



## D/DRC Case

1817 Pickens Street

Landmark District

TMS: 11403-01-07

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**DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMISSION**  
**DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT**  
**HISTORIC AGENDA**  
**EVALUATION SHEET**  
Case # 1

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**ADDRESS:** 1817 Pickens Street

**APPLICANT:** Chris Peebles, owner

**TAX MAP REFERENCE:** TMS#11403-01-07

**USE OF PROPERTY:** Office

**REVIEW DISTRICT:** Landmark District

**NATURE OF REQUEST:** Request Certificate of Design Approval for exterior changes

**FINDINGS/COMMENTS:**

This is a ca. 1910 two-story, wood-frame, American Four Square residential building that is contributing to the Landmark District. The earliest map showing this house is from 1919. Earlier maps do not show this block. The Landmark District has the highest level of protection in the city, as it encompasses a high number of individual landmark buildings and is the best collection in the city of residential buildings that date from the early 1800s through the early 1900s. While larger mansions line the wider lots of the east to west streets, the north to south streets generally have smaller lots and a higher number of buildings from the late 1800s through the first decades of the twentieth century.

A feature common to this district is the chimney. As these older buildings required fireplaces for heating and sometimes cooking, the chimneys were necessary features and their placement often help identify the period of the building's construction, the interior floor plan, and the style of the building. Corbels, or a series of projecting courses of brick, were common ornamental features of chimneys and were present on the chimney at 1817 Pickens Street. True to its era and style, the chimney was not overly ornamental.

Staff received a complaint about a chimney being demolished at this site on October 14, 2013 and immediately went to the site. There was no permit for work being conducted, which was a re-shingle job for the roof. Staff spoke with the workers on site and with their boss by phone about the need for a permit and for approval from the D/DRC to remove a chimney. At the time staff visited, the chimney was removed completely from the roof plane up; the bricks were in a dumpster. Staff asked to see the bricks, which had been dropped off the roof and were broken. The mortar attached to the bricks was very sandy and flaked off easily. The bricks were oversized, but probably typical for the era.

Staff spoke with the owner, who appears to have owned this rental property since 2007, and he is applying to not have to rebuild the chimney, or in other words, is asking retroactively to remove the chimney. Please see the accompanying material from the applicant at the end of the evaluation.

**PERTINENT SECTIONS FROM CITY ORDINANCE**

***City Code of Ordinances Section 17-674(d): Criteria for review of design of structures and sites.***

*Issuance of a certificate of design approval shall be based upon the requirements set forth in the standards or design guidelines adopted by the city council for each historic district. For individual landmarks, the Governor's Mansion Protection Area, Elmwood Park Architectural Conservation District, and the Landmark District, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation as amended and listed below shall serve as guidelines until such time as design guidelines may be written and adopted by city council for each local historic district. The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects, taking into account the designation level of each district.*

*(1)a. For landmark districts, the historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

The chimney was a “historic material” and its removal does not meet this guideline.

*b. In architectural conservation districts and protection areas, the historic character of a district shall be retained and preserved through the preservation of historic materials and features which characterize the historic district.*

Not applicable.

*c. For individual landmarks and the landmark district, each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

Not applicable.

*(4) Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

Not applicable.

*(5) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

The distinctive features of the original chimney were an example of masonry craftsmanship that was a characteristic of this property. Its removal does not meet this guideline.

*(6) Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

This guideline requires the repair of deteriorated features. The applicant has provided one photograph showing some mortar loss in the top courses of the chimney. Chimneys typically deteriorate from the top down because the soft lime mortar loses its binders over the years from rain water. Mortar has a life span and must be re-applied after several decades; this is a normal maintenance process for historic masonry. The mortar on this chimney was not repaired when it showed signs of deterioration.

The severity of the deterioration of this chimney could not be assessed by staff because it was completely removed by the time staff arrived at the site. The photograph from the applicant and staff's view of the sandy mortar indicates that there were areas of deterioration at the top courses of the chimney due to mortar loss, but there does not seem to be any indication that the bricks themselves were deteriorated or that the mortar loss continued further down than the top few courses. The chimney should have been repaired with new mortar and with re-pointing for deteriorated joints to comply with this guideline.

*(7) Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

Not applicable.

*(8) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

Removing the chimney was an exterior alteration that destroyed historic material that helped characterize the property. This was the only chimney on the roof. Its detailing was consistent with an early twentieth-century chimney type and it was original to the building. It was the most ornate chimney of its neighbors facing Pickens Street. Its removal does not meet this guideline.

*(9) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

Not applicable.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Staff finds that the removal of the original chimney does not meet Section 17-674(d) of the City Code of Ordinances and recommends the request be denied.

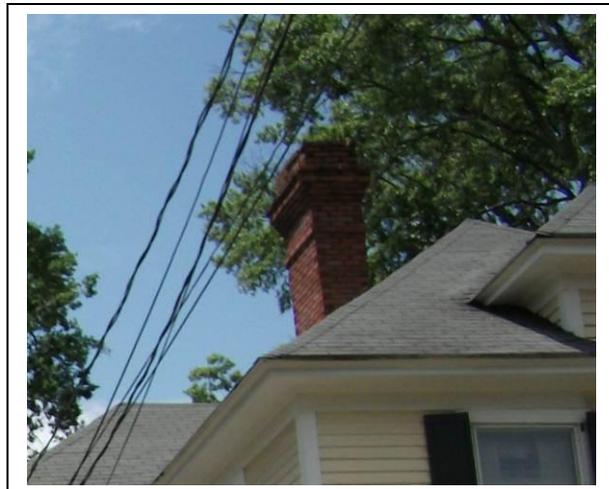
Staff recommends that to comply with Section 17-674(d) of the City Code of Ordinances that the chimney be rebuilt exactly, within a period of 120 days.

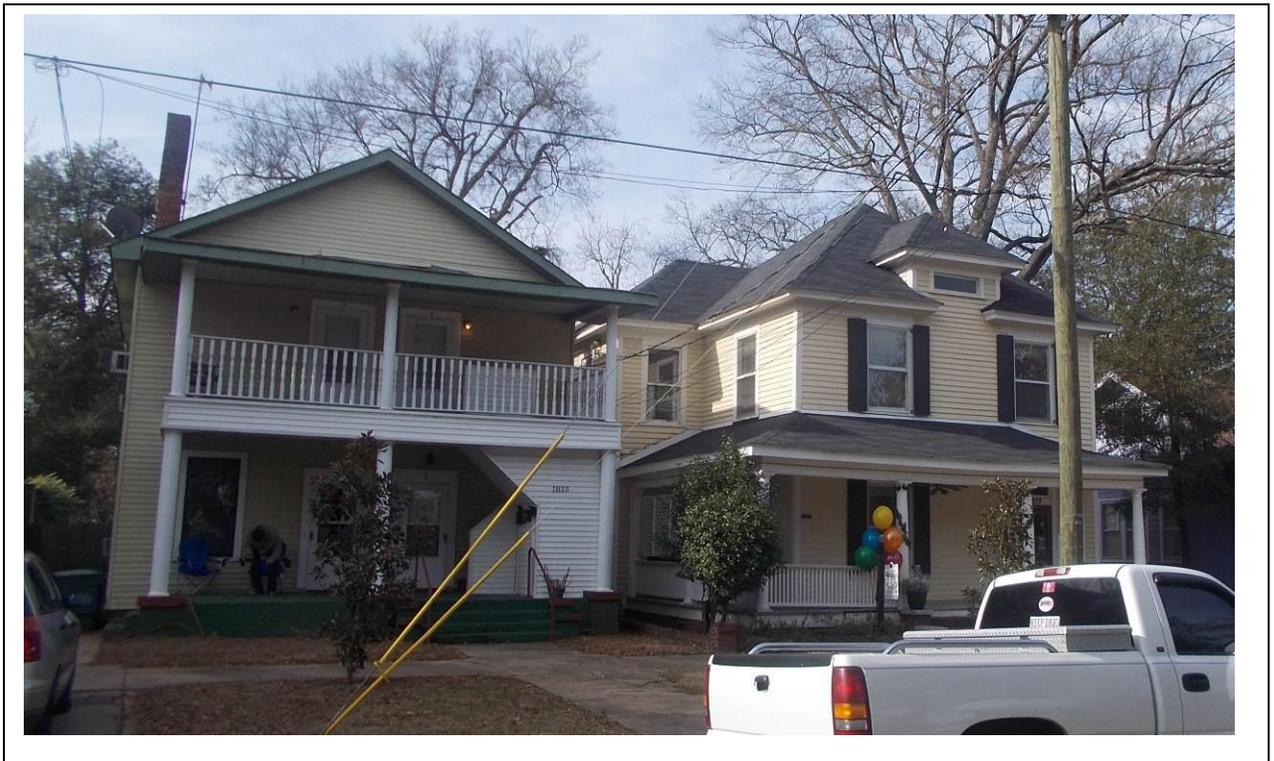


**Above:** 1992 survey photo from city files

**Right:** Google view of house

**Below:** Staff photo of chimney, 2011





Images above by staff show the work conducted on the roof, the mortar and brick dust and broken brick resulting from the drop of materials from the roof onto a concrete sidewalk, and the building as it looks today.

To: Design/ Development Review Commission  
Date: 12/10/ 2013  
Subject: 1817 Pickens Street

Upon discovering several leaks on my property at 1817 Pickens Street, I hired a contractor to repair the roof.

During repairs, they presented me a picture of the "chimney" (picture below) which you can plainly see was not active and falling apart. Since this chimney was no longer in use, nor was their any future intent to use it, we decided to "roof over" the chimney part and discard the remaining bricks.

I was unaware at the time that I needed to apply to your commission in order to do this until Staci Richey called this to my attention after the repairs were already done. I sincerely apologize for my ignorance in this instance.

I respectfully ask for the commission to allow me the permission to not have to rebuild the chimney based on the following criteria:

1. The repairs have already been made to a decaying chimney that appears to have presented a safety hazard in the condition it was in.
2. The structure is in better shape then the start of the project.
3. The "chimney" was not in any significant view that compromise the integrity of the structure. On the next page, I scanned a picture taken from the appraisal done on this property in 2007 when I bought it. It is not the best picture in the world, but it is the only picture I have of the property of the roof line before the work was done. As you can see, the chimney was barely visible, if at all.

Sincerely,

Chris Peebles





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LAW OFFICE