

▶ **FILE #:** 1-F-16-RZ **AGENDA ITEM #:** 32
 POSTPONEMENT(S): 1/14/2016, 2/11/2016 **AGENDA DATE:** 4/14/2016
 ▶ **APPLICANT:** CITY OF KNOXVILLE MAYOR MADELINE ROGERO
 OWNER(S): JED CORPORATION

TAX ID NUMBER: 95 I A PT OF 004 AND TO CENTERLINE OF ADJACENT PUBLIC R-O-W (MAP ON FILE) [View map on KGIS](#)
 JURISDICTION: City Council District 6
 STREET ADDRESS: 301 State St
 ▶ **LOCATION:** West side State St., south side W. Summit Hill Dr.
 ▶ **APPX. SIZE OF TRACT:** 0.4 acres
 SECTOR PLAN: Central City
 GROWTH POLICY PLAN: Urban Growth Area (Inside City Limits)
 ACCESSIBILITY: Access is via State St., a local, one-way north street with 24' of pavement width within 45' of right-of-way.
 UTILITIES: Water Source: Knoxville Utilities Board
 Sewer Source: Knoxville Utilities Board
 WATERSHED: First Creek

▶ **PRESENT ZONING:** C-2 (Central Business District) / D-1 (Downtown Design Overlay)
 ▶ **ZONING REQUESTED:** C-2 (Central Business District) / H-1 (Historic Overlay) and Design Guidelines
 ▶ **EXISTING LAND USE:** Vacant -former clothing factory
 ▶ **PROPOSED USE:** To be determined
 EXTENSION OF ZONE: Not an extension of H-1 overlay
 HISTORY OF ZONING: None noted
 SURROUNDING LAND USE AND ZONING: North: C-2/D-1 - Public alley/office
 South: C-2/D-1 - Parking
 East: C-2/D-1 - Multi-family residential
 West: C-2/D-1 - Parking/office
 NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT: Located within the Downtown Design Overlay and the Gay Street National Register Historic District. Surrounded by predominately office uses but with Marble Alley MF development to the east across State Street.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

▶ **RECOMMEND that City Council APPROVE C-2 (Central Business) / H-1 (Historic Overlay) zoning with the attached design guidelines.**

The 1898 Cal Johnson Building is significant because it is the only existing commercial/industrial building within the central business district constructed by a former slave. Cal Johnson is a significant figure in Knoxville History as a prominent business man and philanthropist. The building is also significant for its architecture as a simple Vernacular Commercial structure that contributes to the significance of the Gay Street National Register Historic District.

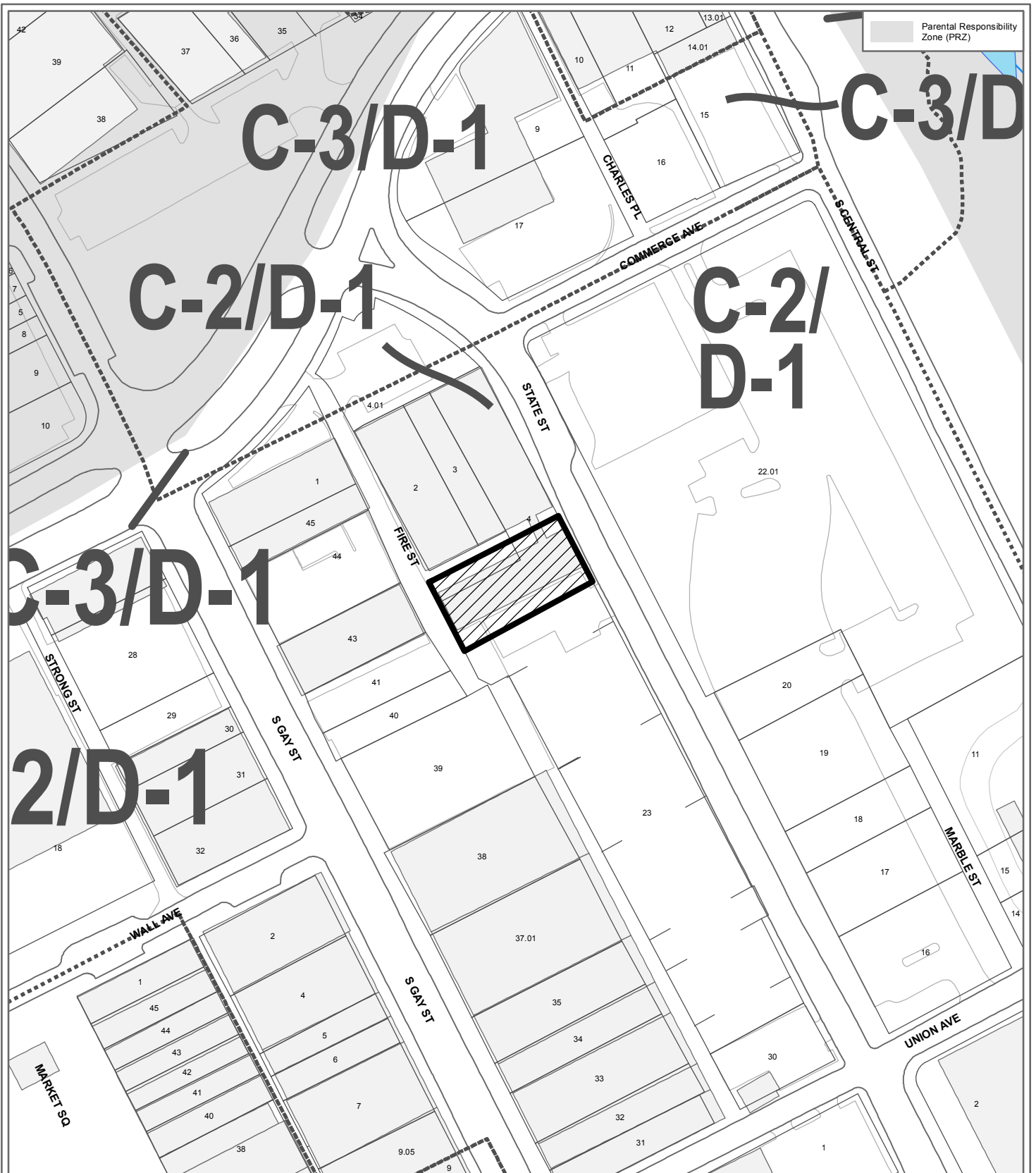
COMMENTS:

The design guidelines proposed to be adopted with this rezoning/designation request are those of the Downtown Knoxville Design Guidelines. These guidelines comprise specific recommendations for historic buildings and include the National Park Service's Secretary of Interiors Standards. The guidelines and standards provide best practices for restoration and rehabilitation of only the exterior of buildings so as to retain their historic character.

ESTIMATED TRAFFIC IMPACT: Not required.

ESTIMATED STUDENT YIELD: Not applicable.

If approved, this item will be forwarded to Knoxville City Council for action on 5/10/2016 and 5/24/2016. If denied, MPC's action is final, unless the action to deny is appealed to Knoxville City Council. The date of the appeal hearing will depend on when the appeal application is filed. Appellants have 15 days to appeal an MPC decision in the City.



**1-F-16-RZ
REZONING**

From: C-2 (Central Business District) / D-1 (Downtown Design Overlay)

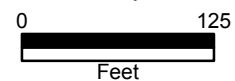
To: C-2 (Central Business District) / H-1 (Historic Overlay) and Design Guidelines



Petitioner: City of Knoxville, Mayor Madeline Rogero

Map No: 95

Jurisdiction: City



Original Print Date: 12/29/2015 Revised: 1/6/2016
Metropolitan Planning Commission * City / County Building * Knoxville, TN 37902



C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

Downtown contains four districts and several individual landmarks which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The buildings differ in ground-floor appearance and architectural details, reflecting their original materials, stylistic era and uses. The guidelines on the following pages apply to National Register properties and do not apply to locally-designated (H-1) historic resources, which are reviewed by the Historic Zoning Commission.

NOTE: Design guidelines for historic resources within downtown Knoxville are based on the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation which are listed in Appendix A, and on design principles that will safeguard the historic integrity of buildings. There are some basic questions to consider before pursuing exterior changes to a historic structure; those questions are addressed in Appendix B. Developers who wish to pursue Preservation Tax Incentives should consult with the appropriate state and federal officials regarding proposed designs.

C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

1. ROOFLINES AND ADDITIONS

Alterations of the rooflines of historic buildings are not appropriate. A one-story rooftop addition, including railings, may be possible on taller buildings if it is inconspicuous from the public right-of-way. Additions should be set back from the primary elevation of the building, and should not damage character-defining features, including parapets and side walls. These walls are often topped by coping stones offering contrasting color or texture, or contain cornices, decorative grills, chimneys, corbelled brickwork and other architectural elements. Rooftop additions are almost never appropriate on buildings less than four stories in height.



GUIDELINES:

- 1a. Preserve or restore historic roofline features, including parapet walls and cornices.
- 1b. Design rooftop additions to be complimentary to the historic building in terms of materials and color.
- 1c. Avoid construction that maintains only the historic facade.
- 1d. Do not alter, obscure or destroy significant features of historic resources when constructing additions.
- 1e. Design rooftop additions so that they are not seen from adjoining streets and sidewalks.

C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

2. STOREFRONTS

Throughout downtown, historic buildings present a front elevation with an individual façade that is usually 25-35 feet wide. The storefronts are divided horizontally into three sections: bulkheads, solid or opaque, usually 18-24 inches tall; a plate glass storefront window 6-8 feet tall; and above it, a clear or patterned glass transom.



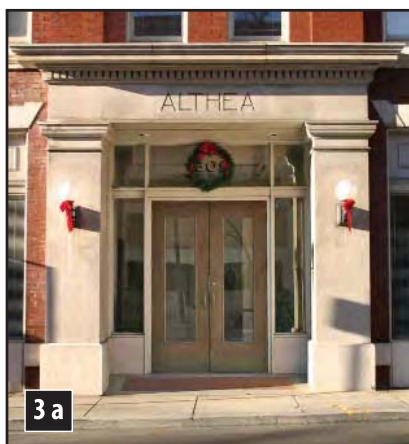
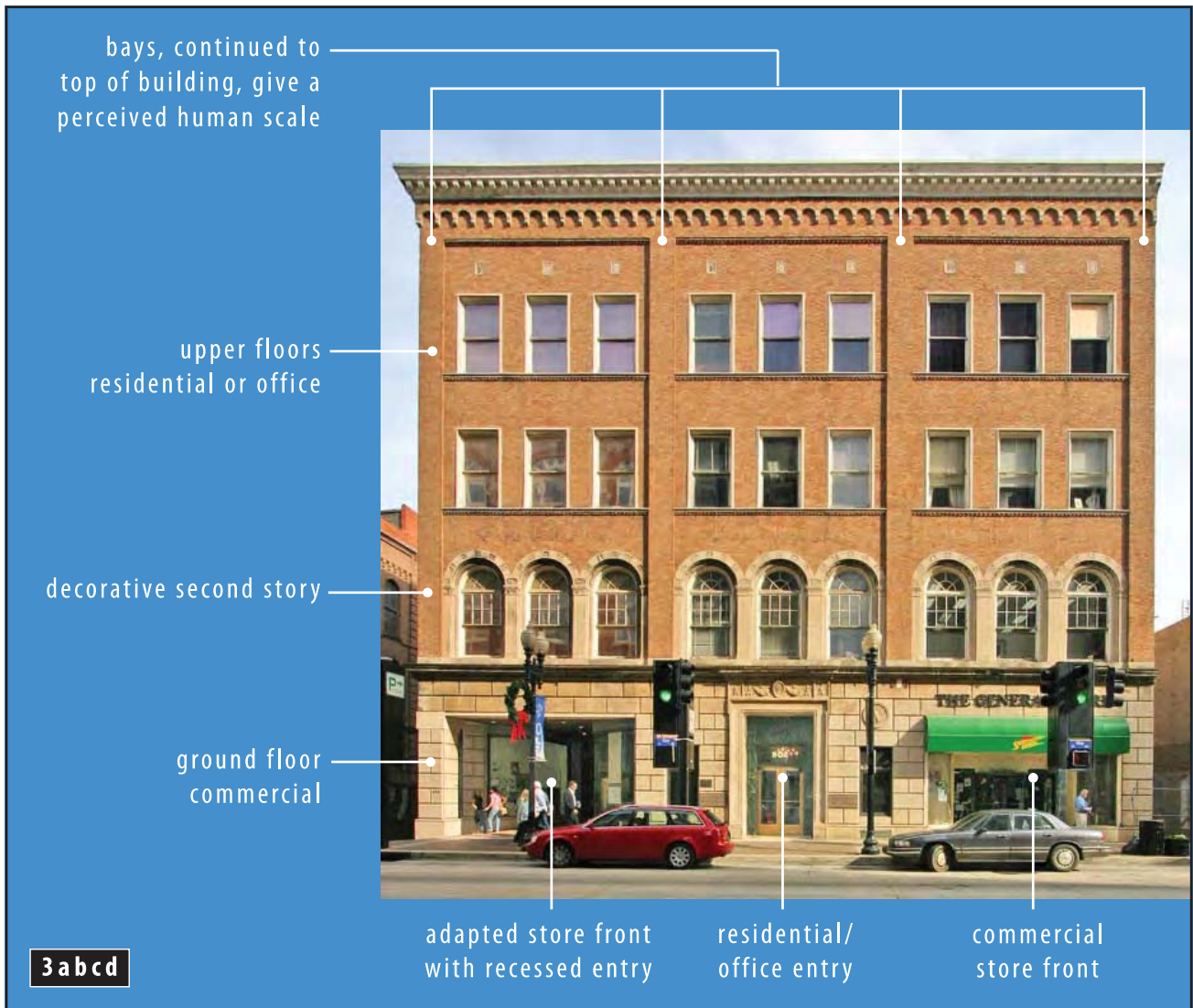
GUIDELINES:

- 2a. Restore and maintain storefronts as they were originally.
- 2a. Along Jackson Avenue, retain industrial loading dock or garage doors (usually 10-12 feet wide and constructed of metal); these features may be incorporated in new construction (for example, where a loading dock or parking entrance is needed).

C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

3. ENTRANCES

Formal entrances to front facades should be retained. This includes entrances that are located above street level and accessed by exterior stairs. Altering or removing the main entrance to grant street-level access is not appropriate.



GUIDELINES:

- 3a. Establish recessed entries, either rectangular or with slightly canted sides, which are appropriate in storefronts.
- 3b. Allow for multiple entries on the first floor of the building, giving access to commercial space that may be divided into bays.
- 3c. Provide access to upper stories through additional entries.
- 3d. Maintain original height and materials for doors that are consistent with the use of the building, such as residential, commercial, or banking purposes.

C. HISTORIC RESOURCES

4. WINDOWS

Appropriate window appearance is significant in finishing a rehabilitation project. From a preservation standpoint, the first and best answer when determining a treatment for windows is to repair rather than replace them. If that is not possible, replacing only deteriorated portions is the next best alternative to total replacement. It is possible to replace window sills, rebuild all or parts of window sashes, and replace window glass, making original windows energy efficient and functional.



GUIDELINES:

- 4a. Repair rather than replace historic windows.
- 4b. Replace windows if repairs are not possible with matching windows, including duplicating design, operation, material, glass size, muntin arrangements, profiles, and trim.
- 4c. Insert windows with the same pane configuration, materials and size as other buildings of the same general construction date, if no original windows are present.
- 4d. Maintain the relationship of solids to voids with new construction that is similar to other buildings in the district, including the typical width, height, spacing, and horizontal alignment of windows.

Appendix A

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.

For more information: www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps

Appendix B

The Basics of Determining Appropriate Exterior Changes

There are some basic questions that should be answered before pursuing any exterior changes. They can help an owner organize proposed changes and their impact on the building.

The Building's Appearance:

1. Will changes affect the symmetry or asymmetry of the façade or other primary elevations?
2. Will alterations affect the orientation of or public access for the building?
3. Will the amount of the building devoted to openings (entrances, windows) change?
4. Are the proportions of the alterations similar and sensitive to the proportions of the building?
5. Will alterations alter historic design elements?
6. What alterations involve the replacement of historic building elements?
7. Will alterations include new signs or awnings?
8. Will alterations impact any unique characteristics of the site?

The Building's Impact on Other Properties:

1. Will the alterations reduce the integrity of the historic resource or site?
2. Does the proposed alteration make reasonable attempts to respect and integrate with the existing design?
3. Are the alterations designed so they are reversible with minimal impact to historic design and materials if they were removed at a future time?
4. What is the effect of the alterations on the property, on adjacent properties and nearby properties, and on properties in the historic district?

Careful consideration of these questions will assist in designing appropriate details that protect the historic and architectural integrity of the buildings.

Suite 403 • City County Building
400 Main Street
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902
865 • 215 • 2500
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www.knoxmpc.org

GOVERNMENTAL REZONING



Jurisdiction: City 6 Councilmanic District County Central City Commission District

Date Filed: _____ Fee Paid: — File Number: 1-F-16-RZ

Map Number: 95 Zoning District: _____ City County Sector: Central City

Name of Applicant: CITY OF KNOXVILLE, MAYOR ROGERO

PROPERTY INFORMATION:

Address: (Street Number) 301 (Street Name) STATE STREET

General Location: SOUTHERN PORTION OF PARCEL ID # 095IA004; ALSO KNOWN AS THE CAL JOHNSON BUILDING.

Description: Parcel(s) see above City Block(s) _____

Other This rezoning is relevant to the current building at 301 State Street, known as the Cal Johnson Building. The alley to the north of the building was closed by Ordinance 0-6518-77.

Size of Tract: _____ Acres _____ Square Feet



CHANGE REQUESTED:

I (we) request that the MPC, after appropriate study, recommend an amendment to the official zoning map to change the zoning of the property described above.

FROM: C-2/D-1 TO: C-2/H-1

Previous Zoning Requests: _____

ALL CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO THIS APPLICATION SHOULD BE SENT TO:

MADELINE ROGERO see below
Name: (Print) Address • City • State • Zip • Phone • Fax

AUTHORIZATION OF APPLICATION:

City of Knoxville Knox County
Signature: Madeline Rogero Department: MAYOR'S OFFICE
Name (Print): MADELINE ROGERO Title: MAYOR OF KNOXVILLE
City: 400 MAIN ST SUITE 691 KNOXVILLE, TN State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: 37902

APPLICATION ACCEPTED BY:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
MPC April 14, 2016

Charles W. Swanson
CHARLES W. SWANSON, LAW DIRECTOR

Ph: 865-215-2040
Agenda Item # 32

M P C
METROPOLITAN
P L A N N I N G
C O M M I S S I O N
T E N N E S S E E

Suite 403 • City County Building
400 Main Street
Knoxville, Tennessee 37902
865 • 215 • 2500
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www.knoxmpc.org

APPLICATION for DESIGNATION
HISTORIC OVERLAY (H-1 OR HZ)
NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAY (NC-1)

Request: H-1 or HZ Historic Overlay or NC-1 Neighborhood Conservation Overlay

Date submitted: 12/7/15

Historic Name of Property: unknown

Common Name of Property: CAL JOHNSON BUILDING

Address of Property: 301 STATE STREET

Tax Parcel ID Number ^(A portion of) 095IA004 Base Zoning: C-2/D-1

Is the property listed on the National Register of Historic Places? Yes No

Applicant's Name (please print): MAYOR MADELINE ROGERO

Applicant's Signature: Madeline Rogero

Address: 400 WEST MAIN STREET SUITE 691
KNOXVILLE, TN 37902

Telephone Number (s): 865-215-2040

Application Accepted By: Charles W. Swanson

NOTE: AN APPLICATION FOR REZONING MUST BE FILED WITH THIS APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC OVERLAY ZONING.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

(See Page 2 for required documentation.)

Charles W. Swanson
CHARLES W. SWANSON
LAW DIRECTOR

APPLICATION INFORMATION:

To be submitted for review by the
Historic Zoning Commission:

- Statement of Significance:** This documentation must include the age of each building, site, or structure, a notation of the former residents or users as well as the architect or builder, and any historical events associated with the property if applicable.
- Architectural Description:** Include information about the type of building, site, structure, or district. If a district is proposed, describe each property to be included. Buildings within a district must be labeled as contributing or non-contributing. Noteworthy site features such as fences, walls, outbuildings, walkways and signs or landscaping must also be described and noted on a site plan. The description must note the original appearance together with any alterations that have been made to the exterior of the property.
- Location map and site plan:** Maps may be obtained from the Knoxville Geographic Information System website: <http://www.kgis.org/kgismaps/Map.htm>
- Surveyed boundary map.** AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST
- Photographs:** For a single property, include a photograph of all elevations (sides) and the immediately surrounding context of the property. For a district, the front elevation of each property, together with representative streetscapes that include noteworthy site features should be included. The photographs must be submitted digitally or on a compact disk. The name, address, and location of the property or district and the date of each photograph must be noted.
- Property owner listing:** A list of all property owners and their addresses must be provided. In the case of a district, this information must be correlated to the addresses of each property included in the district.
- Supplemental documentation:** Any additional information available that supports the nomination. The Historic Zoning Commission or staff may request additional documentation.

Statement of Significance for the Cal Johnson Building

The Cal Johnson Building, located at 301 State Street, should be protected by a historic overlay because of its association with a significant Knoxville, Cal Johnson. Entrepreneur and philanthropist Cal Johnson was born to Cupid and Harriet Johnson in Knoxville on October 14, 1844.² The Johnson family, slaves of Colonel McClung, lived on the site of the old Farragut Hotel Building at the corner of Gay and Church Streets.² In his early teens, Mr. Johnson moved to McClung's Campbell Station estate (in modern Farragut), where he tended his master's horses and developed a lifelong interest in horses.² During the Civil War, he befriended Knoxville saloon owner Patrick Sullivan, and helped Sullivan, who was away fighting in the war, to relay messages to his family.⁴

At the close of the Civil War, Mr. Johnson found work exhuming bodies from the temporary battlefield graves for reburial in proper cemeteries.² As a result of the hard times and lack of economic opportunities associated with the aftermath of war, Mr. Johnson struggled with alcohol use for several years.²

Mr. Johnson recognized the futility of his life, vowed to stop drinking, and took a job first as a cook, then as a bartender.² By 1879, he had saved \$180, which he used to lease a building at the corner of Gay and Wall and open a saloon.² Reinvesting his money in the business, Mr. Johnson soon operated three saloons: Popular Log, Popular Log Branch, and Popular Log Center Branch.² His establishments, patronized by the leading men of the era, became the most popular whiskey houses in the city.² Mr. Johnson operated his saloons in strict accordance with the law: he sold neither to minors, women, nor those who appeared to be intoxicated.²

Mr. Johnson owned the only horse racing track in the City of Knoxville, and the track held regular races until the general assembly outlawed the sport in 1907.² Today, Speedway Circle, the site of the track, maintains the original shape in what is now the Burlington neighborhood near Chilhowee Park.⁵ Although saloons and horses remained Mr. Johnson's principal sources of income, he also had other business interests, including vast real estate holdings.² In 1906, he donated a house at the corner of Vine and Patton Streets to be used as the first black YMCA building.² At the presentation ceremony on May 14, 1906, Mayor S.G. Heiskell proclaimed to the large crowd of African Americans that Mr. Johnson's gift represented the largest ever given by a black person to the YMCA.² From 1883 to 1885, Johnson served on the Knoxville Board of Aldermen.²

In 1898, Mr. Johnson constructed the Cal Johnson Building on State Street in downtown Knoxville.⁴ The Cal Johnson Building was constructed as a three-story, brick warehouse building and was used for some time as a clothing factory.⁴ The building was built in the Vernacular Commercial style; buildings in this style typically have simple details and often reflect the materials commonly available at the time of construction. The Cal Johnson Building is a rare example of a large commercial structure built by a former slave, and in fact, the Cal Johnson Building is the only building associated with Mr. Johnson that is still standing in Knoxville.³ The Cal Johnson Building is a contributing property in Gay Street Commercial Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.¹ The Cal Johnson Building has also been identified repeatedly by Knox Heritage as an endangered structure on its annual Fragile Fifteen list.³

Knoxville has recognized Mr. Johnson's legacy in several other ways. In 1922, Knoxville established the Cal Johnson Park in his honor, and in 1957 the Cal Johnson Recreation Center was erected in the park.⁴ It seems appropriate that the City take action to protect the last remaining building associated with Mr. Johnson by designating it with a historic overlay. Although minimal changes have been made to it, the Cal Johnson Building is threatened by long term, ongoing deterioration and lack of maintenance.³ The historic overlay would afford the Cal Johnson Building the protection it deserves as a significant part of Knoxville's history.

Sources

¹ Bennett, Ann. National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Gay Street Commercial Historic District. 1 Mar. 1986.

² Booker, Robert. "Caldonia Fackler 'Cal' Johnson." The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture. The University of Tennessee Press, 25 Dec. 2009. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

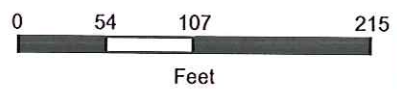
³ Knox Heritage Quarterly, Spring 2012. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

⁴ McRary, Amy. "Cal Johnson went from slavery to successful businessman." *The Knoxville News Sentinel* 29 Dec. 2012. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.

⁵ Neely, Jack. "Tracing the Origins of Knoxville's Original Speedway." *Metropulse* 6 Nov. 2013. Web. 17 Nov. 2015.



Cal Johnson Building
 301 State Street
 Knoxville Tennessee



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PROPERTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE - KNOX COUNTY, TENNESSEE

Source: KGIS

MAP DEPARTMENT - OWNERSHIP CARD

ACTIVE NORMAL

11/17/2015

District	Map	Insert	Group	Parcel	Ward	Property Location		
	95	I	A	4	06	200 W SUMMIT HILL DR		
Subdivision				Block	Lot	Plat	Dimensions (shown in ft.)	Acreage
				-	-	-	223 X 136 X IRR	0.00 - A.C. Deeded
								0.00 - A.C. Calculated
Owner				Sale Date	Book	Page	Sale Price	Mailing Address
JED CORPORATION				10/3/1977	<u>1624</u>	397	\$ 100,000	PO BOX 78 KNOXVILLE, TN 37901

--

Remarks

ATTRIBUTES FROM NCR LOADER

Parent Parcel

Parent Instrument Number

Previous Parcel (Split From)

Next Parcel (Merged Into)

<http://www.kgis.org/parcelreports/ownercard.aspx?id=095IA004>

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Caldonia Fackler "Cal" Johnson

By Robert J. Booker , Beck Cultural Exchange Center

Entrepreneur and philanthropist Cal Johnson was born to Cupid and Harriet Johnson in Knoxville on October 14, 1844. The Johnson family, slaves of Colonel Pless McClung, lived on the site of the old Farragut Hotel Building at the corner of Gay and Church Streets. In his early teens, Johnson moved to McClung's Campbell Station estate, where he tended his master's horses and developed a lifelong interest in horses.

At the close of the Civil War Johnson found work exhuming bodies from the temporary battlefield graves for reburial in proper cemeteries. As a result of the hard times and lack of economic opportunities associated with the aftermath of war, Johnson turned to alcohol and soon became a destitute drunkard, living on the streets of Knoxville.

Johnson recognized the futility of his life, vowed to stop drinking, and took a job first as a cook, then as a bartender. By 1879 he had saved \$180, which he used to lease a building at the corner of Gay and Wall and open a saloon. Reinvesting his money in the business, Johnson soon operated three saloons: Popular Log, Popular Log Branch, and Popular Log Center Branch. His establishments, patronized by the leading men of the era, became the most popular whiskey houses in the city. Johnson operated his saloons in strict accordance with the law: he sold neither to minors, women, nor those who appeared to be intoxicated.

Horses remained Johnson's first love, however, and he acquired an enviable stable of race horses that compared to the best in the state. He attended every major race in Tennessee and the surrounding states. In 1901 he bought the famed mare Lennette at Frankfort, Kentucky, for \$6,000. He also owned George Condit, the 1893 Columbian Exposition's champion standard Bred Trotter. Johnson owned the only horse racing track in the city of Knoxville, and the track held regular races until the general assembly outlawed the sport in 1907. Today, Speedway Circle, the site of the track, maintains the original shape.

Although saloons and horses remained Johnson's principal sources of income, he also had other business interests, including vast real estate holdings. In 1906 he donated a house at the corner of Vine and Patton Streets to be used as the first black YMCA building. At the presentation ceremony on May 14, 1906, Mayor S. G. Heiskell proclaimed to the large crowd of African Americans that Johnson's gift represented the largest ever given by a black person to the YMCA.

From 1883 to 1885 Johnson served on the Knoxville board of aldermen. In 1922 Knoxville established the Cal Johnson Park in his honor, and in 1957 the Cal Johnson Recreation Center was erected in the park.

Johnson married twice, but had no children. At the time of his death on April 7, 1925, his estate was estimated at \$300,000-\$500,000.

Published » December 25, 2009 | *Last Updated »* January 01, 2010

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Cal Johnson went from slavery to successful businessman

Born a slave, Cal Johnson became wealthy, generous businessman

BY: Amy McRary

POSTED: 1:58 PM, Dec 29, 2012

When self-made real-estate mogul, businessman and philanthropist Calvin Fackler "Cal" Johnson died in April 1925 his obituary made the front page of one Knoxville newspaper.

Born a slave and once a drunk, the 80-year-old died Knoxville's richest and one of Tennessee's wealthiest African-Americans. The Knoxville Sentinel's front page obit noted that Johnson's fortune — made mostly in real estate and racehorses — was estimated between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The obituary also noted Johnson was generous, donating land and money to "give parks and other facilities to his people."

In 1897 the then 53-year-old businessman put his life in perspective to an unnamed Knoxville Sentinel reporter. The reporter's three-column story on Johnson was headlined "A Man's Success."

"I started out when many were prejudiced against my color, and when it looked like the negroes had been set free just to starve. But I went to work, and I don't mean to brag at all when I say that I have done pretty well, I think," said Johnson.

Born at the corner of Gay Street and Church Avenue, Johnson was the son of slaves Cupid and Harriet Johnson. They were property of Knoxville's wealthy McClung family. As a teen Johnson moved to the McClung farm in the Campbell Station area to care for its horses.

During the Civil War Johnson served then Union soldier and later Knoxville saloonkeeper Patrick Sullivan. Sullivan's own 1925 obit noted he'd outlived everyone who served under him in the war, quoting Sullivan that Johnson was "one of my best team drivers. He used to carry messages to my wife during the war."

When the war was over Johnson was a free man. Accounts of his life published years later aren't exactly clear on the timeline of events just after the war. For some time he worked as a cook, first at Knoxville's Lamar House and then in Chattanooga's Lookout Mountain area. He returned to Knoxville "with a few dollars in his pocket," he told the Sentinel reporter years later, looking for other work.

He got the task of overseeing other former slaves burying Union dead in the National Cemetery established in 1863 in Knoxville. That apparently led to Johnson getting a contract with the government to reinter Union fallen in the cemetery. During the war soldiers were often buried in hastily dug graves near battlefields in East Tennessee; their bodies were being located and moved to the cemetery.

The 1897 newspaper story noted Johnson was employed by the U.S. government to "gather dead bodies throughout this region and convey them here for burial." Other accounts say the work included moving bodies of soldiers who died in battles in the Cumberland Gap area to the Knoxville graveyard.

That gruesome work gave Johnson money to buy a horse and a dray. A few years later he opened a grocery store on Gay Street. After three years he sold that business.

By the mid-1870s, he began drinking heavily. He'd decided, the 1897 newspaper article said, "to enjoy life. But he got to drinking and for three years he was an inveterate drunkard, during which time he spent every dollar he had." Penniless and without work, the article characterized Johnson as "almost a beggar on the streets."

But Johnson stopped drinking and got back to work. He worked again as a cook, then a bartender. He never drank again, worked hard, saved his money and went into the saloon business. Eventually he'd own three saloons, a racetrack and race horses. His land holdings included rental houses and downtown buildings. He also served as a city alderman. While he couldn't read or write, he reportedly in later years used a stamp to mark his name on documents.

Twice married and childless, Johnson often used his wealth to help others. He donated land for the first YMCA for African-Americans and supported the local orphanage that cared for black children.

In 1922 the city created a park along what's now Hall of Fame Drive and named it for Johnson. He helped, giving money for lights, sidewalks, a flagpole and a large fountain for the park.

Signs of Cal Johnson's work and philanthropic ventures remain. His oval Burlington horse racetrack is now a street named Speedway Circle. Along State Street a tall red brick building he built about 1898 as a clothing factory still stands but is on Knox Heritage's "Fragile Fifteen" list of area endangered structures. Though some of Cal Johnson Park was taken for interstate access ramps and its fountain is gone, the rest of the park and the 1957 Cal Johnson Recreation Center remain along Hall of Fame Drive.

Related stories

Though Emancipation Proclamation changed little when it was issued, it set the stage for revolutionizing amendment (<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/though-emancipation-proclamation-changed-little/>)

Stories from our readers on the Civil War

(<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/stories-from-our-readers/>)

Ordinances regulated activities of Knoxville's Civil War-era black community

(<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/ordinances-regulated-activities-of-knoxvilles/>)

Quakers, caves put East TN on Underground Railroad routes

(<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/quakers-caves-put-east-tn-on-underground-routes/>)

Original Proclamation comes to Nashville in February

(<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/original-proclamation-comes-to-nashville-in/>)

Cal Johnson went from slavery to successful businessman

(<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2012/dec/29/cal-johnson-went-from-slavery-to-successful/>)

NORTHWEST SIDE



EAST SIDE



NORTHEAST SIDE



SOUTH SIDE



WEST SIDE

