

02/04/2005

Aging QA building faces possible demolition

By: Russ Zabel



The Park View apartment building on West Highland Drive was built in 1927-1928, and it's definitely seen better days, according to a nomination report submitted to the city's Landmarks Preservation Board. Photo by Russ Zabel

The Park View apartment building on West Highland Drive may end up going to way of the J.C. Black mansion, which was demolished right next door last year. That's significant because both buildings across the street from Kerry Park could be considered as historic.

"We would like to tear it down," confirmed Bruce Lorig from Lorig & Associates, which represents the owners, Esther M. Oakes and her nephew and his wife. "But we recognize one of the steps you have to go through is go through the Landmarks [Preservation] Board."

In fact, a nomination to give the nearly 80-year-old building landmark status was scheduled to be submitted on Feb. 2, said Landmarks Preservation Board spokeswoman Beth Chave.

She drew a distinction between the Black mansion and the Park View, which was built in 1927-1928. The apartment building is a multi-family structure, and its demolition would require a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review, which includes information about historic qualities of a building. "So then, we would be asking for a nomination anyway."

By contrast, although historic preservationists were outraged by its destruction, the 1914-era Black mansion didn't require a SEPA review and historical assessment before demolition because it was a single-family home, Chave explained.

The Landmarks Board still has to approve the nomination for the Park View, but that's only one step in a process that begins with a neutral report about the building in question, she said.

The nomination report for the Park View was prepared by Bola Architecture & Planning, which provides more than a little Seattle history.

It notes, for instance, that the area where the apartment house is located was annexed to Seattle in 1883. The neighborhood at the time was known variously as Queen Anne Hill, Nob Hill, Queen Anne Towne and Galer Hill.

The report also points out that the Park View was deemed "significant to the city" in a 1975 survey of Queen Anne by Historic Seattle.

Still, according to the report, the building was not included in a 1979 City Historic Survey of Queen Anne, it was left off a Queen Anne Historical Society list of 13 State and National Register properties and 22 city landmarks. Furthermore, it was omitted in 1993 in "Queen Anne: Community on the Hill," a history book that included multi-family residences.

Records indicated that the original Park View owner was I.J. Trahan, who sold the building in 1933 to one F.J. Comeau. Hartley A. Oakes, husband of one of the present owners, bought the place in 1955 for \$170,000.

The nomination report says the three-story, 22-unit apartment house was built with a concrete foundation, with a wood-frame construction and brick-veneer cladding and terra cotta features.

Evidence suggests it was built in the Gothic Revival style, according to the report, which makes a point of noting that the building is in poor shape.

Advertisement

VONAGE
The Broadband Phone Company

\$24.⁹⁹
month

An **UNHEARD** of rate for
UNLIMITED calls.

get it >>

"Due to settlement and out-of-plane masonry veneer, there is inadequate drainage from many of the south-facing windows and considerable evidence of water infiltration," the report states.

The report adds that the brick veneer is presently failing "due to deteriorating masonry ties," the terra cotta has been damaged and a considerable amount of masonry has flaked away.

The building includes a single-story garage in the back with 16 stalls separated by walls, but the report mentions that only 10 of those stalls are big enough to accommodate a car.

"The Park View is not a high-quality building," said Lorig, who added that the condition poses a problem. "In order to preserve it for another 50 years, you'd have to bring it up to code."

Bringing the building up to code would include providing handicapped access, for example - an expensive and difficult project because the Park View doesn't have elevators, he said. The electrical wiring is shot, and building managers are forced to call plumbers on a continual basis, Lorig added.

He wouldn't even hazard a guess at how much a major remodel at the Park View would cost. "We're hoping not to have to worry about that."

Lorig & Associates has an option to buy the building, and the owners are interested in unloading the place, he said. "The building has been a maintenance headache for a long time for them." Lorig added. "We would put in a very high-end condominium building."

He estimated there would be 25 to 30 units, costing close to \$1 million apiece in some cases. "I think the market's good, and it's a fantastic location."

While that's probably true, Lorig still has to convince the Landmarks Preservation Board that the Park View is not worth saving. Spokeswoman Chave said property owners can testify at the nomination hearings about why they think a nomination should be denied.

"We've had this process before us before," she said, adding that's what happened to the old Seattle School District administration building, which will be replaced with an assisted living complex (see story this issue). "It's not unusual, not anymore."

In addition, Lorig could still apply for a demolition permit even if the landmark status is approved, Chave said.

He could also fight against a controls-and-incentives agreement that governs what can be done with a historic landmark, although that is difficult.

And finally, Lorig has the right to appeal a denial of a demolition permit or the controls-and-incentives agreement to a city Hearing Examiner, Chave said.

All that may be unnecessary. Just because a building is nominated doesn't make it a landmark, she noted.

Staff reporter Russ Zabel can be reached at rzabel@nmlink.com or 206-461-1309.



Bulk up that black book. match.com I am F Seeking M Zip/Postal code [] Go

©Pacific Publishing Company 2005