve the Pagoda." Tere O'Connell estimates to restore the structure, "could easily cost in excess of \$150,000."

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The Commission's Standards for Review of demolition of structures within a Local Historic District or at Historic Landmark include:

§ 25-11-244 - ACTION ON A CERTIFICATE OF DEMOLITION OR REMOVAL.

(A) This section applies to an application under Section 25-11-241(C) (Application For Certificate).

(B) The commission shall consider:

- (1) the state of repair of the building;
- (2) the reasonableness of the cost of restoration or repair;

- (3) the existing or potential usefulness, including economic usefulness, of the building;
 - (4) the purpose of preserving the structure as a historic landmark;
 - (5) the character of the neighborhood; and
 - (6) other factors the commission determines to be appropriate.
- (C) The commission shall issue a certificate to the building official if the commission determines that:
- (1) the interest of historic preservation will not be adversely affected by the demolition or removal; or
 - (2) the interest of historic preservation can be best served by the removal of the structure to another identified location,
- (D) The building official shall notify the applicant not later than the fifth day after the certificate is issued.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Reviewed and supports the proposal as submitted.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness as proposed as the structure is beyond repair and the applicants will properly document the structure and salvage and store character-defining features when possible.

Scope of work for Demolition of Gazebo/Pagoda Structure at 1400 West Avenue:

The structure is a three-level, cedar-framed gazebo/pagoda-like structure that displays both rustic and fine carpentry details. It was constructed sometime between 1935 and 1965 (likely prior to 1948) as shown in Sanborn Maps. Located at the rear of the Mueller-Danforth property, the front of the structure is two levels and sits on the ground, with the back of the structure having three levels suspended over the steep cliff and supported by rough cedar posts. The lowest level has simple plank flooring and open sides. The next level, accessible from the property's yard also has cedar plank flooring, squared posts that support the top level, and railings and built-in benches with decorative diamond pattern. The rear of this middle level originally had a pergola structure that is now severely deteriorated with none of the railings remaining. There are fan-shaped brackets at the top of the square posts on this level. The upper level, accessible from an exterior stair on the north side, has a gabled roof with scalloped fascia board and exposed decorative rafter ends. The walls are screened with decorative details in the framing. A scalloped skirt is located between the upper and lower levels, with a large "D" on the front-center for the "Danforth" family. The structure was painted white with dark green trim. The structure is in a very deteriorated condition and was in such a condition when it came into the possession of Doug and Margaret Danforth upon the passing of Doug Danforth's mother.

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The proposal is to document the structure utilizing digitally rectified and dimensioned photography to allow for possible reconstruction in the future, as well as to provide a record of the historic resource, then demolish the structure and salvage and store character-defining features as possible.

O'C
O'Connell Architecture, LLC
1405 West 10th Street
Austin, Texas 78703
512|751.1374

March 26, 2015

Doug and Margaret Danforth
1400 West Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: 'Pagoda' at the Mueller-Danforth House, Austin Landmark Property

Dear Doug and Margaret,

It was a pleasure to meet you the other day, and I only wish that we could have had better news about the condition of the cliff side pagoda structure. It is a charming three-level cedar-framed structure constructed between 1935 and 1948, with mortised joinery and mid-century details. It surely was a source of family pride and enjoyment in its time. However, many of the structural framing members at the roof and upper level floor framing have completely failed, and it is not safe at all for occupancy. The cliff side site would make it extremely challenging and costly to rehabilitate the structure in its current location. While many decorative elements such as the railings, brackets, and fascia could be repaired and reused, the railings in particular would also require modification to meet life safety requirements. The rehabilitation of this structure in place could easily cost in excess of \$150,000.

Due to the hazardous conditions, I recommend that you have it documented for the historical record and salvage character-defining features to the extent possible for reuse at a later date. The salvage operation could occur as the structure is being carefully disassembled and removed from the site.

There are two ways to document the structure worthy of your consideration. One is to develop measured drawings drawn in CAD. We would not be able to access the entire structure safely to obtain all of the measurements, so we would take known measurements using measuring tapes and laser measuring devices, then extrapolate for the inaccessible areas of the structure. Field documentation and CAD drawings would cost between \$1,800-\$2,400.

The other option is to document the structure using digitally rectified photography to the extent possible, then overlaying a digital layer of dimensions taken from the site. This approach would be relatively easy to accomplish at the east elevation, more challenging at the north and south elevations, and nigh impossible at the west/cliff side elevation. I'd also use detail images to document distinctive features. It would provide a good record of the structure should anyone want to reconstruct it or something like it at a later date. The cost for this documentation should not exceed \$1,000.

I am available to provide this documentation once you receive approval from the Historic Landmark Commission, and will await word from you.

Best Regards,



Tere O'Connell, AIA

cc: Alyson McGee

J Pinnelli Company LLC

April 12, 2015
Austin, Texas

Re: Pagoda at 1400 West Avenue
Condition & Feasibility to Preserve

I was asked to assess the Pagoda's condition and estimate a cost to restore the one of a kind Austin treasure. Sadly, it was immediately apparent to myself and my staff that the Pagoda was beyond preserving.

The Pagoda, an all wooden structure, is sited at the rear of the lot at the top of a very steep slope.

The first floor is flush at grade with the rear yard of the residence.

The front edge is attached at the first floor finished floor level to the rear yard.

The other three sides of the all-wooden structure are attached to tall cedar posts and wooden columns.

It is an all-wooden west facing structure.

By original design, with the exception of the roof framing, all of the Pagoda's wooden parts have been fully exposed to the elements since it was constructed.

The determination is such that the structure would have to be completely disassembled and reassembled. I estimate that only about thirty percent of the deconstructed materials could be salvaged.

Old growth materials available to the original contractor are no longer available. It would not be possible to construct a fully wooden structure with any hope of longevity with today's materials.

It is a tribute to the contractor that the Pagoda has held up as long as it has.

Even with unlimited funding, it will not be feasible to preserve the Pagoda. So much of the re-construction would have to be made out of steel, as to fatally compromise the original design.

Joe Pinnelli
General Contractor



Mueller-Danforth House – 1400 West Avenue (c. 1927)

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



View to back yard from the street

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



View from driveway

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



"Pagoda" structure at rear of property

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



"Pagoda" structure at rear of property

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



Structure overhangs the cliff

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



Main beam of second floor has failed.

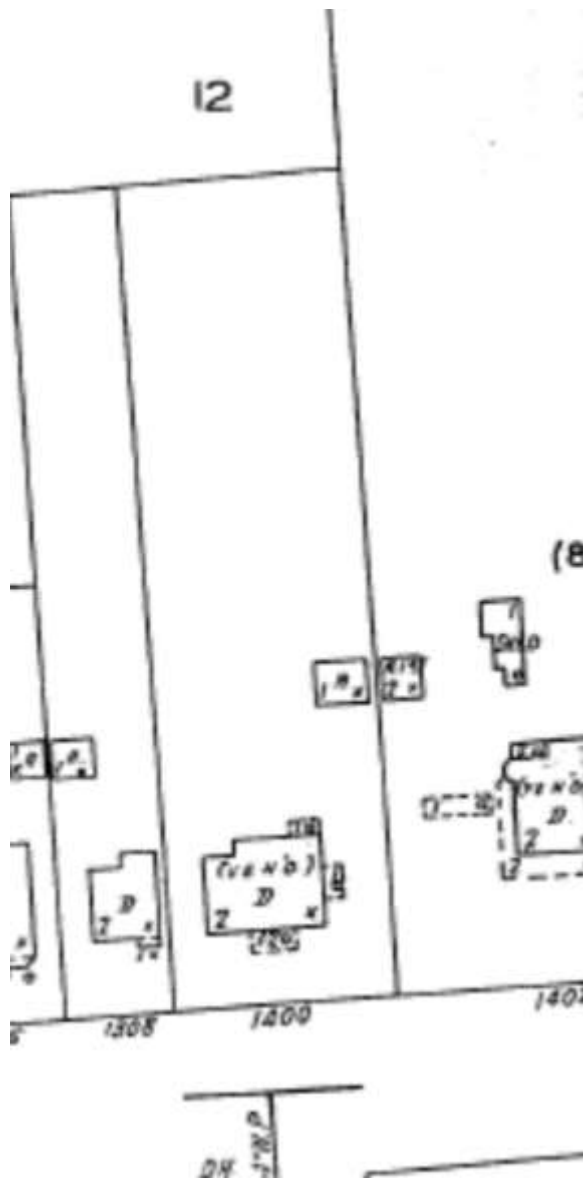
Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



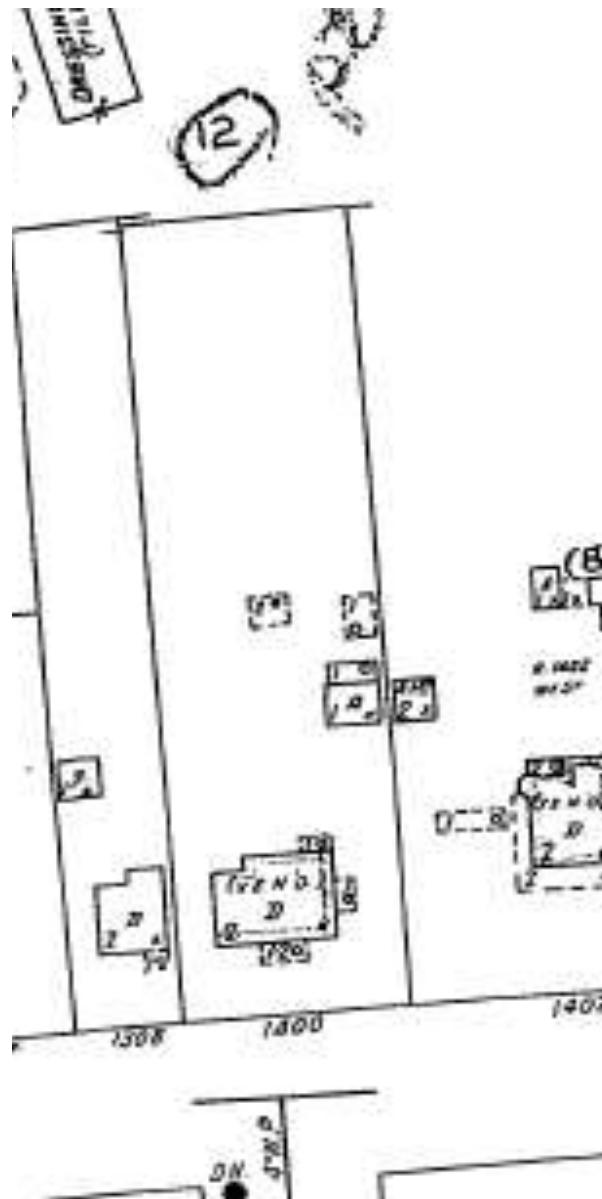
Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee



1935 Sanborn Map



1965 Sanborn Map

Mueller-Danforth House (c. 1927)
January 21, 2015 – Alyson McGee