

**RESOLUTION OF THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION DENYING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR  
THE DEMOLITION OF STRUCTURES WITHIN  
THE RIDGELAND/OAK PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT LOCATED AT  
203 SOUTH MARION STREET, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS**

**WHEREAS**, on May 19, 2020, 203 Focus Acquisition Company LLC ("Applicant") filed an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness seeking approval to demolish structures ("Structures") within the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District located at 203 South Marion Street ("Subject Property"); and

**WHEREAS**, on June 17, 2020, the Village of Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission ("Commission") reviewed the Applicant's application and determined it did not meet the Architectural Review Guidelines and took no action on the application per Section 7-9-13(F) of the Village of Oak Park Village Code ("Village Code"); and

**WHEREAS**, on June 19, 2020, the Applicant requested a public hearing before the Commission on its application, on August 26, 2020, a legal notice was published in *The Wednesday Journal*, a newspaper of general circulation in the Village of Oak Park ("Village") providing notice of the public hearing, and letters were mailed by regular and certified mail also on August 26, 2020 to owners of property within two hundred and fifty feet (250') of the Subject Property advising them of the application and the public hearing; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to proper notice, and by agreement of the Applicant, the Commission conducted a public hearing on the application on September 10, 2020, at which time and place a quorum of the Commission was present; and

**WHEREAS**, at the public hearing all persons testifying were sworn and provided testimony and evidence under oath, the Applicant presented evidence and testimony in favor of the application, no members of the public presented oral testimony supporting the application, two (2) members of the public presented oral testimony opposing the application, and the Commission received and reviewed an additional eighteen (18) written comments opposing the application and no written comments supporting the application; and

**WHEREAS**, at the conclusion of the public hearing the Commission considered all evidence and testimony submitted on the application, deliberated on the application and determined, by unanimous votes of those Commissioners present, that the Structures are contributing resources in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and that the application of a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish the Structures be denied;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE VILLAGE OF OAK PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION:**

**SECTION 1: Incorporation.** Each Whereas paragraph above is incorporated by reference into this Section and made a part hereof as material and operative provisions of this Resolution.

**SECTION 2: Findings of Fact.** The Commission makes the following findings of fact regarding the application:

**Subject Property and Structures**

1. The Subject Property is located at 203 South Marion Street and used to be known as 203 Wisconsin Avenue.

2. The Subject Property is located in the DT Downtown Zoning District and the DT-3 Pleasant Sub-District.

3. The purpose of the DT-3 Pleasant Sub-District is to “accommodate the pedestrian-friendly, lower-intensity mix of small floor plate retail, personal service, and entertainment uses that support the vitality of the Downtown Central,” per Section 5.1.A.3. of the Village’s Zoning Ordinance.

4. The Subject Property is in the vicinity of Mills Park, which is in the OS Open Space Zoning District.

5. The Structures, a building and a garage, were built in 1881 by James Campbell Rogers.

6. Rogers, a pioneer settler originally from New York, lived with his family in the house on the Subject Property for forty-five (45) years, until 1926.

7. Rogers was a prominent early Oak Park resident, grain merchant and a member of the Chicago Board of Trade for fifty (50) years.

8. Rogers notably gifted a Frank Lloyd Wright house, the Frank Thomas House at 210 Forest Avenue, built in 1901, to his daughter and her husband as a wedding gift.

9. While Roger’s wife, Mary Rogers, lived the last four (4) years of her life at 233 Linden Avenue, her obituary noted that “the Rogers homestead [the Subject Property] was for many years the center of social life in the village and its hospitable doors were always open to friends as well as to community interests” (Oak Leaves, September 26, 1930).

10. In 1920, the Rogers had the house on the Subject Property converted into two apartments in 1920 by E. E. Roberts.

11. The Subject Property was sold to Earl Drechsler around 1926.

12. Drechsler owned a funeral home business founded in 1880 by J. W. Senne and bought out by his father, Charles Drechsler, in 1894.

13. The original Drechsler Funeral Home was built by Charles Drechsler in 1894 at 1116 Lake Street.

14. Earl Drechsler converted the house on the Subject Property into a funeral home with the help of architect Norman D. Barfield and moved the business to the Subject Property in 1933.

15. At the opening of the new location in 1933, the Drechsler Funeral Home was the only funeral home in the Village.

16. It was noted in a 1933 Oak Leaves article that the new location could accommodate three hundred (300) guests and that the opening was attended by five hundred (500) people.

17. A later addition and alterations occurred at Drechsler's request in 1957, which were overseen by architect John Barr Todd.

#### Application

18. The Applicant attended the public hearing.

19. The Applicant proposes to demolish the Structures and replace them with a redevelopment of the Subject Property.

20. The Applicant does not propose to incorporate, save or preserve any elements of the Structures.

21. The Applicant stated that the Subject Property would be improved to a higher and better use with a redevelopment, as opposed to leaving the Structures on the Subject Property.

22. The Applicant did not present any testimony or evidence regarding the design of the proposed development.

23. The Applicant argued that the Structures have undergone a series of modifications outside of the period of significance for the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and are therefore non-contributing resources in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District, making a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition to demolish the Structures unnecessary.

24. The Applicant did not provide any compelling testimony or evidence regarding the application of the standards for determining whether a Certificate of Appropriateness should be granted to demolish the Structures.

## Testimony and Evidence

25. Other than testimony and evidence from the Applicant, no testimony or evidence was presented in support of the application.

26. Eighteen (18) written objections to the application and no written statements supporting the application were received by the Commission prior to the public hearing and accepted into evidence.

27. At the public hearing, two (2) Village residents testified in opposition to the application and no Village residents testified in support of the application.

28. Evidence at the public hearing demonstrated that the Structures are an important part of the fabric of the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District.

29. Mills Park includes a National Landmark, Pleasant Home, in close proximity to the Subject Property.

30. The Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District's nomination notes that a strength of the District is the myriad of types of structures in the District.

31. The Chair accepted the following exhibits into evidence at the public hearing:

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness application, dated May 19, 2020
- B. "203 S. Marion St. Oak Park, IL Historic Overview" by Booth Hansen, dated May 19, 2020, and an "Addendum" thereto dated August 27, 2020
- C. Staff Report, dated June 17, 2020
- D. Staff Report, dated September 14, 2020
- E. Correspondence from Applicant requesting public hearing, dated June 19, 2020
- F. Legal Notice, Notice to owners, Notice to property owners within 250 feet
- G. Photographs of the Structures
- H. Sanborn Maps of the Subject Property from 1895, 1908 and 1950
- I. Public comments received by the Village prior to the public hearing

## Comprehensive Plan

32. The Village's Comprehensive Plan's ("Comprehensive Plan") Future Land Use Plan identifies the Subject Property as being within the Neighborhood Commercial / Mixed Use land use area, which include "single-story commercial structures located along the street and multi-story mixed-use structures. These areas tend to be pedestrian-oriented, though some development includes small off-street parking areas. Uses in these areas are often oriented towards day-to-day needs for residents"

33. The Comprehensive Plan notes that the purpose of the Village's Historic Preservation Districts is to "protect historic buildings and maintain the character of historic areas in the Village" and that historic preservation is "an important tool for achieving several of the guiding principles of this Plan."

34. The Comprehensive Plan supports the preservation of the Village's historical and architectural heritage, which preservation ensures one of the Village's defining characteristics and source of pride endures.

35. In accordance with the Comprehensive Plan, in the past two (2) years the Commission has denied similar requests for certificates of appropriateness for demolition of structures in the vicinity of the Subject Property in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District, both across the street, at 224 South Marion Street, and around the corner, at 1014 and 1018 Pleasant Street.

## Architectural Review Guidelines

36. Section 7-9-12(B) of the Village Code provides that the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Commission's Architectural Review Guidelines shall be used when considering whether a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition of a contributing resource should be granted.

**SECTION 3: Conclusions.** The Commission makes the following conclusions regarding the application based on the testimony and evidence presented at the public hearing, and based on the findings of fact set forth above:

1. The architectural style and heritage of the Structures should be preserved.

2. The Structures contribute to and reinforce the character of the Village as a whole, the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and the area in the immediate vicinity of the Subject Property and Mills Park.

3. The Structures serve as an important gateway from the surrounding neighborhood into Mills Park.

4. The Structures are contributing resources within the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District.

5. Demolition of the Structures does not comply with the Village's historic preservation requirements in the Village Code.

6. Demolition of the Structures does not meet the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards and does not meet the Commission's Architectural Review Guidelines.

7. Demolition of the Structures would frustrate and thwart the policy of the Village as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan, by removing a structure which contributes to the Village's historical and architectural heritage and by negatively impacting the historic character of the historic area around the Subject Property.

8. Demolition of the Structures would disrupt the myriad of types of structures in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and other Village Historic Districts.

9. Demolition of the Structures would set a negative precedent for requests to demolish other contributing resources in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District.

10. The Structures are in good condition and have had a long useful life.

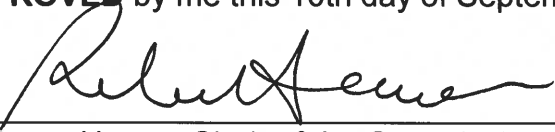
11. The Structures conform to the purposes of the DT Downtown Zoning District and the DT-3 Pleasant Sub-District as described in the Zoning Ordinance.

**SECTION 4: Denial of Application.** Pursuant to the authority vested in the Commission by the Village Code, and based on the above findings, the testimony and the evidence presented at the public hearing, by a unanimous vote of those Commissioners present, the Commission hereby finds the Structures are contributing structures in the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District and, by a unanimous vote of those Commissioners present, the Commission denies the Certificate of Appropriateness application to permit demolition of the Structures.

**SECTION 5: Severability.** If any Section, paragraph, sentence or provision of this Resolution shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the invalidity or unenforceability of such Section, paragraph or provision shall not affect any of the remaining provisions of this Resolution.

**ADOPTED** this 10th day of September, 2020, pursuant to a unanimous roll call vote of the Commission.

**APPROVED** by me this 10th day of September, 2020.

  
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Rebecca Houze, Chair of the Commission

