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STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

July 10, 2017

APPLICATION FOR DEMOLITION

92 Kilburn (Map 79 Lot 1)

Request to demolish a portion of a circa 1891 mill structure.

APPLICANT:

Alison Cesar
Sitec, Inc
449 Faunce Corner Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747

OWNER:

B. S Realty Limited Partnership
100 North Front Street
New Bedford, MA 02740



OVERVIEW OF REQUEST: The applicant is seeking demolition of a portion of a vacant mill building to accommodate parking for a new tenant and to allow for further investment and redevelopment of the existing portions of the mill site.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The mill structure, which is part of Mill Building #2 of the former Grinnell Manufacturing Company, is divided into two sections: a three story brick “picker house” and a one story “drawing room”. An enclosed bridge structure connects the Picker House to Mill Building #1. In the past, the buildings have been adapted for new uses and the original arch windows have been replaced with aluminum windows, or filled with concrete block. New building penetrations have occurred to allow for entry and egress. The buildings are currently vacant.





92 Kilburn Street – Map: 79, Lot: 1 - Aerial View looking north

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: The provisions of the Demolition Delay Ordinance shall apply only to any building or structure that, in whole or in part, was built seventy-five (75) or more years prior to the date of the application for the demolition permit, and is:

- A building or structure listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or on the State Register of Historic Places;
- A building or structure importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, economic, political or social history of the city, or;
- A building or structure which is historically or architecturally significant in terms of period style, method of building construction or association with a significant architect or builder either by itself or as a part of a group of buildings, or;
- A building or structure located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of a federal, state or local historic district boundary.

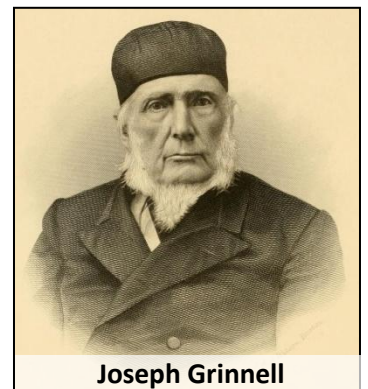
FOR BOARD MEMBER CONSIDERATION:

Historical Context

New Bedford’s legacy of fine textile production began in 1847 with the establishment of Wamsutta Mills, financially backed and promoted by prominent New Bedford citizen, Joseph Grinnell. Wamsutta’s success and the gradual decline of whaling spurred the development of additional cotton textile mills, beginning with the Potomska Mill in 1871 and the Grinnell Mill in 1881.

Joseph Grinnell

Joseph Grinnell was one of the most successful and prominent citizens in New Bedford by the mid 19th century. Born in 1788 into a whaling family, he diversified from whaling into other business interests and became the first president of the First National Bank, Director and President of the New Bedford Rail Road Company, and served as a U.S. Congressman from 1843 to 1851. As one of the initial investors into New Bedford’s foray into the manufacturing of fine cotton, he served as President of the Wamsutta Mills until his death in 1885.



Joseph Grinnell

Grinnell Manufacturing Company

Established in 1881 with the construction of Mill #1, and located just northeast of the Wamsutta Mill; the Grinnell Mill was named to honor Joseph Grinnell. Its first President was Edward Kilburn who also had been affiliated with both the Wamsutta and Potomska Mills. A manufacturer of fine cotton goods, its success prompted the construction of Mill #2 in 1891, providing over 1800 looms and 800 employees. Like many mills, the Kilburn constructed and provided nearby blocks of housing for its mill hands. Grinnell Manufacturing ceased operations in 1931.

Adaptive Reuse

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, New Bedford's vacant former textile mills provided convenient real estate investment opportunities for small businesses, light manufacturing, as well as conversion to professional office spaces. The southern portion of Grinnell Mill #2 was sold to adjacent Revere Copper in 1937 and the other parts of the mill complex adapted for new uses. With over 300,000 square feet of space, the mill currently houses a variety of professional office spaces and retail businesses, such as the Acushnet River Antique Center.

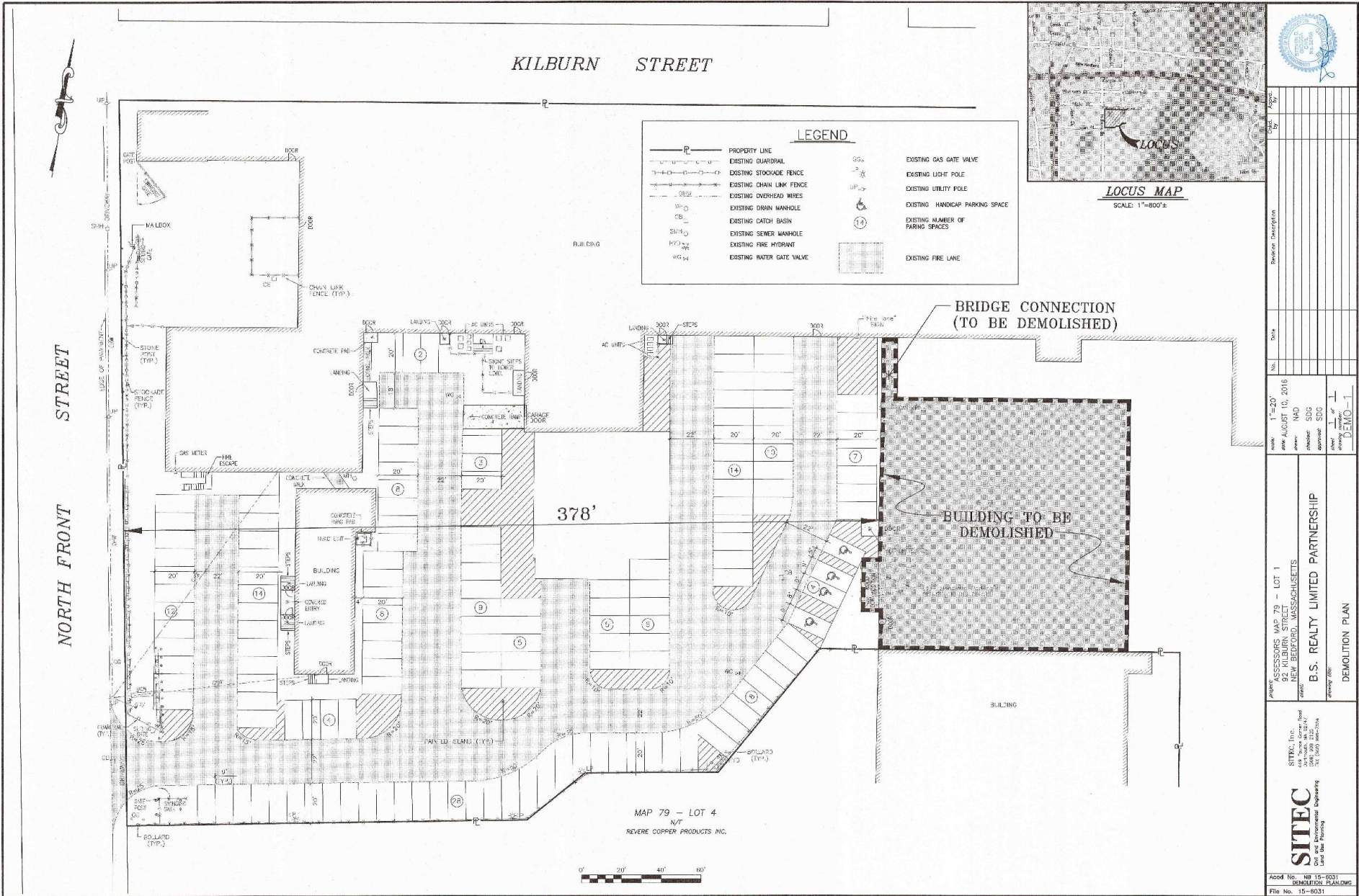
STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The property's association with New Bedford's early cotton textile industry provides historical significance to the property as a whole; however the portion of the mill seeking demolition no longer retains architectural significance due to its severe alterations. The remaining "picker house" and "drawing room" are a small section of Mill #2, the remaining portion is abandoned and under the ownership of Revere Copper.

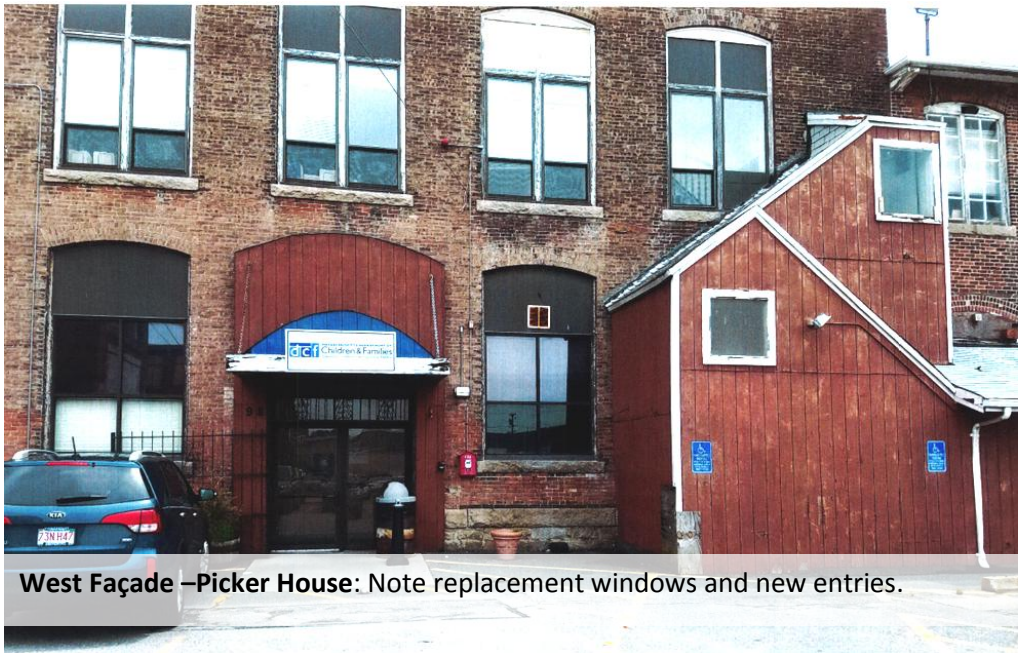
With the growth of the city's economic base, combined with the lack of buildable land, the NBHC has seen an uptick in the requests for selective demolitions within existing industrial mill complexes. According to the city's Master Plan, *"There is very little buildable land (219 acres); so much of the future development activity in New Bedford is likely to occur on previously developed land and infill properties. Therefore, land use policies should focus on previously developed areas and infill, while preserving our existing open land."*

The current owner has owned the property since 1985 and has continuously updated and adapted the structures to meet building codes and attract tenants. In 2015, the applicant sought and was granted a demolition permit for the mill's boiler house and chimney stack and has recently constructed a new addition on the south side of Mill #1 to house an elevator and second means of egress in order to accommodate a new medical office tenant. The current request to demolish a portion of Mill #2 will provide land for tenant parking, which is a city code requirement. (see parking plan below)

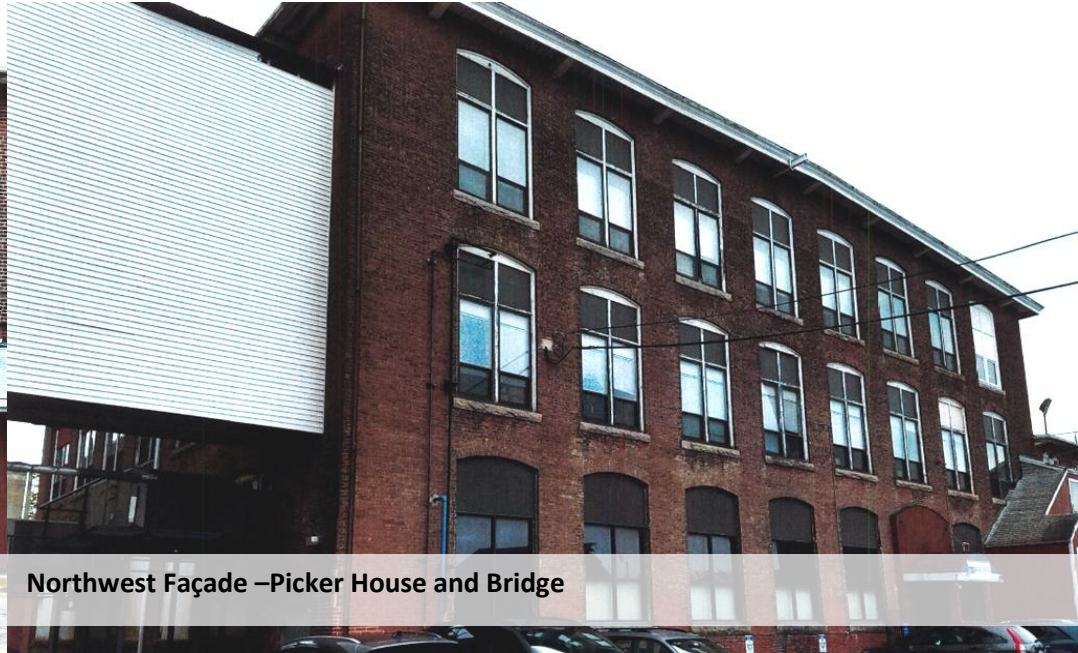
The selective demolition of mill structures, particularly those which no longer retain significance, should be considered as a means to preserving those portions of a mill complex which can be positively adapted for new uses. For these stated reasons, Staff recommends that the structure(s) not be preferably preserved.



DEMOLITION PLAN



West Façade –Picker House: Note replacement windows and new entries.



Northwest Façade –Picker House and Bridge



Bridge from Mill# 1 to Mill #2



East Façade –Drawing Room: Note filled windows with concrete block.