

AKRON URBAN DESIGN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING OF JULY 1, 2025 - 9:00 A.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, THIRD FLOOR, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

166 S. HIGH STREET

- (1) CORRECTION and APPROVAL of Minutes of November 5, 2024.**
- (2) PUBLIC HEARING:**
 - A. **UD-2025-02-HP** – Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the former Firestone Tire and Rubber Company building at 1200 Firestone Parkway
- (3) DISCUSSION:**
 - A. **UD-2025-01-T** - Discussion regarding Municipal Code text change to Article 2, “Urban Design and Historic Preservation”

KJ/emd

UD-2025-02-HP

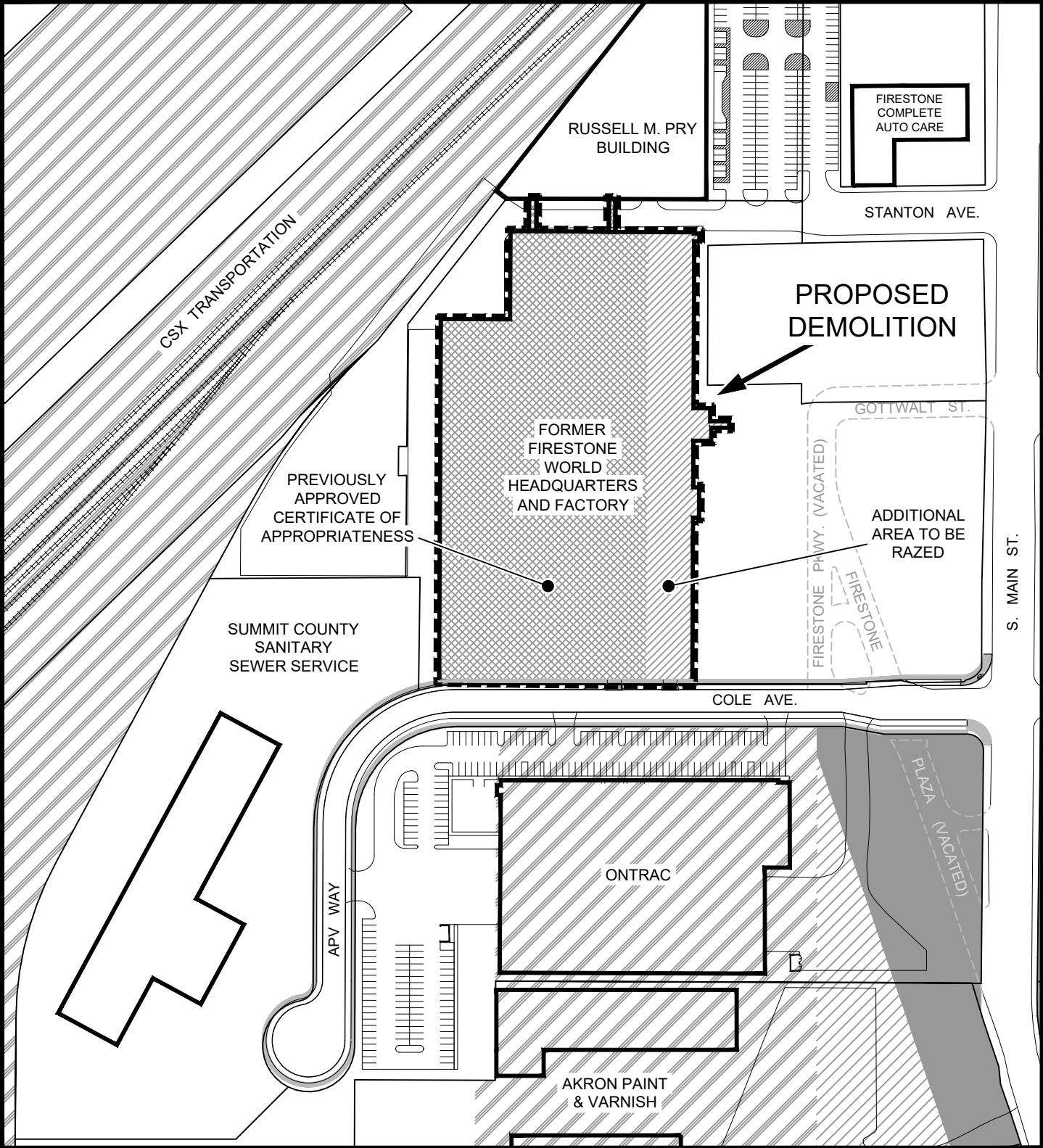
Certificate of Appropriateness to
demolish the former Firestone Tire
and Rubber Company building at
1200 Firestone Parkway

- U3 Retail Business
- U4 Commercial
- U5 Ordinary Industry
- UPD-48



0 200'

Created 06/12/2025 jwh
Revised 06/17/2025 jwh



MEMORANDUM

**TO: AKRON URBAN DESIGN AND
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

**ITEM # 2A
UD-2025-02-HP**

**FROM: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

DATE: JULY 1, 2025

SUBJECT: UD-2025-02-HP – Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the former Firestone Tire and Rubber Company Plant 1 building located at 1200 Firestone Parkway.

GENERAL LOCATION: The former Firestone Tire and Rubber Company Plant 1 building is generally located west of S. Main Street and north of Cole Avenue / Firestone Plaza.

COMMENTS:

The City of Akron is applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the former Firestone Tire and Rubber Company Plant 1 building. The building was listed as an Akron Historic Landmark in 2013. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2014. In June, 2024, the Akron Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the three rear wings of the structure. The entire front building, including the clock tower, was to be retained. Unfortunately, separating the front wing from the remaining structure while securing the building from both trespassers and weather is financially infeasible and the City is applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the entire structure.

Plant 1 was built in 1910 as a factory and office building. According to the original nomination, the building was originally 19 bays wide, 18 bays deep and four stories tall. Soon after completion, additional bays and a fifth floor were added. Before 1916 additional bays were added, as well as a new entrance placed at the base of an eight-story clock tower, producing the existing 46-bay, 5-story front façade. Each floor in the front bay is approximately 39,000 square feet and the clock tower is approximately 6,300 square feet for a total of approximately 240,300 square feet of space. The size of the structure makes it difficult to secure and maintain.

The building has been vacant for approximately 10 years. Various developers have gone through the building to see if it could be repurposed. Their consensus was that reuse was not feasible. Due to a 'covenant not to sue' from the EPA, the building cannot be used for any residential or day care use. Metal scrappers have been removing valuable wiring and piping for years. The building has been stripped of nearly all valuable metals

and requires complete mechanical, electrical and plumbing overhaul creating another obstacle to redevelopment. The roof on the east front bay is badly deteriorated and leaks in multiple locations. Storm water continues to damage the interior of the building. The roof is beyond repair and a full roof replacement is required. A roof replacement is complicated due to its many large and leaking sawtooth skylights, elevated mechanical rooms, and abandoned roof mounted equipment. All these components are obsolete and serve no useful purpose. The upper clock tower has ½ inch and larger cracks from water intrusion and freeze/thaw. Cracked tower masonry continues to worsen and needs to be rebuilt. The entire building needs tuckpointing to prevent further water intrusion and damage. Structural columns and beams show signs of damage. Concrete casing around multiple columns and beams has spalled away or damaged from previous processes over the years. The adequacy of these columns and beams is unknown.

The City of Akron received a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the three rear wings and retain the front wing in 2024. Separating the front wing from the remaining structure and securing the building from both trespassers and the weather is very expensive. The low bid for the demolition of the entire structure is \$7.347 million. The low bid to separate and secure the front bay and demo the rear 3 bays is \$12.349 million. The entire structure is continuous at the basement and first floor level and doesn't become separated into wings until the second floor. A new 650-foot-long masonry wall on new footings would be needed from the basement to the second floor to enclose the building from the outside once the interior is exposed after demolition. All openings created by the removal of bridges and mechanical connections will need to be infilled. The roof will need to be replaced including the removal of all obsolete sawtooth skylights, mechanical rooms, and rooftop equipment. Exterior tuckpointing is required throughout. Portions of the clock tower require masonry rebuilding. Structural analysis and probable repair are required at all damaged columns and beams. This all comes at a substantial cost for a vacant, 240,000 square foot building that unfortunately does not have any realistic potential for redevelopment.

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance states that the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition when A) the historic landmark is so deteriorated that its integrity has been irretrievably lost; and B) the structure is a secondary one that lacks historic or architectural significance or does not occupy a major portion of the historic landmark; and C) retention of the historic landmark is not technically or economically feasible and D) the Commission after thorough investigation, determines that there is no feasible alternative to demolition. In this instance, B is inapplicable. It is the City's contention that the property meets the criteria for A and C due to the structural deterioration of the building, the prohibitive cost and ongoing vandalism.

RECOMMENDATION:

Planning Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the former Firestone Tire and Rubber Company Plant 1 building.

KFM/emd

Article 2. Urban Design and Historic Preservation*

31.390 Definitions.

For the purpose of this article, the following definitions shall apply:

"Alteration" means any change in an external architectural feature of a historic landmark or structure within a historic district or in the interior of any such structure if interior features are included in the designation.

"Certificate of Appropriateness" means a certificate indicating that a proposed environmental change, alteration or demolition of a historic landmark or within a historic district has been approved.

"Demolition" means the removal or destruction of any historic landmark or any landmark located within a historic district or site.

"Designation" means designation of a structure, site or district as a historic landmark or district.

"Environmental change" means any material alteration, removal, construction or addition of any improvements, including new construction, to a historic landmark or within a historic district if subject to public view.

"Historic district" means any area containing eligible historic landmarks which:

- A. Has historic significance in its totality; or
- B. Represents periods or styles of architecture typical in history, or are an assemblage of structures important to history; or
- C. Causes an area, by reason of historic significance, architecture or assemblage, to constitute an identifiable area.

"Historic landmark" means a structure, group of structures or site which:

- A. Is indicative of historic or cultural importance evidenced in any of the following ways:
 - 1. Has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation, or
 - 2. Is associated with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city, state or nation, or
 - 3. Is the site of a historic event with a significant effect upon society, or
 - 4. Exemplifies the area, property or site of the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the city, state or nation; or
- B. Is indicative of architectural or engineering importance evidenced in any of the following ways:
 - 1. Is a portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an area of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style, or
 - 2. Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, or
 - 3. Is identified as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city, state or nation, or

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4. Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural or structural innovation; or
 - C. Is indicative of geographic importance as part of a or related to a square, park or other distinctive area, should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif.

However, landmarks, sites and districts of historical, cultural or social importance to the community, or cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by local institutions, structures moved from original locations, reconstructed historic buildings or properties achieving significance within the past fifty years shall not be considered eligible for designation unless the structure is a:

1. Property significant because of architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance, or
2. Building or structure moved from its original location but significant for architectural value or which is the surviving structure associated with a historical person or event, or
3. Birthplace or grave of a historical figure if no other appropriate site or building associated with that figure exists, or
4. Cemetery significant by containing graves of important persons, from age, from design features or from association with historic events, or
5. Reconstructed building executed in a suitable environment and presented as part of a restoration master plan when no other building or structure with the same association survives, or
6. Property commemorative in intent of design, age, tradition, or symbolic value invested with its own historical significance, or
7. Property achieving significance within the past fifty years if exceptionally important or unique, or
8. Building, structure or property that is an integral part of a historic district.

(Ord. 388-1997)

* Editor's note: The provisions set out in §§ 31.390—31.399 shall not be in effect until one hundred eighty days from the passage of Ord. 388-1997.

31.391 Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission.

- A. Establishment—Composition. There is established the Akron Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission to act in an advisory capacity to the City government in connection with historic preservation of the City. Such Commission shall consist of seven members, all of whom have demonstrated special interest, experience or knowledge in history, architecture, or related disciplines. Members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by a majority of Council, except that the Director of the Summit County Historical Society or his/her designee and a representative from the Akron Area Board of Realtors shall be standing members of the Commission. At least one member shall be an architect and the others shall preferably include members from the following arts and professions: landscape architecture, real estate development and learned in history preservation or architectural traditions of the City. Two additional members shall represent the public at large. Members residing in at least three different wards shall be represented on the Commission. The Mayor shall solicit suggested nominations for such appointments from architectural, educational, and other organizations for the non-lay members.
- B. Terms and Vacancies. The appointments shall be for staggered three-year terms, except that vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term.
- C. Compensation. Members shall be compensated one hundred dollars per each meeting attended.

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- D. Chairman—Administrative Procedures—Consultation. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall organize and elect a chairman annually and adopt such administrative procedures as are necessary to accomplish the purposes mentioned in subsection A of this section. City officers and the staff of City departments may consult with and advise the Commission from time to time on matters coming within the scope of this article and the Commission may likewise consult with and advise such officers.

A member of the Department of Planning and Urban Development, preferably with experience in historic preservation, shall be assigned to assist the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission in carrying out its duties relating to historic preservation.

(Ord. 388-1997; Ord. 319-2017; Ord. 258-2022)

31.392 Duties and Powers of the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission.

The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall:

1. Review and make recommendations on submitted designs for buildings, signs, bridges, viaducts, elevated ways, gates, fences, lamp standards, arches, approaches and other structures erected on or to be erected on City property and site development pertaining thereto;
2. Review and make recommendations and the design of arches, bridges, awnings, structures and approaches on private property and which extend over public streets or other public property;
3. Advise owners of property in the City or its environs on development of such property, and any persons, corporation, or institution contemplating the erection of any building or the making of any improvement thereon may submit the plans and designs or sketches thereof to the Commission for advice and suggestions for which no charge shall be made by the Commission;
4. Recommend designation of, and conservation guidelines for, historic landmarks and historic districts;
5. Approve or deny Certificates of Appropriateness;
6. Maintain a survey of and prepare plans for historic structures, sites and districts;
7. Advocate and further the conservation of historic resources and act as a liaison between the City and groups and individuals interested in historic preservation;
8. Facilitate the redevelopment of historic structures and districts in accordance with development plans of the city.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.393 Structures on public and private land.

- A. Designs for buildings, signs, bridges, viaducts, elevated ways, gates, fences, lamp standards or other structures erected on or to be erected on City land must be reviewed by the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission. Before letting of any contract the Commission shall make a recommendation on the design to the Planning Commission for approval.

Designs for arches, bridges, structures and approaches on private property which extend over public streets or other public property must be reviewed by the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission. Construction shall not commence until the Commission makes a recommendation on the design to the Planning Commission for approval.

- B. Designs for awnings on private property which extend over public streets or other public property must be reviewed by the Commission. Construction shall not commence on any such structures until the Urban

Design and Historic Preservation Commission makes a recommendation on the design to the City Council for approval.

- C. The Commission may waive, in writing, review of a particular structure covered in subsections A and B of this section.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.394 Historic landmark and historic districts.

- A. Application for Designation. Any individual or group wishing to have a structure, site or district designated a historic landmark shall file with the Planning and Urban Development Department a designation application in such form as prescribed by Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission.

An application for the designation of a historic structure or site shall be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee of seventy-five dollars. An application for the designation of a historic district shall be accompanied by a non-refundable application fee of two hundred fifty dollars.

If the individual or group does not own the structure, site or district, the individual or group must notify the owner or owners of the structure, site or district by certified mail of the proposed designation and provide reasons supporting that proposed designation. The individual or group must then file proof of this notice with the Planning and Urban Development Department. No further action on the proposed designation will occur until thirty days after the owner or owners are notified of the proposed designation.

Repeal or amendment of a designation may be initiated in the same manner.

- B. Planning Department Report. The Department of Planning and Urban Development shall forward to the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission a report and conservation guidelines for the proposed landmark or district. The conservation guidelines shall:
1. List alterations, demolitions, and environmental changes appropriate for the proposed landmark or district;
 2. Outline ways the proposed landmark(s) can be redeveloped to be compatible with new development;
 3. Recommend improvements to proposed landmarks or within proposed districts.
- C. Notice and Public Hearing. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall hold a public hearing to consider the application and shall at least fifteen days prior to the public hearing invite the property owner(s), all property owners within the five hundred feet of the proposed designation, and individuals or groups requesting notice of designation applications to attend.
- D. Recommendations. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall make a recommendation on the designation application and conservation guidelines and forward these recommendations to the Planning Commission.

In reviewing a designation, the Planning Commission shall consider:

1. The relationship of the proposed designation to comprehensive plans of the City and any development or project plans near the proposed designation;
2. The effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding areas; and
3. Other considerations shown relevant to the designation.

In reviewing conservation guidelines for a designation, the Commission shall consider:

1. The promotion of conservation, development and use of property proposed for designation;

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2. The promotion of special historic, architectural, community or aesthetic interest or value of the property proposed for designation;
 3. The promotion of redevelopment compatible with the proposed designation;
 4. The preservation of the integrity of existing designations without limiting new construction to a particular period or architectural style;
 5. The impact and effect of the proposed designation on the residents effected thereby, and the economic and/or social characteristics of the city.
- E. Approval. The application and conservation guidelines for a historic designation along with the recommendation of both the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission and the City Planning Commission shall be forwarded to City Council for approval or denial by a simple majority vote on an ordinance.

If a structure or site was proposed for designation by someone other than its owner and the owner objects to the designation, Council may approve the designation only if two-thirds of the Council favor the designation.

If a district was proposed for designation by someone other than its owner or owners, and the owner, or owners representing more than fifty percent of the land area of the proposed district, object, in writing, to the designation, Council may approve the designation only if two-thirds of the Council favor the designation.

- F. Notice of Designation. Upon Council approval of a designation, the Department of Planning and Urban Development shall notify the owner(s), the City Planning Commission, the Superintendent of Building Inspection and the Director of Law of the designation. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall notify abutting property owners and others requesting notices of designations.

The Director of Law shall cause a copy of the designation and conservation guidelines to be filed as a miscellaneous filing in the Recorder's office.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.395 Alterations, demolitions, and environmental changes.

- A. Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. No person or organization shall make an alteration, demolition, or environmental change to a historic landmark or district without first obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness. Applications for Certificates of Appropriateness shall be filed with the Superintendent of Building Inspection in the form as prescribed by the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission. The Superintendent of Building Inspection shall not issue a building permit until a Certificate of Appropriateness is issued.
- B. Recommendations. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall approve or deny an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness involving an alteration or environmental change within sixty days of the filing of the application. If an application for Certificate of Appropriateness involves demolition, the Commission shall approve or deny the application within ninety days of filing the application.

If the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission does not act on an application within the specified time period, the application for Certificate of Appropriateness shall be deemed approved.

The time period for recommendation of an application may be extended by agreement between the applicant and the Commission.

- C. Notice and Public Hearing. Copies of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness shall, within seven days after filing, be transmitted to all affected City departments and to any individual or organization requesting copies of these applications.

The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall advertise a public hearing to consider an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness in a local newspaper of general circulation and give notice of the public hearing by regular mail to abutting property owners and to any organization or individual requesting to receive notice of applications for Certificates of Appropriateness. Such notice shall be at least seven days in advance of the public hearing at which the application will be considered.

- D. Approval Guidelines. The Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall ~~approve~~ **consider granting** Certificates of Appropriateness when:
1. In the case of an alteration or environmental change, the alteration or environmental change conforms to the Federal Conservation Regulations and the rehabilitation guidelines stated in 36 C.F.R. Part 67.7, as may be amended;
 2. In the case of a demolition, when demolition is necessary because:
 - a. The historic landmark or historic district is so deteriorated that its integrity has been irretrievably lost, ~~and or~~;
 - ~~b. The structure is a secondary one that lacks historic or architectural significance or does not occupy a major portion of the historic landmark or historic district, and~~
 - c.b.** Retention of the historic landmark or district is not technically or economically feasible, ~~and or~~;
 - d.c.** The Commission after thorough investigation, determines that there is no feasible alternative to demolition.
- E. Transmittal of Decision. The written approval or denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Commission shall be forwarded to City Council and the Superintendent of Building Inspection within ten days after the decision on the Certificate of Appropriateness.
- F. Appeal. Any applicant for a Certificate of Appropriateness wishing to appeal the denial of that Certificate of Appropriateness may do so by requesting a Hearing before the City Council.

Any appeal and request for a hearing shall be made in writing to the Clerk of Council and include the name, address and telephone number of the person appealing and a brief statement of the grounds for appeal within fifteen days of Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission's Decision on the Certificate of Appropriateness.

The City Council shall hold a public hearing on the appeal within thirty days of receipt of the request for a hearing. A notice of this hearing shall be sent to the person requesting the appeal, any person notified of the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness under subsection C of this section and the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission at least seven days before the hearing.

The person appealing an Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission decision on a Certificate of Appropriateness shall have the right to appear at and address the hearing. A representative of the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission shall appear at the hearing to speak on behalf of the Commission and its decision on the Certificate of Appropriateness being appealed.

The City Council shall issue a decision, in writing, on the appeal of a Certificate of Appropriateness within fifteen days of the public hearing.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.396 Minimum maintenance.

- A. Requirement. The owner of a historic landmark or structure within a historic district shall maintain the structure to perpetuate it and to prevent its deterioration.

B. Exemptions. Nothing in this section shall regulate:

1. Ordinary maintenance or repair of property within a historic landmark or historic district; or
2. Emergency repairs to public property; or
3. Demolition, when determined necessary, under standards in Title 19 of this code, by the Superintendent of Building Inspection.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.399 Penalties and enforcement.

- A. Penalty. Any person or organization violating the provisions of §§ 31.394(A), (B), or 31.396(A) of this code is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree. Each day on which a violation continues constitutes a separate offense.
- B. Civil Action. In addition to the criminal penalties above, the Urban Design and Historic Preservation Commission may petition the Superintendent of Building Inspection and Director of Law to take action against any group or individual who violates the provisions of §§ 31.393(A) or (B), 31.395(A), or 31.396(A) of this code.

The owner of any property contiguous to or neighboring a designated historic landmark or historic district who would be damaged by a violation of these provisions may institute a suit for injunction to prevent or terminate such violation.

(Ord. 388-1997)

31.40 Urban Renewal Commission.

- A. Establishment. The Mayor is requested to appoint an Urban Renewal Commission consisting of representatives from the University of Akron, the City Planning Commission, the Law Department, the Finance Department, and the Division of Building Inspection and Regulation of the Department of Public Safety, together with the Chairman of the Health and Social Service, the Finance and the Planning Committees of Council, to comprise an official body of the municipal government for the processing of projects for an urban renewal program.
- B. Citizens' Committee. The Mayor is requested to appoint a citizens' committee consisting of a representative from industry, commerce, the University of Akron, the Akron schools, the social agencies of the community, the Ministerial Association, area development organizations, the Boards of Trade Council, organized labor, the Planning Commission, and such other members not to exceed five in number as he deems desirable.
- C. Urban Renewal Program Federal Aid. The Mayor is requested to formulate with the assistance of the committees provided for in subsections A and B of this section, an urban renewal program, seeking the assistance of the federal government, if available, in the educational, commercial, industrial, and resettlement areas of the urban renewal and rehabilitation field.

(Ord. 535-1957)

31.41 Animal Control Commission.

- A. There is established an Animal Control Commission which shall consist of five members to be appointed by the Mayor subject to approval by City Council. Said Commission shall include at least one member from

Customer Service, one member who is a licensed veterinarian, and three members shall represent the public at large.

- B. The first appointments to the Animal Control Commission shall be for two one-year terms, two two-year terms and one three-year term. Thereafter all appointments shall be for three-year terms, except that vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term.
- C. Members shall serve without compensation from the city, or from any trust, donation, or legacy to the city, for their services as such members, but this limitation shall not preclude a member or his firm from receiving compensation from the City under contract or otherwise for services rendered outside his duties as a commissioner.
- D. The Animal Control Commission shall organize and elect a chair annually and adopt such administrative procedures as are necessary to accomplish the purposes mentioned in subsection (F) of this section. City officers and the staff of City departments may consult and advise with the Commission from time to time on matters coming within the scope of this section and the Commission may likewise consult and advise with such officers.
- E. As soon as practicable after initial membership appointment, the Commission shall meet and organize. Thereafter the Commission shall meet at least six times annually. The Commission shall have the power to adopt bylaws, consistent with the provisions hereof, governing the conduct of its business and to establish standards as deemed necessary. At all times the Commission shall conform to § 31.05 of the code.
- F. It shall be the Commission's function and duty to:
 - 1. Study and review all the rules, regulations, and ordinances regarding animals;
 - 2. Offer recommendations and suggested changes for the regulation of animals;
 - 3. Hear, consider, and advise the City Government concerning citizen suggestions and complaints;
 - 4. Keep the City Government advised of study results and offer recommendations and amendments.

(Ord. 828-1991; Ord. 401-1991)

31.42 Alarm Review Board.

- A. Establishment—Composition. There is established an Alarm Review Board to hear appeals on alarm business license denials and revocations and to act in an advisory capacity to the City Government regarding police and fire emergency alarm use and regulation. Such Board shall consist of five members appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by a majority of Council. The Board shall consist of one representative each from the Police Department, Fire Department, and the professional alarm industry as well as two individuals from the public at large.
- B. Terms and Vacancies. The first appointments to the Alarm Review Board shall be three appointments for two-year terms and two appointments for one-year terms. Thereafter all appointments to the board shall be for two-year terms, except vacancies shall be filled for unexpired terms.
- C. Compensation. Members shall serve on the Alarm Review Board without compensation from the city, or from any trust, donation, or legacy to the city, for their services on the Board.
- D. Chairman—Rules and Regulations—Consultation. The Alarm Review Board shall organize and elect a chair annually and adopt rules and regulations necessary to accomplish the purposes of subsection (A) of this section and §§ 111.378 through 111.394 of this code. City officers and the staff of City departments may consult and advise with the Board from time to time on matters coming within the scope of this section and §§ 111.378 through 111.394 of this code and the board may likewise consult and advise with such officers.

(Ord. 884-1992)

(Ord. 342-2020)