LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING STAFF REPORT

for October 17, 2013 HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING

PROJECT: Special Permit #13048 for Historic Preservation to reduce parking requirement for a sorority in the Little-Atwood House.

PROPOSAL: A Special Permit for Historic Preservation (§27.63.400) to reduce the parking requirement of a sorority at Little-Atwood House to seven stalls.

LOCATION: 740 South 17th Street

LAND AREA: 14,200 square feet, more or less

EXISTING ZONING: R-7 Residential District with Landmark designation

WAIVER/MODIFICATION REQUEST: To accept a site plan showing four surface stalls plus three stalls in the garage and permit a "banner" type sign.

CONCLUSION: Approving the Special Permit will allow for a re-use of the historic site with alternative parking arrangements.

RECOMMENDATION:	Conditional Approval of Special Permit

GENERAL INFORMATION:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Lots 5 & 6, Block 2, Sawyer's Addition, in the NW 1/4 of Section 25, Township 10 North, Range 6 East, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

EXISTING LAND USE: Main house under renovation to convert from Bed and Breakfast Inn to a sorority, plus an apartment in the carriage house.

SURROUNDING LAND USE AND ZONING:

North, West:	Multi-family residential	R-7
East:	Single family and multi-family residential	R-7
South:	Church	R-7

HISTORY:

ca. 1893	Construction of property for Frank Little.
1980	Included as a contributing property in the "Mount Emerald & Capitol Addition Historic District" on the National Register of Historic Places.
1983	Designated as a Lincoln Landmark.
1984	Landmark Special Permit #1057 approved for office use.
1995	Landmark Special Permit #1552 approved for bed & breakfast use.
2013	Purchased by current owner.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SPECIFICATIONS:

The community's distinctive character and desirable quality of life for current residents and for future generations should be supported by exercising stewardship of historic resources throughout the county, while maximizing benefits of past investments in public infrastructure and private property. The Plan encourages the continued use and maintenance of historic resources, including properties not formally designated as landmarks. (p. 4.6)

City and County governmental policies should provide for the protection and enhancement of historic resources. (p. 4.9)

Seek incentives and regulatory support to maintain, rehabilitate, and minimize energy utilization of existing buildings in order to make it more feasible to rehabilitate and continue to use older buildings. (p. 4.9)

UTILITIES: The site is served by all public utilities.

PUBLIC SERVICE: The property is in the Lincoln Public School District (Lancaster District 001) and has all City of Lincoln services.

AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS: The Little-Atwood House is the earliest extant residential example of the Neo-Classic Revival style in Lincoln, predating other houses of the style by a decade. It is unusually ornate and well-preserved on the interior and exterior.

ALTERATIVE USES: Single family, duplex, sororities, fraternities, and multi-family residences are among permitted uses in the R-7 district.

ASSOCIATED REQUESTS: None.

ANALYSIS:

1. The property consists of two buildings; the house and carriage house. The house has been used as a residence, offices, and bed & breakfast inn, the latter two uses by special permits. Sororities are a permitted use in this R-7 district. The carriage house consists of an apartment over the garage.

2. In addition to being listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the site was designated as a local landmark under the City's preservation provisions which provides the protection of Historic Preservation Commission review of proposed alterations, as well as eligibility to request a Special Permit to relax zoning standards that normally would apply.

3. The applicant requests to reduce the required parking for a sorority, which in the R-7 district calls for 12 stalls for 15 residents, on site or within 600 feet. The property contains 4 stalls west of the garage and 3 within the garage.

4. The area surrounding Little-Atwood House is densely developed with residences, except for the block to the south, 3/4 of which is occupied by First Presbyterian Church. The sorority has arranged with the church for non-concurrent use of 6 parking stalls in a lot owned by the church at the southwest corner of 17th & G Streets. The agreement allows the sorority members use of the stalls except for Sunday mornings, when they are available for church members. This arrangement does not satisfy the parking requirement of the R-7 district, but may be permitted by a special permit for historic preservation.

5. The applicant originally requested (in the letter of application and site plan) to remove an outdoor fireplace from the northwest corner of the property to create another parking stall. This stall would be located in the front yard, which is ordinarily prohibited and it not within the authority of Planning Commission for final action. (Only City Council may adjust yards and height requirements.) The applicant has withdrawn this request.

6. The applicants also request permission to install sorority signs/logos. Per the Section 27.69.160, for residential uses, one sign per special permit of 20 square feet is allowed. Fraternities and sororities are permitted a wall sign of 20 square feet, when they are within a ½ mile of an educational institution. The sorority is within a half mile of Kaplan University. The banner requested appears to be less than 20 square feet. A banner is considered a temporary sign, but it appears the request is for a permanent sign that appears to look like a banner.

7. Permission to install sorority insignia should be cited within the special permit, with final design subject to the Certificate of Appropriateness process of Historic Preservation Commission. The sign should be 20 square feet or less and could be

a wall sign or some type of permanent sign with the banner appearance as shown in Exhibit A.

8. Other aspects of the sorority project reflected in the application include construction of a fire escape on the north, side elevation and removal of two damaged cedar trees from the south yard. The fire escape is located and designed for minimal impact to the interior and exterior would be reversible. Removal of the cedar trees would enhance the appearance of the yard. and

9. A Special Permit for Historic Preservation under LMC §27.63.400 is to be evaluated under the following six criteria:

The significance of the historic structure or site and the degree of variation sought from the permitted uses of the district:

The Little-Atwood House is probably the earliest house in Lincoln to reflect the stylistic influence of the Chicago World's Fair of 1894. It is listed on the National Register within the Mount Emerald District and is a locally designated Lincoln Landmark.

The variation sought by this special permit is not of use - sororities are permitted by right in the R-7 district - but rather of how parking is provided. Non-concurrent use of parking spaces conserves land. The degree of overlap of the sorority and church uses - one morning per week - is relatively minor.

The extent to which economic factors necessitate the change in use:

The Little-Atwood House has been on the market for several years as a bed & breakfast inn. The sorority use is permitted in the district, but the site does not offer space for required parking without ruining its historical residential character. Leasing or purchasing non-concurrent off-site parking has been difficult in this densely developed area.

The extent of proposed exterior change to the structure or site:

The proposal would maintain the historic buildings and site, with future changes subject to continued oversight by Historic Preservation Commission. The requested removal of two aged cedars would improve the setting. The fire escape is located and designed to minimize impact to the building and primary street facades of the house and would be reversible. Sororities and fraternities typically have insignia or logos displayed on the building or site and the Certificate of Appropriateness process of the HPC can oversee the compatibility of this feature.

The impact on the surrounding area:

The proposal provides a near-equivalent amount of parking to the district requirement, while better utilizing available stalls within the immediate area. The sorority appears to be benefitting the area by continuing the high degree of maintenance provided by the previous B&B owner/occupants.

The compatibility of the proposed use to the structure or site and the surrounding area:

The Little-Atwood House has accommodated a range of uses in its century-plus history. The sorority will provide a heightened degree of fire-protection to the structure and its occupants and the parking proposal minimizes changes to the site.

The manner in which the public will be benefitted by such proposed use:

The proposal maintains an active use in one of the architecturally finest 19th century residential properties in Lincoln.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

This special permit approves the historic preservation use of the Little-Atwood House as a sorority of fifteen residents with seven on-site parking stalls, and one sign of up to 20 square feet, subject to the approved site plan and the following conditions:

Site Specific Conditions:

1. Architectural details for alterations to existing buildings and any future alterations to the proposed site plan must be submitted and approved by the Historic Preservation Commission.

Standard Conditions:

2. The following conditions are applicable to all requests:

    2.1 Before occupying the improvement all development and construction shall substantially comply with the approved plans.

    2.2 All privately-owned improvements shall be permanently maintained by the owner.

    2.3 The site plan accompanying this permit shall be the basis for all interpretations of setbacks, yards, locations of buildings, and similar matters.

    2.4 The terms, conditions, and requirements of this resolution shall run with the land and be binding upon the Permittee, its successors and assigns.

2.5 The applicant shall sign and return the letter of acceptance to the City Clerk. This step should be completed within 60 days following the approval of the special permit. The City Clerk shall file a copy of the resolution approving the special permit and the letter of acceptance with the Register of Deeds, filling fees therefore to be paid in advance by the applicant. Building permits will not be issued unless the letter of acceptance has been filed.

Prepared by:

Ed Zimmer, 441-6360, ezimmer@lincoln.ne.gov
Historic Preservation Planner

DATE: October 11, 2013

APPLICANT: Brian Woodbury
Atwood Investments LLC
2015 Burnham St.
Lincoln, NE 68502

OWNER: same as application

CONTACT: Trevor Hull
Erickson Sullivan Architects
209 South 9th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
(402) 475-1787
trevor@ericksonsullivan.net

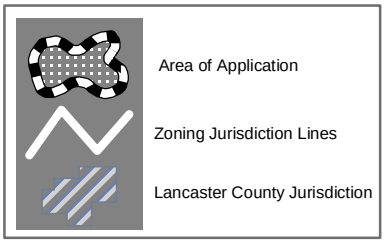
2010 aerial

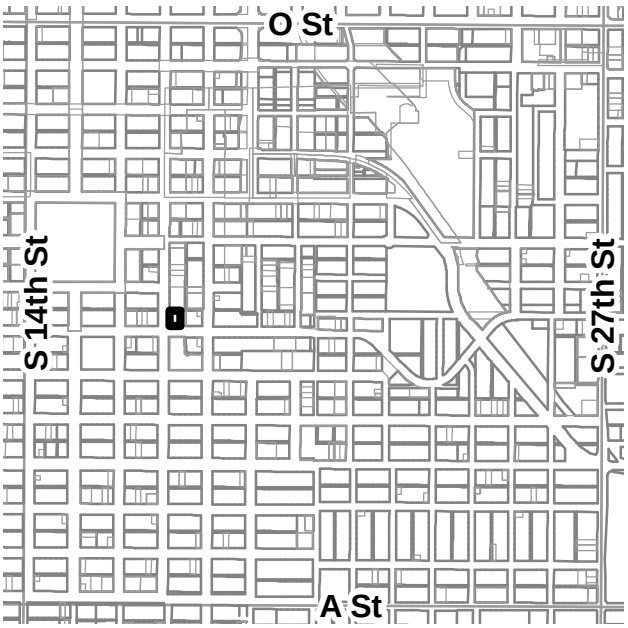
Special Permit #: SP13048
Atwood House
740 S 17th Street

Zoning:

R-1 to R-8	Residential District
AG	Agricultural District
AGR	Agricultural Residential District
O-1	Office District
O-2	Suburban Office District
O-3	Office Park District
R-T	Residential Transition District
B-1	Local Business District
B-2	Planned Neighborhood Business District
B-3	Commercial District
B-4	Lincoln Center Business District
B-5	Planned Regional Business District
H-1	Interstate Commercial District
H-2	Highway Business District
H-3	Highway Commercial District
H-4	General Commercial District
I-1	Industrial District
I-2	Industrial Park District
I-3	Employment Center District
P	Public Use District

One Square Mile:
Sec.25 T10N R06E





File: M:\plan\gis\PlannerPacket\MXD\Agendadrawings.mxd (SP13048)

September 30, 2013

City Planning Department
555 South 10th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

ERICKSON ■ ARCHITECTS ■ SULLIVAN

RE: Atwood House – Special Permit

On behalf of Atwood Investments and Bryan Woodbury, I am requesting a Special Permit be granted to the property listed on the attached Application for a Historic Preservation Purposes.

The Owner of the property is in the process of converting the building into a Sorority House, to house approximately 15 people. The attached floor plans show the existing and proposed new changes to the building in order to meet exiting and fire codes for this type of use. In addition to these changes, the Owner is requesting that several changes take place to the exterior of the building.

Specifically, the changes to the property we are requesting are as follows:

1. We are requesting a waiver be granted for the number of parking stalls required for this type of property. As shown on the site plan, there is not enough room on the property nor is there property adjacent to allow for the required parking for a Sorority.
2. We are proposing a new exterior stair be added to the north side of the building, in order to provide a second exit from the second floor. A second exit is required by the Fire Marshal, and after considering extending a stair to first floor, we are proposing what we believe to be the less intrusive solution. The North façade of the building is not the primary façade – it faces the driveway and garage, and is not in the view of passing traffic. The stair would be most likely constructed of a simple wood frame structure and railings, and painted white to match the building. It would be held back from the west façade of the building to minimize the impact to the more historic west and south facades. (See Exhibit A)
3. In the future, the Sorority may desire signage on the front of the building. If so, we are proposing a banner be hung on the west façade above the entry doors, as shown in the attached rendering. (Exhibit A)
4. The Owner would like to remove the existing exterior brick fireplace at the northwest corner of the property, to allow for more parking as shown on the attached site plan. (See Photo, Exhibit B)
5. The Owner would like to remove two overgrown cedar trees from the south side of the property, thereby improving views to the façade. The over story deciduous trees would remain. (See Photo, Exhibit C)

209 South 9th Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
info@ericksonsullivan.net
402.475.1787 Tel.
402.475.1800 Fax

Overall, the Owner is concerned with the exterior appearance of the building and preserving the Historic nature of the facades of the building.

Please call if you have any questions.

Thank you,

Trevor L. Hull, AIA

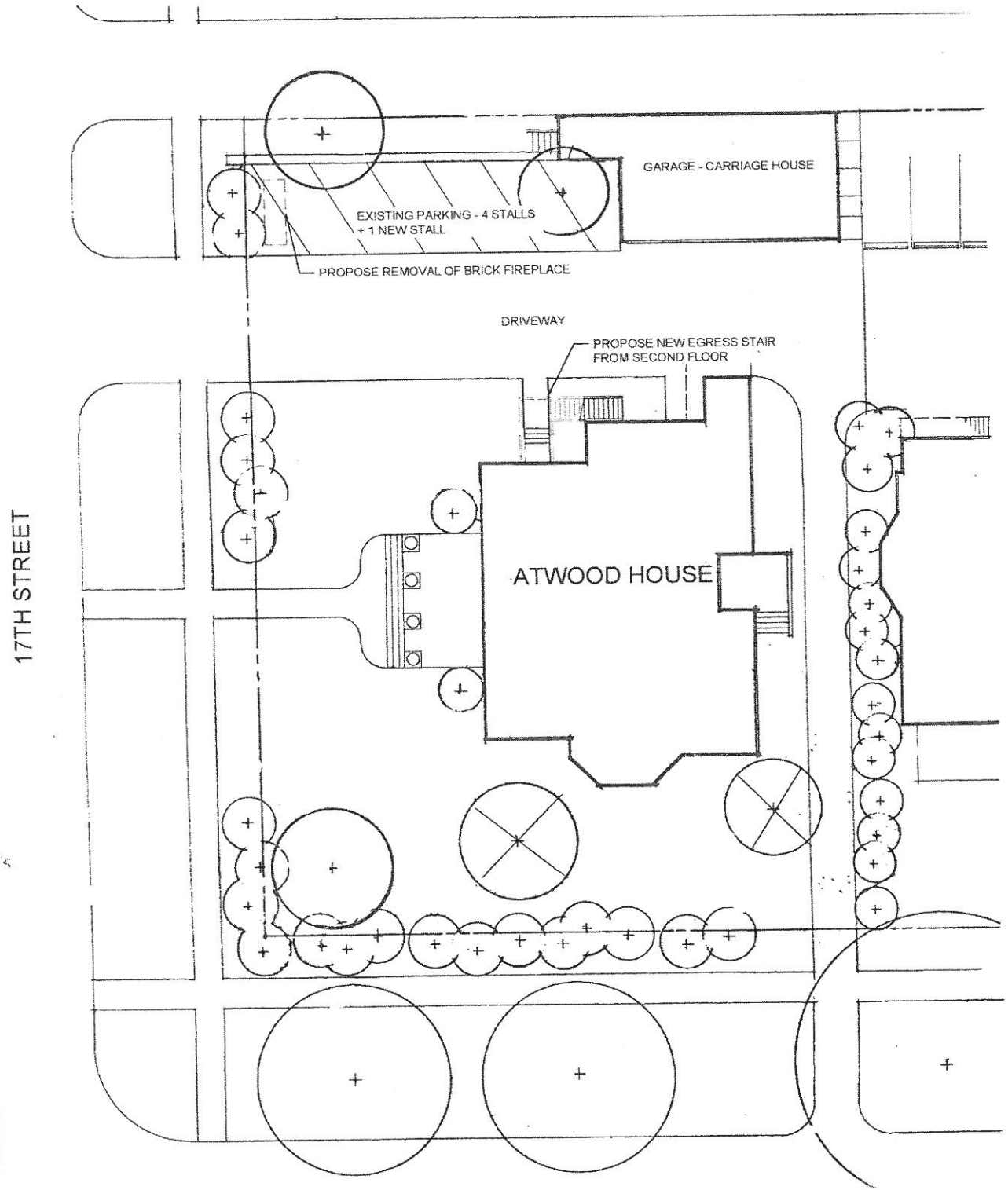

GARAGE - CARRIAGE HOUSE
EXISTING PARKING - 4 STALLS
+ 1 NEW STALL
PROPOSE REMOVAL OF BRICK FIREPLACE
DRIVEWAY
PROPOSE NEW EGRESS STAIR
FROM SECOND FLOOR
ATWOOD HOUSE
17TH STREET

Exhibit 'A'

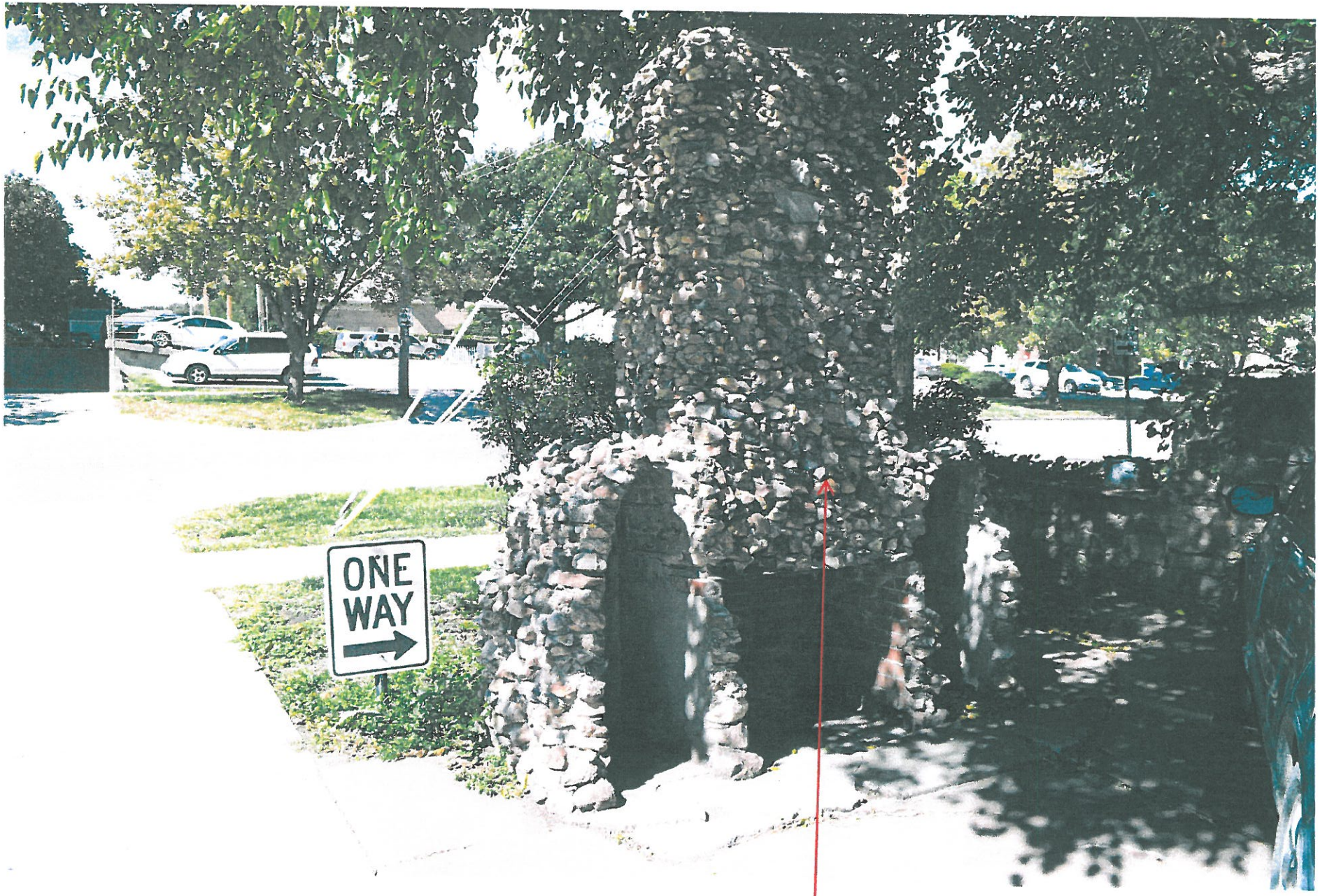


Exhibit 'B'

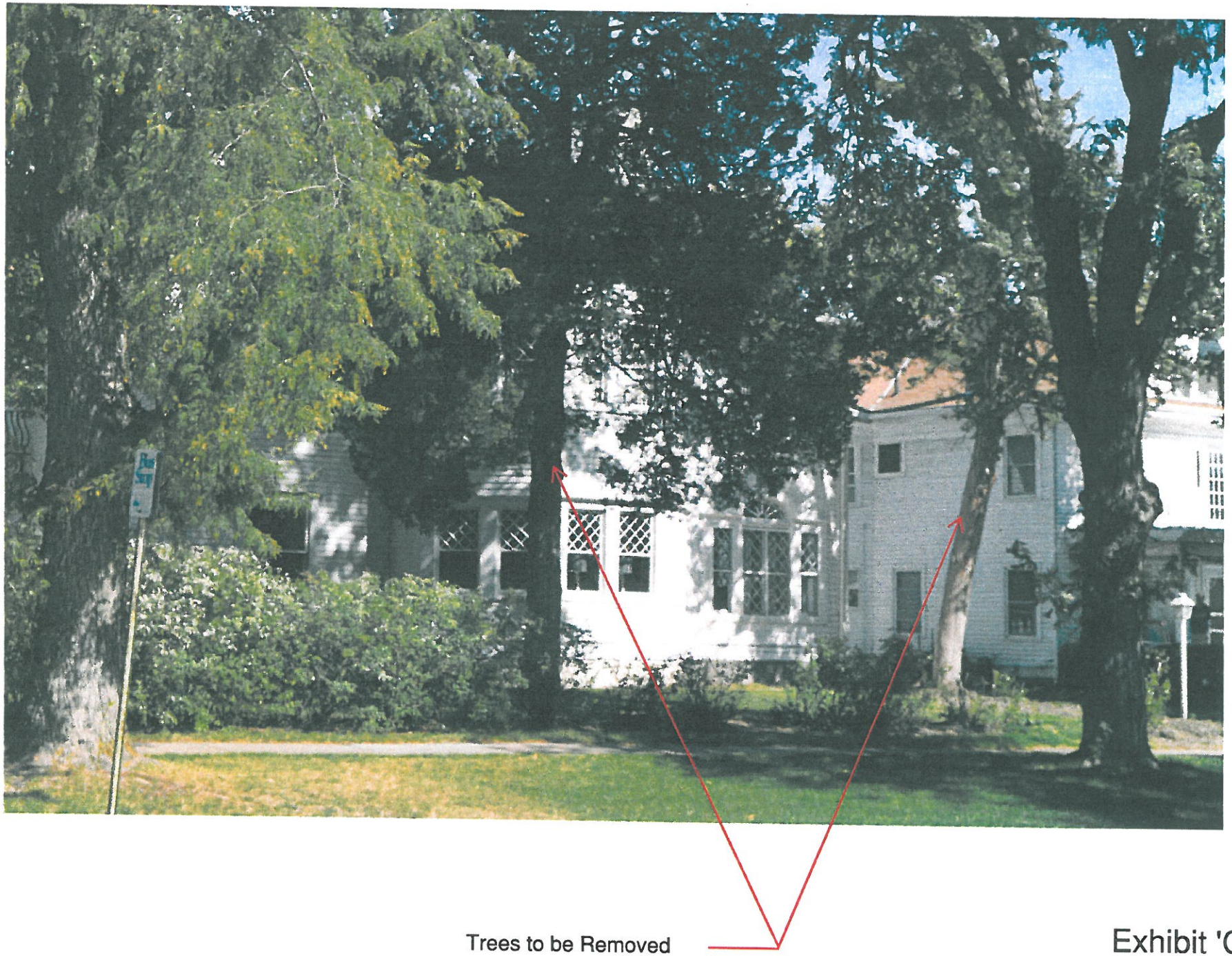


Exhibit 'C'