

## D/DRC Case

1721 Gadsden Street

City Center Design/Development District

TMS: 09010-01-09

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**DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMISSION**  
**DESIGN REVIEW DISTRICT**  
**CONSENT AGENDA**  
**EVALUATION SHEET**  
**Case # 3**

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**ADDRESS:** 1721 Gadsden Street

**APPLICANT:** John Hewett, Maureen O'Hare, agents

**TAX MAP REFERENCE:** TMS#09010-10-09

**USE OF PROPERTY:** Residential

**REVIEW DISTRICT:** Pending Individual Landmark, City Center Design/Development District

**NATURE OF REQUEST:** Request recommendation for Group III Individual Landmark

**FINDINGS/COMMENTS:**

This is a c.1883 single-family home that has been part of the Arsenal Hill neighborhood for over a century. Part of the African-American enclave there, this house is a survivor of decades of change and altering demographics and is the oldest building on this block. Updated several times to keep up with changing trends, the building nonetheless retains some important original historic detailing, such as its roof form, double bay windows on the south elevation, original siding and original windows. With a plan to re-establish a historically appropriate façade and open porch, the owners intend to restore the exterior to its original appearance.

**PERTINENT SECTIONS FROM CITY ORDINANCE**

*Section 17-691(d) of the Columbia City Ordinance outlines the criteria for designation as a Group III Landmark. "Group III consists of structures or sites which round out and extend the material-visual history of Columbia when added to Groups I and II; they evidence one or more of the following criteria for selection:*

- (1) The site of events, homes of men, etc., that are interesting locally.*
- (2) Somewhat unusual characteristics in architectural design.*
- (3) Belonging to a family or "genera" of buildings recognized locally.*
- (4) A mediocre example of a style or type of building which is becoming, or in danger of becoming, extinct locally.*
- (5) Evidencing one or more of the criteria for Group II, but too decrepit or too destructively modified to constitute a prime historic document.*

*If possible, these should be preserved by "adaptive use," although not necessarily on their original sites. Generally, preservation of interiors is not of great importance and controlled remodeling of exteriors is in order."*

This meets criterion one as it is the site of events that are interesting locally, in particular the infilling of downtown with modest homes in the late 1800s and their rapid demise during the urban rehabilitation efforts several decades later. This is the oldest surviving original building on this entire block of Gadsden Street, and is a testament to the racial divisions that helped shape the

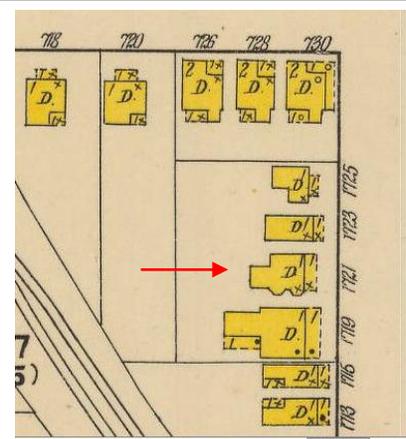
Arsenal Hill neighborhood. It is also a survivor of the mass demolitions that wiped away African-American neighborhoods during the 1950s and 1960s in downtown Columbia. Part of the reason for its survival was that the owners made changes and updated the building during the years, maintaining it and keeping it livable. While these changes are unsympathetic to the original design, they gave the building a “modern” look at a time when old buildings were bulldozed throughout the city. Arsenal Hill, in particular, had several blocks wiped clear and yet some that remarkably remained intact.

The residential building at 1721 Gadsden Street appears to have been built around 1883, with alterations occurring probably in the 1930s and 1960s that included enclosing the front porch. Otherwise the exterior retains its original form, roof shape, windows, siding, and double bays on the south elevation. This unusual characteristic in architectural design, combined with the unusually wide siding, meet number two of the criteria for Group III landmark designation. This appears to be a simple turn of the century Folk Victorian cottage, but the addition of the double bay on the south side is a sign of more attention to detail for this modest house and is a feature that does not appear to be replicated anywhere nearby. It also helps confirm the earlier construction date.

This building also meets criterion four; it is a mediocre example of its style that is in danger of becoming extinct locally. Indeed, this building currently has no protection and was facing demolition before the new owners considered retaining the building instead. While there are a number of houses in the city from around 1900 and later that are of similar size, this is an unusual design and predates many of those buildings as it was likely built in the early 1880s. This is also among the smaller homes downtown that served African Americans throughout the twentieth century, and among only a handful that survive. The first tenant might have been A.H. Hammond, a white policeman in 1888, but by 1891 the property, like several others in the area, was lived in by an African-American. Columbus Young worked as a driver, and his block and the block to the south were majority or all-black during the 1890s, while the block to the north was all-white. Small homes on downtown lots are gaining attention in Columbia due to the attractiveness of the location. Aging houses such as this also face a number of physical challenges, such as significant structural repairs and updating of plumbing, electrical, and mechanical systems, which can be a daunting task for many owners. If people elect not to put forth the effort, parts of the city’s irretrievable built history, such as this building, would become extinct.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Staff finds that the building meets several criteria from Section 17-691(d) of the Columbia City Ordinance for a Group III Landmark.



1919 Sanborn Map

