



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

DATE: May 29, 2013
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Timothy Frye, Preservation Coordinator, (415) 575-6822
RE: Landmark No. 250 – Shipwright’s Cottage at 900 Innes Avenue

On May 14, 2013 the Department approved a building permit application for roof repair and replacement at 900 Innes. Christopher Yerke also provided an assessment of the property’s condition in a report based on our April 9, 2013 site visit. The Planning Department (Department) will brief the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) on the assessment and any other progress to date.

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RESTORATION WORKSHOP



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Bayview Historical Society
C/O Dan Dodt

RE: 900 Innes, assessment of conditions

Hello Dan,

Pursuant to my inspection of the house at 900 Innes on 4/09/13, I offer the following thoughts on the best way to proceed with preservation of the property. Replacing the roof is obviously of major concern for the long term preservation of the property. However, as we are now past the bulk of the rainy season, and experiencing an unusually dry year, I feel that there are some safety concerns that should be thoroughly assessed before undertaking roof work.

The building shows a number of structural deficiencies. Some of them are due to age, but many of them are inherent in the original manner of construction, and the building is in need of an engineering assessment to determine the extent of remedial work necessary to make the structure sound enough to place work crews and materials safely on the roof. Here is a brief list of deficiencies noted:

- The concrete foundation, which appears to be a later addition, is severely cracked and collapsing inward at the front right corner of the house. Furthermore, the normal relationship of sill plate to foundation is non-existent. This foundation was poured underneath the existing framing, and all the framing is sub-standard. In some places, the concrete does not reach the framing at all. It was not professionally done.
- The method of framing the main floor needs to be explored. The walls are thinner than they should be, and in the few places where the structure is visible, there seems to be little more than lap siding run horizontally over vertical sub sheathing planks, without the benefit of any framing. Obviously there must be some wall framing present in the form of periodic posts to support the roof framing, but these were not obvious. I saw very little that would provide credible shear strength, and the whole building is listing notably. This is my biggest cause for concern about putting a roofing crew on the structure.
- The brick, kitchen chimney is supported by a steel plate over substandard framing above the basement
- The roof framing seemed substantial enough, but is covered by compromised wooden shingles over the original skip sheathing. The lack of a reliable shear plane in either the

Christopher Yerke, Proprietor
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roof or the walls makes collapse a distinct possibility if overloaded. I was unable to inspect the soundness of the roof framing. It would appear that the roof has been in a failed state for a long time, so the possibility of rot in the framing members seems reasonable.

Access throughout the building is hampered by debris and junk scattered throughout the interior. I feel that the best way to proceed to assess the property, in order, is as follows:

1. Hire a licensed, insured demolition and hauling company to clean out the interior of the building and remove any hazards to access, and perform selective demolition necessary to reveal critical portions of the structure for further inspection. This process should be directed by a licensed contractor experienced with historic buildings.
2. Tarp the roof to temporarily seal out the elements.
3. Bring in a structural engineer to review the building's deficiencies and report upon necessary upgrades, as well as any temporary shoring measures required to make the building safe for roofing work.
4. Make a thorough, initial cost assessment of the work required to restore the building with a view to probable resources that can be brought to bear (financially, politically, etc.). Obviously it is desirable to save the building, but the larger question is whether it is feasible to do so.
5. Form a rehabilitation plan which determines a critical path through the restoration process. At this point, it might be desirable to bring in a preservation architect to balance the issues of historic fidelity with the necessity of structural upgrades and any possible adaptive reuse of the site. Alternatively, the structure could be shored up, sealed and reroofed to halt further deterioration until such time as a thorough restoration can be undertaken.

At the very least the building needs a new foundation, structural retrofitting, a new roof, complete plumbing and electrical upgrades, as well as thorough pest and (probably) mold remediation. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Christopher Yerke

S.F. sees bayfront site as possible park



Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Equipment and supplies are seen on the property of 900 Innes Street in San Francisco, Calif.

By John Wildermuth

May 29, 2013

A ramshackle 138-year-old house sitting just above the waters of India Basin could become part of a landmark addition to San Francisco's park system.

The Shipwright's Cottage at 900 Innes Ave., one of the few remaining icons of the city's almost-forgotten era of wooden boatbuilding, is on the market, and the city's Recreation and Park Department wants to buy the site and the surrounding 3 acres, half of which sits under the quiet waters of the cove.

"This parcel is the last privately owned piece of land on the waterfront," said Phil Ginsburg, the department's director. "It's been on our acquisition list for some time."

Beyond the historical value of the land, it also will bridge one of the last remaining gaps for the city's proposed Blue Greenway, an ambitious effort to build a bike path through a linked network of parks, public open space and recreation areas along 13 miles of waterfront from AT&T Park in China Basin all the way south to the city limits past Candlestick Park.

"If this isn't acquired, we'd have to move the Greenway to Innes (Avenue), which will be a major (traffic) artery once the Hunters Point Shipyard project is built," said Matt O'Grady, executive director of the San Francisco Parks Alliance, a nonprofit group that works on projects like the Blue Greenway. "But now there's a willing seller, so we hope this can be a congenial effort." No one denies the land is an important part of San Francisco's maritime history. From the 1860s through the late 1980s, it was an active boatyard, building many of the shallow draft hay scow schooners that carried bulk cargo around the bay and delta waterways all the way into the 1930s.

San Francisco Chronicle

The hay scow Alma, now moored at the Hyde Street Pier on Fisherman's Wharf, was probably built there, as was Jack London's 74-foot schooner, Snark.

'Live-work facility'

"The Shipwright's Cottage was the city's original live-work facility," said Jill Fox of the India Basin Neighborhood Association, which has worked for years to preserve the property. "The family that ran the boatyard lived there when this was the center of the city's wooden boatbuilding industry."

But economics can trump history, leading preservationists and developers to battle over the future of the property for much of a decade. After San Francisco developer Joe Cassidy bought the property at a foreclosure sale in 2003, he planned to demolish the cottage and build condominiums, retail space and a kayak center.



Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Rosemary Cameron (left) and Matt O'Grady of the S.F. Parks Alliance and Jill Fox of the local neighborhood association visit the site.

Waterfront preservationists persuaded the Board of Supervisors to list the Shipwright's Cottage as a city landmark in 2005. A couple of years later, a frustrated Cassidy donated the property to the Tenderloin Housing Clinic.

"We tried to develop the property, too, but back then there wasn't anything being built in San Francisco," said Randy Shaw, executive director of the clinic, a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of services for homeless adults. "A condo project would have brought in much more money, which we need to support our

activities."

But in December, the clinic put a \$3 million price tag on the property and started talks with the city.

"It always made sense to sell to the city, but the city never had any money," Shaw said. "Let's hope it's a happy ending."

The city now has the money, thanks to two recent parks bonds that earmarked cash for open-space acquisition. But there are still plenty of potential roadblocks.

Because the property was a boatbuilding yard for more than a century and is less than a mile from the long-closed Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, the federal Environmental Protection Agency is doing a survey for toxic materials. Then a fair market value must be set for the property, which is the upper limit the city can pay.

San Francisco Chronicle



Lea Suzuki, The Chronicle

Jill Fox (l to r) of the India Basin Neighborhood Association; Rosemary Cameron, board president of the San Francisco Parks Alliance; and Matt O'Grady, executive director of the San Francisco Parks Alliance stand in front of the Shipwright's Cottage at 900 Innes Street on Thursday, May 23, 2013 in San Francisco, Calif.

Not looking parklike

On a recent weekday, the property looked anything but parklike. Blocked from the street by a chain-link fence topped with rusty barbed wire, the cottage itself was boarded, battered and in desperate need of basic upkeep. The unkept land around was jammed with weeds and blowing trash, with long lengths of metal pipes strewn across the property.

An old semitrailer blocked access to a public hiking trail, and construction

equipment was parked on much of the property.

But from a hill looking down on the cove, one of the few that weren't filled in years ago to provide more room for a land-starved city, the picture changed. A couple of elderly docks reach out into the quiet waters, alongside old wooden pilings. Geese honk as they drop onto the water. Across the inlet, the well-trimmed greenery of the city's adjoining India Basin Park gives a hint of what the old boatbuilding yard could become.

Another Crissy Field?

When combined with neighboring parkland, "it really has the potential to be the Crissy Field of the southeast," Ginsburg said.

That can't happen soon enough for Fox and her neighborhood group.

"I've been advocating for the city to acquire this since 1999, when my son was in preschool," Fox said. "Now he's just finished his first year of college and I want to finally see this done."

John Wildermuth is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: jwildermuth@sfchronicle.com