

Petition Requesting Individual Local Landmark Designation for 749 E Jefferson St & 223A S Clay St

We, the residents of Louisville Metro hereby request that the Louisville Metro Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission conduct a study and hold a public hearing to determine if 749 E Jefferson St and 223A S Clay St should be designated as Individual Local Landmarks pursuant to LMCO 32.260 (I) as amended on August 8, 2019. The boundaries are identified on the attached map.

We request designation, not as an anti-development effort, but to engender responsible development.

Through this petition, designation is requested for both properties individually due to their high integrity, under the following two Local Landmark Designation Criteria:

MCO 32.260 (O) (a) It's character, interest, or value as part of the development or heritage of the city.

MCO 32.260 (O) (d) It's embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type that has significantly influenced the development of the city, the Commonwealth, or the nation.

The disappearance of historic buildings has been escalating among NULU developments - likely because these larger developments are lead by out-of-state entities that have less incentive for preservation efforts. Given the significant history of the East Market area, and given that these buildings are becoming an increasingly rare sight amidst NULU, we see it justified to protect these structures against demolition NOT only if they have a popular significance, but simply because they exhibit MANY aspects of integrity that might be less obvious to an uninformed observer. Specifically:

The structures proposed for designation exhibit...

1) ...An architectural style of significant integrity and growing rarity in Louisville.

A guide to their age, their architectural style is *Italianate*: a style most popular in the mid-1800's. It originated in Italy in the 16th century, but was popularized by the influential Andrew Jackson Downing, a widely respected landscape gardener who also published house pattern books in the 1840s and '50s (The first Italianate houses in the United States were built in the late 1830s). Italianate architecture is known for its symmetry, ornate decorative details, round-arched windows, tall cornices, and classical influences.

749 E Jefferson not only embodies this style immaculately, but *it is an extremely rare specimen within not only NULU, but in much of downtown Louisville - if not all of Louisville*. In fact, in less than an hour drive spanning the streets highlighted in blue below, we observed that *749 E Jefferson is the ONLY example of a three-story solid brick Italianate building with two stories of solid limestone decorative arched windows*, with the single exception of 720 E Market St (currently Evergreen Liquors), which looks notably different. As pertaining to Section 32.260 (O) (d) of the Amended Landmarks Ordinance effective August 8, 2019, the quality, significance, and *rarity* of its architectural detail alone makes this building one of extremely high integrity and should be enough for this building to meet the criteria for designation as an individual landmark.

If we consider our city as competing with other cities, we should consider that the demolition of this 3-story Italianate specimen would likely never be permitted in other cities, even as close as Cincinnati (whose preservation efforts now award them the largest concentration of Italianate architecture in the country).



Among the streets highlighted in blue, we observed that 749 E Jefferson is the ONLY example of a three-story solid brick Italianate building with two stories of solid limestone decorative arched windows, with the single exception of 720 E Market St (currently Evergreen Liquors), which looks notably different.

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2) ...An age among the oldest in Louisville.

The two buildings slated for demolition are a quaint solid brick shotgun house at 223A S Clay St (523 S Clay St prior to 1909) and a three-story solid brick and limestone Italianate building at 749 E Jefferson St (753-755 E Jefferson St prior to 1909). Both appear on Louisville's oldest Sanborn maps (1892), and were likely built by German immigrants in the middle of the 1800's (before the Civil War) when most of this area was developed. We're hoping that further research in City Directories and Deeds will clarify their full age.

3) ...A construction better than any other.

~~No one can afford to build like this anymore - few GC's even know how to; it would be illogical for any~~ informed person to tear these down. Both buildings are constructed of solid brick, likely three wythes (layers) thick, with solid limestone window arches likely sourced from local quarries. Solid brick shotguns are among the most prized properties just a few blocks north in Butchertown. 749 E Jefferson St also boasts six massive solid limestone columns capped by five solid limestone lintels, all likely over twelve inches thick. Many might mistake these buildings as run-down and in need of demo, but the peeling paint is misleading: their brick is in great shape and is infinitely patchable/repairable, and their limestone construction is even more solid than concrete (Indiana limestone has a higher strength-to-weight ratio than fresh concrete, and concrete's integrity is compromised with time as it's rebar skeleton slowly rusts). As built, these two structures could last for many more centuries. There's no structure that Rabbit Hole could replace these with that would be as solid or last as long, especially if RH continues with their corrugated steel construction.

4) ...A state of preservation (and photo documentation) that make them prime for renovation.

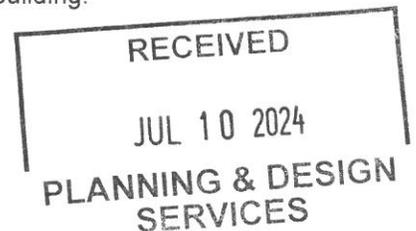
An exterior designer and historic renovation preservationist has confirmed both structures slated for demolition would renovate beautifully. The same layers of paint that make these look dilapidated has actually preserved the detail in the solid limestone columns, lintels, and window arches: if stripped of their paint, you would see every chisel mark perfectly preserved and these elements could possibly look as new as they did in the mid-1800's. We've found detailed photos of the original storefront and bulkheads that could also facilitate a historic renovation. Therefore the style isn't the only thing making this building a prime specimen of Italianate design worthy of preservation: it's excellent state of preservation and historic documentation strengthens its case for preservation. This strengthens the case for this building meeting the requirement within Section 32.260 (O) (d) of the Amended Landmarks Ordinance effective August 8, 2019.

As you can see, the age, the timelessness of the style, and the quality of the construction should all be reason enough to preserve these buildings. Once they're gone, they're gone forever.

5) ...A History we all share.

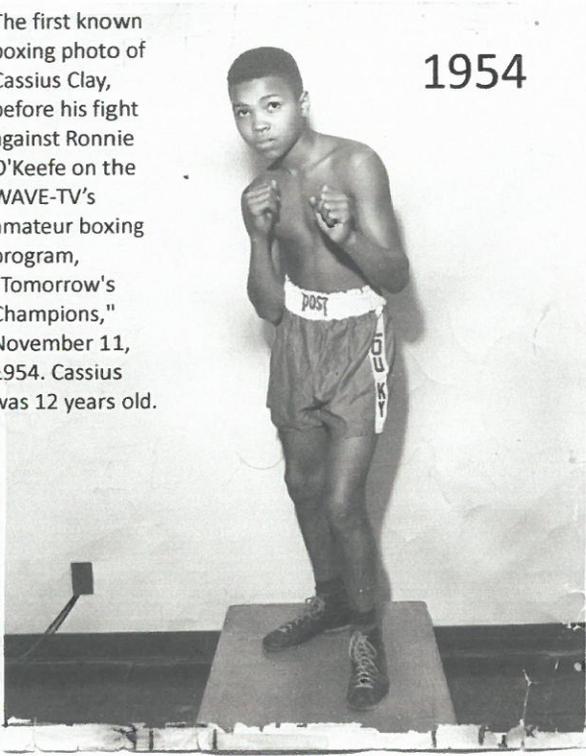
Rabbit Hole may own these buildings, but they are *our* shared history. These buildings are not just architectural treasures; they also represent our shared cultural heritage. To preserve them, we shouldn't have to discover that this was the first disco ball factory or umbrella maker in the city - these buildings were home to many more than just one thing. Over the last century and a half, scores of residents and businesses called these buildings their home: chances are, you or someone you know share a last name with them - they were relatives to many of you. We'll be spending the next month in the city directory archives to catalogue the businesses as well as the names and occupations of the hundreds of people and that have called these buildings home.

Consider also that, in essence, these structures have "seen" more than any of us currently living... or dead. As just one example: Cassius Clay began his boxing career at the age of 12, in 1954; that's just three years after our 1951 photo was taken. In the 1960's - the decade that he changed his name to Muhammad Ali - he trained in a boxing gym that still towers over the alley behind 749 E Jefferson (the Headline Boxing Gym gym was opened at 216 S Shelby St by Bud Bruner in 1952, and its building dates to 1854. It was here where Clay had his first gym workout after winning an Olympic gold medal in Rome in 1960 - the same medal he famously threw into the Ohio River after being denied into a whites-only restaurant). Take a look at that photo and imagine how many times he must have rounded this corner as a young boxer with gloves in tow, racing to or from his gym (he would frequently run the 7-mile distance to and from his training gym). It would be a deeply meaningful mural to apply life-size on the east side of this building.



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The first known boxing photo of Cassius Clay, before his fight against Ronnie O'Keefe on the WAVE-TV's amateur boxing program, "Tomorrow's Champions," November 11, 1954. Cassius was 12 years old.



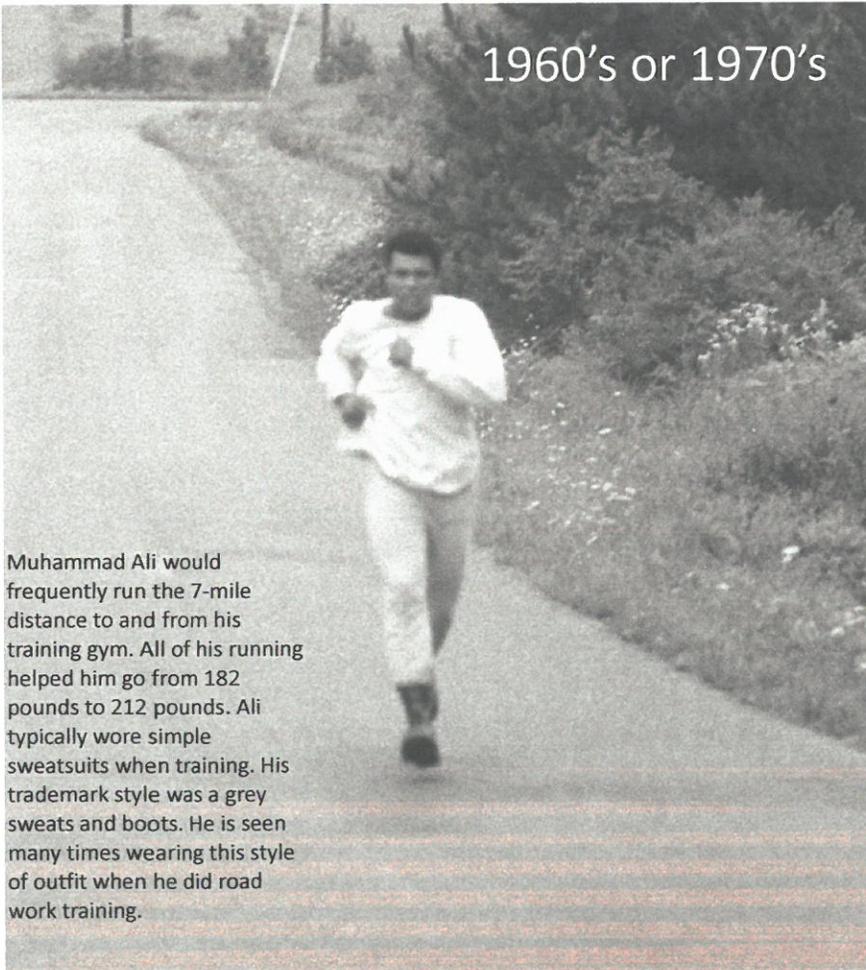
1954



1951

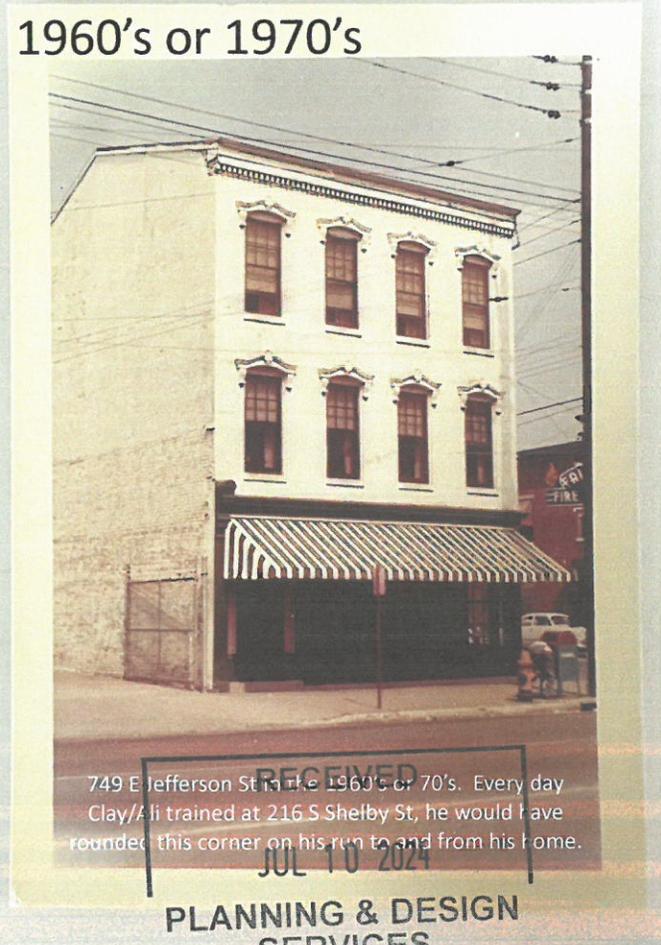
749 E Jefferson St in 1951 - by Caufield and Shook

1960's or 1970's



Muhammad Ali would frequently run the 7-mile distance to and from his training gym. All of his running helped him go from 182 pounds to 212 pounds. Ali typically wore simple sweatsuits when training. His trademark style was a grey sweats and boots. He is seen many times wearing this style of outfit when he did road work training.

1960's or 1970's



749 E Jefferson St in the 1960's or 70's. Every day Clay/Ali trained at 216 S Shelby St, he would have rounded this corner on his run to and from his home.

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6) ...A Character that is key to sustaining NULU's vibrancy.

Preserving these buildings is crucial for maintaining the unique character of NULU. In fact, it's the historic buildings that form the heart of NULU: their age and human scale provide the eclectic backdrop that attracts the most vibrant activity that NULU is known for. NULU's historic buildings house its most popular restaurants, bars, and shops. As we've seen, modern development in NULU plays a secondary role: it's important, but only in how it gives NULU the capacity to grow in density. As we've seen, even those living in the modern buildings congregate at the historic ones.

Locals have a lot of reasons to not love this:

We've got dozens of local architects creative enough to incorporate these historic structures into the development, but Rabbit Hole has chosen a NC-based architect for the design.

Even those in favor of development should question their support of Rabbit Hole's expansion: Urban infill is favorable to suburban sprawl, so I'm in favor of development downtown too. But Rabbit Hole's expansion is still largely industrial - an anomaly in the center of NULU, this city's prized commercial heart. Rabbit Hole's expansion is poised to leave this entire block of E Jefferson without any commercial frontage. Given the central location of the resulting dead zone, Rabbit Hole's expanding in this way will effectively keep NULU from doubling in size and expanding south onto E Jefferson. Rabbit Hole's expansion will be the bottleneck to NULU's expansion - or more accurately the stopper.

Where the Rabbit Hole expansion is not industrial, it's focused on hospitality, so to balance out this industrial anomaly, what better way of utilizing 749 E Jefferson than as an entrance to their boutique hotel? Certainly 749 E Jefferson is tall enough for their needs, given that much of their new construction isn't taller than its three stories. And it's wrapping column arrangement is perfect for a corner entrance. At least then the corner will see some activity, as every corner should.

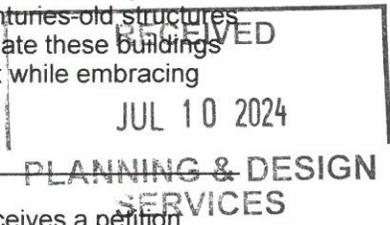
Rabbit Hole's industrial use is also responsible for their request to demolish 223A S Clay: their semi trucks simply need more room. Given that they've created their own problem, if 223A S Clay is truly in the way of their trucks and there is no better design option, it's only reasonable that they relocate 223A S Clay.

7) ...A viable option to relocate.

We hope it doesn't come to this, but worst-case scenario we ask that if Rabbit Hole must remove these buildings, they be required to find a new home for them just a few blocks north into one of the many empty lots of Butchertown. Years ago when NULU developers were more local, relocating buildings was more common. Rabbit Hole is now majority owned by a French company, Pernot Ricard. It's important that out-of-town and foreign investors respect our local shared heritage just the same. If Rabbit Hole demolishes these buildings, it might be the only Kentucky distillery destroying Kentucky heritage. In stark contrast, so many other distilleries are restoring historic buildings - a move that they know strengthens their brands. Pernot Ricard would be wise to take note.

Summation

We strongly support modern development, but for all of the reasons above, it should only be done creatively incorporating or preserving historic structures. Rabbit Hole can easily afford to do this, and we hope this petition also serves to help them to understand their many reasons to. Once these centuries-old structures are gone, they won't ever come back. Please help us halt the demolition plans, designate these buildings as the historic structures they are, and explore alternative solutions that honor our past while embracing future growth.

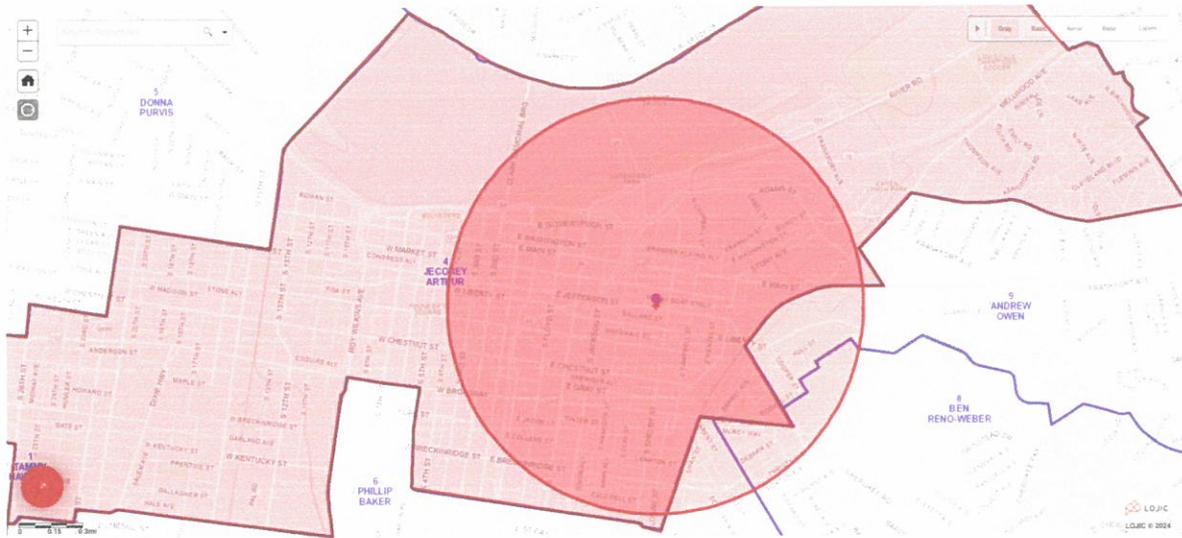


We understand that the Commission may only designate a structure or property if it receives a petition requesting such designation and the petition contains the verified signatures and addresses of no fewer than 200 residents of the Louisville Metro required by Section 32.260(l) of the Amended Landmarks Ordinance effective August 8, 2019.

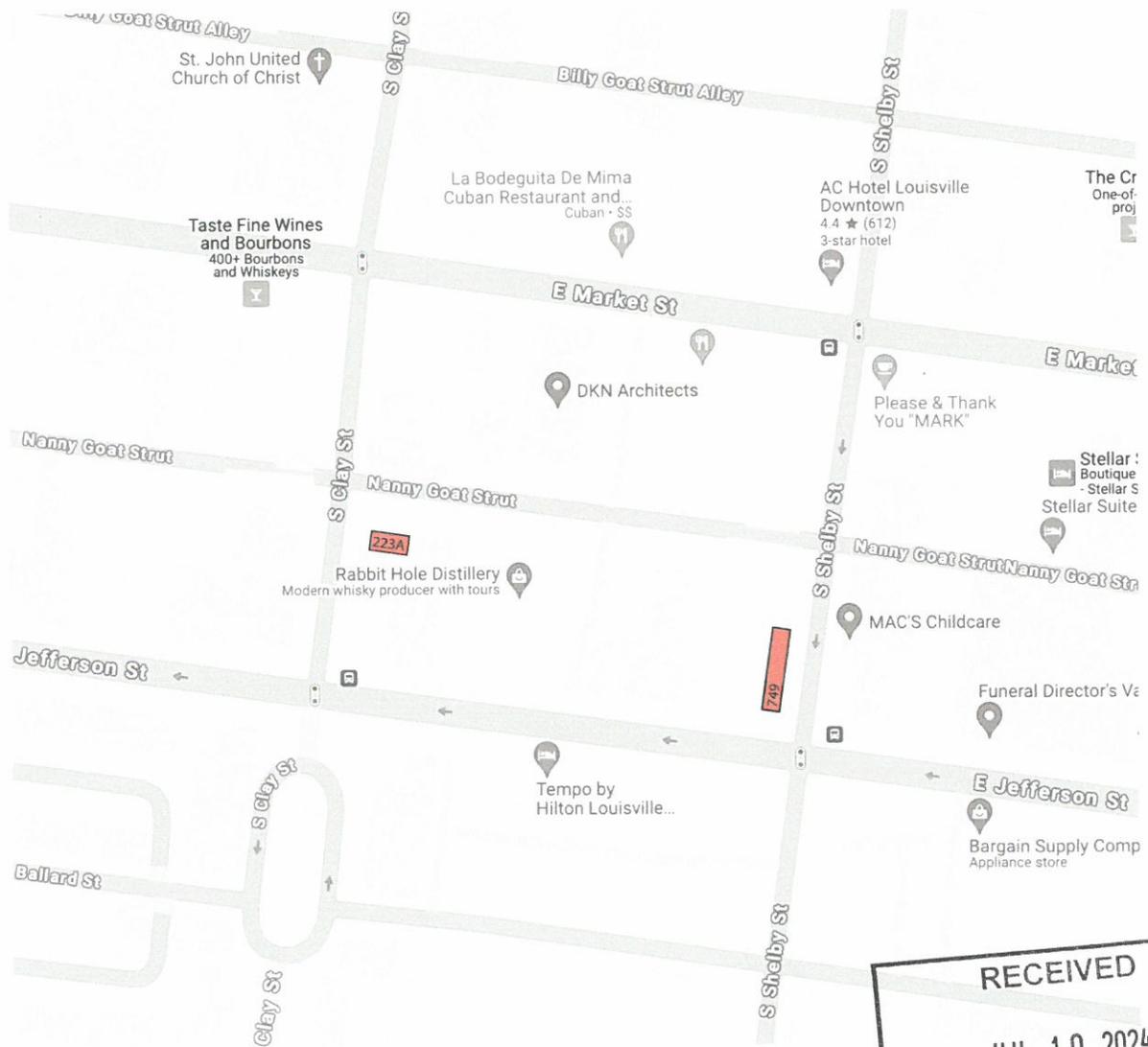
Information for designation of individual local landmarks and historic districts can be obtained by downloading the following web site: <http://www.louisvilleky.gov/PlanningDesign/Historic+Landmarks+and+Preservation+Districts+Commission.htm> or by calling (502) 574-2868

For more information about this petition, please contact the person who will be submitting this petition: Kevin Dohn at 347-461-6760.

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We need at least 200 verified signatures of residents or owners from addresses within Metro Louisville, and 101 of these signatures must be associated with addresses within either of these areas shown in red.

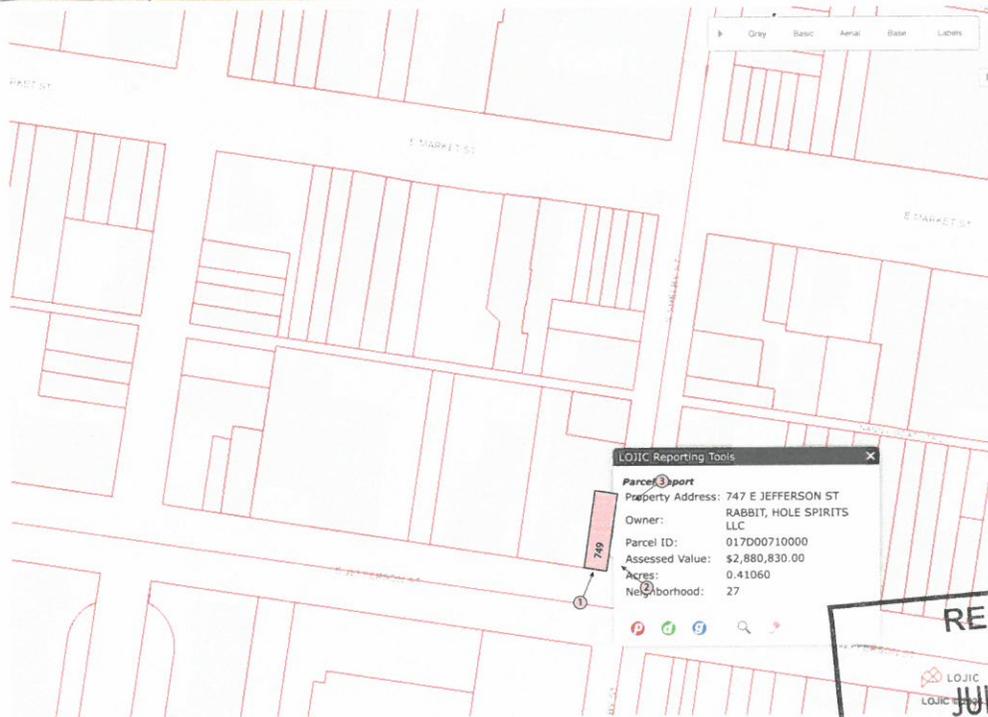
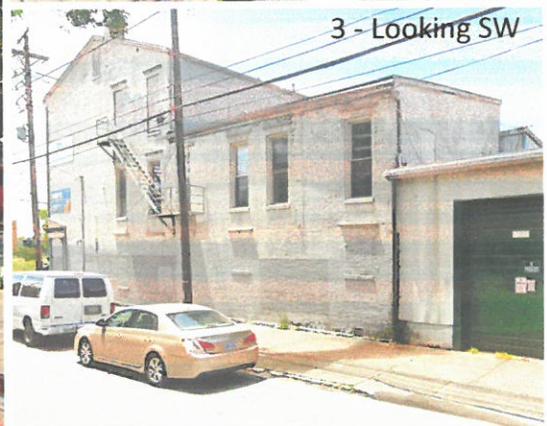


Map of both structures slated for demolition

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749 E Jefferson St



749 E Jefferson St is in Lojic under 747's lot lines

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223A S Clay St

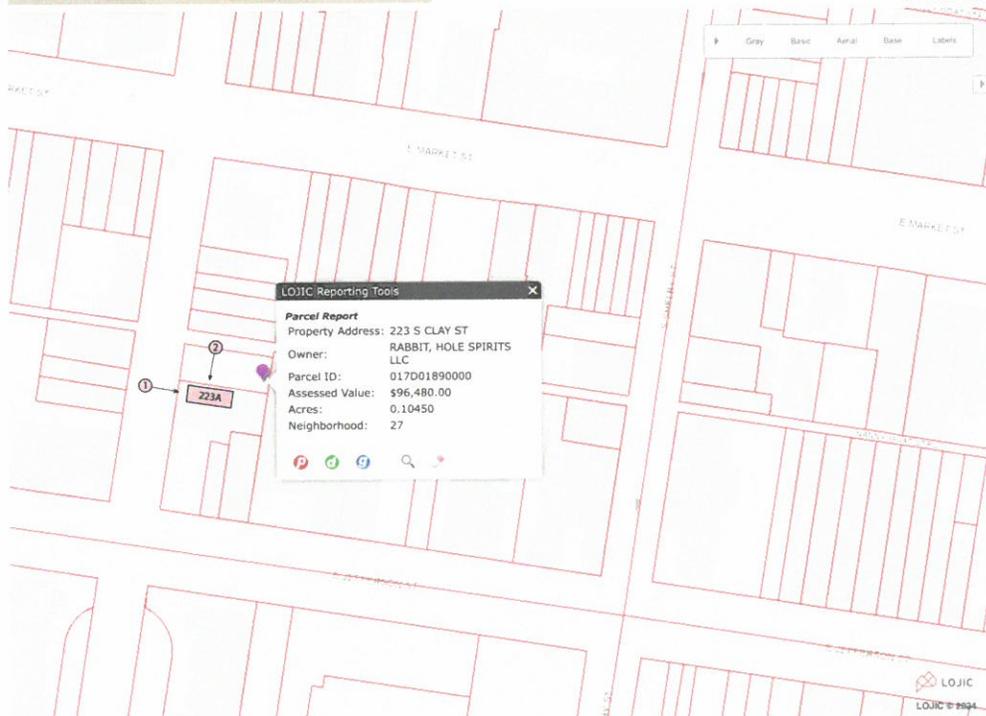


1 - West façade



2 - North façade

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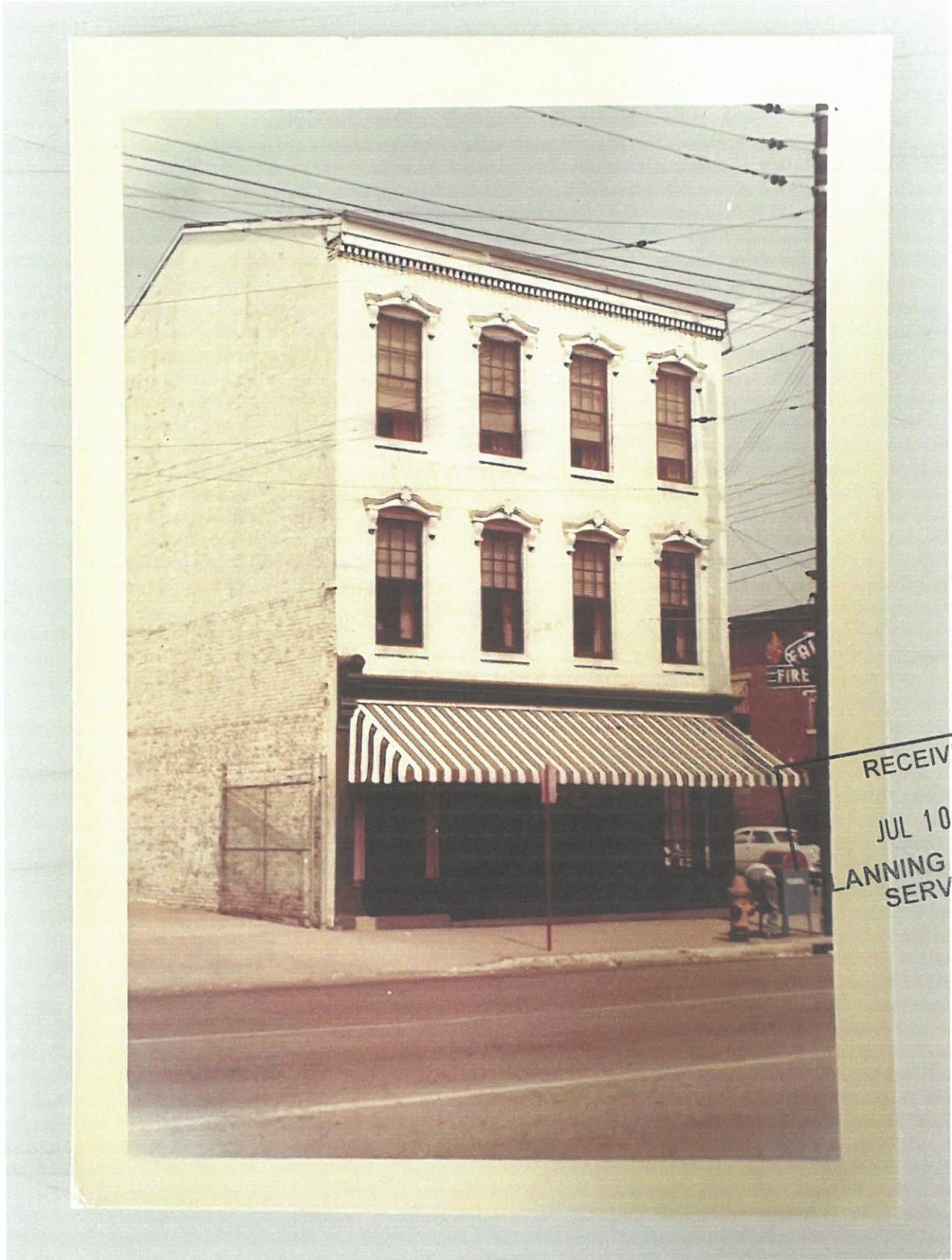
223A S Clay St is in Lojic under 225's lot lines

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749 E Jefferson St - 1951
by Caufield and Shook



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749 E Jefferson St - 1960's