

DRC REPORT TO LANDMARKS COMMISSION
January 26, 2016

**APPLICATION FOR TYPE III CERTIFICATE
OF APPROPRIATENESS (#1527):**

Pacific Coast Coal Admin Building

18825 SE Renton-Maple Valley Road SE,
Renton vicinity

Jennifer Bush, Goodnight Properties, owner

Project proposal: Demolish the building.

This historic resource has been neglected for many years. Built in 1927 it served several purposes for a number of different mining operations, including mine car repair shop, hospital and administration offices. It was owned by King County from the 1940s until the 80s and used for storage and as a shop with the surrounding area serving as a maintenance yard. The current owner has operated a gravel yard and hauling operation at the site for 15-20 years. The property continues to be used for that purpose. In the late 1990s the owner attempted to find an alternative use for the building, but at the time the county health department, environmental services department, and zoning restrictions limited what could be done to the building. There was no water available, and at least one official from the county determined that the building was structurally unsound. No feasible solution was ever developed.



Since that time the building has been vandalized numerous times and all interior equipment has been stripped. The building is constructed of shiplap wood siding covered with corrugated metal panels. In the shop area, large steel trusses set on timber posts span the interior. Sections of the roof are gone, and portions of the exterior siding are missing. Nearly all doors and windows have been removed and there are large areas of mold in the office wing. A porch at the west end was also removed because it was about to collapse.

The applicant has indicated the building has been condemned. As of the date of this report, no paperwork has been submitted to that effect. However, the staff architect toured the building with the owner's representative and concludes the building is not salvageable.

If it were to remain and be placed in some productive use it would have to be rebuilt. Since the owner also does demolition, they plan to take it down themselves, and recycle whatever is left. The metal panels and steel trusses can be sold for scrap, the shiplap siding will be used for fuel, and the concrete slab broken up. There are a few decorative metal pieces on the building, and the owner has promised them to the heirs to the family that started the mining operation at the site. Very little else is worth salvaging.

Property background:

- industrial building associated with coal mining operations along the Cedar River
- constructed 1927
- designated a King County Landmark District in 1993
- no previous COAs; the property has been the subject of various attempts to rehabilitate, but meeting health, zoning and building codes has been a challenge

Applicable features of significance:

- exterior portions of the building
- interior of the shop
- railroad trestle
- concrete foundation of the washhouse
- all land area within the boundaries.



COA evaluated on the basis of the following:

King County Code 20.62.080

Section A. At any time after a designation report and notice has been filed with the director, a certificate of appropriateness must be obtained from the commission before any alterations may be made to the significant features of the landmark identified in the designation report.

Section C.3. Type III COA, for demolition, moving and excavation of archaeological sites.

These code sections are applicable, as the proposed demolition impacts all significant features of the building. A type III COA is being considered for complete demolition.

Rules and Regulations of the King County Landmarks Commission

Part VI. Section H. Type III Certificates of Appropriateness shall be approved by the Commission only when one or both of the following two conditions have been established pursuant to the following standards and criteria:

- The requested action is required to alleviate a threat to public health and safety; and/or

- The requested action is required to rectify a condition of unreasonable economic return.”

This section of Rules and Regulations is applicable, as the project requires a Type III COA.

If the applicant requests approval based on the threat to public health and safety, there are additional thresholds which must be met. According to the Rules, “To prove the existence of a threat to public health and safety the applicant must establish and the Commission must find:

- That a major and imminent threat to public safety exists as demonstrated by an independent analysis and supporting other information
- That all available alternatives for rectifying the threat have been considered as demonstrated by analysis of all such alternatives
- That the costs associated with rectifying the threat would create a condition whereby the investments in the project are incapable of earning a reasonable economic return as described in KCC 20.62.080 and Part VII of the Rules and Regulations.”

This standard is met, in balance. The owner/applicant has not yet provided an independent analysis or any other supporting information that demonstrates there is a major and imminent threat to public safety. However, the commission’s staff architect has toured the building and feels it cannot be salvaged. The flat roof has significantly deteriorated and has large holes in it; the structural supports between garage bays are rotting at the base, and several of them have failed; and both floors of the office end of the building have become saturated and are growing mold. A heavy snow or strong wind in the right location could cause parts of the building to collapse.

Available alternatives to rectify the threat include temporary securing of the building or complete reconstruction. Partial reconstruction or repair is not possible due to the deteriorated condition and loss of siding, roofing, windows, doors, and structural supports. Temporarily securing the building would require a significant investment in fencing and plywood to cover the windows. The building is so large and has so many window openings that it would be easy to spend several thousand dollars just for the materials to secure it. In many locations it would be difficult to attach plywood to the window frames because those frames have rotted away. The location of the building, in a remote location with no neighbors has invited vandals over the years, and any fencing or boarded windows would likely encourage more; the fencing and boarded windows could easily be breached during nighttime hours.

The applicant made several attempts to rehabilitate the building shortly after acquiring it in the 1990s, but met with resistance from various county agencies, and was unable to develop a rehabilitation plan. This is adequately documented in current landmark files. A complete reconstruction at this point would serve no purpose for current use of the site; even if reconstructed, finding an alternative use

would be challenging due to location and zoning/health/building code requirements. If it were to be reconstructed, conservative estimates could easily top \$1 million.

Outstanding issues: Staff is waiting on documentation of condition and insurance cancellation.

Recommendation:

The DRC recommends **approval** of the request with the conditions that the applicant photograph the building prior to demolition, and provide staff with adequate documentation of condition and insurance cancellation.

Recommended Motion: I move to ratify the agreement between the commission and applicant and to approve the Type III COA to demolish the Pacific Coast Coal Company Administration Office as recommended by the DRC at today's meeting.



