

October 8, 2019

Cynthia Johnson Elmore
Louisville Metro Preservation Officer
Division of Planning & Design Services
Louisville Metro
444 S. Fifth St.
Louisville, KY 40202

Re: Landmark Petition for 7607 Wolf Pen Branch Road/Hoke House

Dear Cynthia:

I am writing concerning the landmark petition received by your office on November 7, 2016 by the Wolf Pen Preservation Association (“WPPA”) related to a 1,750 sq. foot home on property owned by my client, Fincastle Farms Development I LLC (“Fincastle”), located at 7607 Wolf Pen Branch Road known as the Peter Hoke House (the “Hoke House”). As you know, although WPPA’s petition was filed in 2016, the petition remained unopened and unevaluated pursuant to a tolling agreement between Fincastle Farms and the WPPA that sought to give time for Fincastle to market and sell the property to a suitable buyer. The parties’ tolling agreement has now expired, and we are aware that the WPPA’s petition has been deemed “received” as of August 1, 2019 and is now before your staff for a technical review and pre-hearing conference.

In anticipation of the technical review, we hope PDS staff will take the following information about the Hoke House into consideration and recommend **denial** of WPPA’s petition.

First, WPPA’s petition is factually incorrect. The petition asserts that the historical character of Hoke House is supported by neighbors’ long-standing, but mistaken, belief that a culturally significant cemetery is located on the Hoke House property, and that the Hoke House property is a “culturally significant natural landscape characterized by trees, sinkholes, large rocks, and open fields.” In truth, the alleged cemetery is a myth, and there are no culturally significant natural features on the Hoke House property. Fincastle commissioned a complete archaeological report of the Hoke House property in 2017 as part of its subdivision application in Case No. 16SUBDIV1017. That report concluded that there was no cemetery, and no archaeological features of historical significance on the Hoke House property. Because the purported cemetery is nonexistent, and the natural features have been confirmed by an archaeological expert to be culturally insignificant, WPPA’s petition is without merit and should be denied.

Cynthia Johnson Elmore
Louisville Metro Preservation Officer
Division of Planning & Design Services
October 8, 2019

Second, the Hoke House does not meet the definition of an “Individual Landmark.” Individual Landmark is defined as “one of significant importance to Louisville Metro, the Commonwealth, or the nation and which represents irreplaceable distinctive architectural features or historical associations that represent the historic character of Louisville Metro, the Commonwealth, or the nation.” The Hoke House is described in the petition as “unoccupied and in need of repairs,” and the petition states that “aluminum sheathing has been applied in a manner that maintains many of the historical features.” These descriptors do not rise to the level of “irreplaceable distinctive architectural features.” Further, there is no evidence regarding the Hoke House and any historical associations. The firmest associations found in the petition have to do with other structures owned by other parties or nearby cemeteries with no association to the Hoke House.

Third, the Hoke House lacks “Integrity” as defined in the Ordinance. Integrity is defined as “the authenticity of a Structure or Site’s historic identity evidenced by survival of physical characteristics that existed during the Structure or Site’s historic...period.” According to the petition, the Hoke House was built on the subject property as part of a 143 acre working farm. The farm has now been divided into lots within the Harrods Glen Neighborhood. Further, the Fincastle Farms Neighborhood is still under development, leaving the Hoke House on a single lot of approximately 1 acre, which lot will be surrounded by other lots and other homes, both existing and planned.

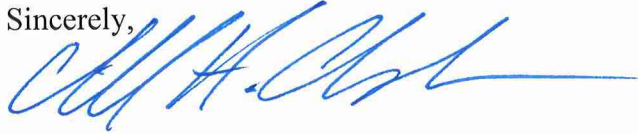
Fourth, the historic preservation community itself has proven that it has no interest in saving the Hoke House property. Fincastle undertook extraordinary efforts during the period of the tolling agreement to find a buyer for the Hoke House who would refurbish and improve the structure, even going so far as to grant an option to the Kentucky Trust for Historic Preservation to purchase the structure for \$1.00. Fincastle cooperated with WPPA to hire an individual with a track record of selling historic properties to market and sell the property. The agent hired could not find a suitable buyer, despite the fact that Fincastle offered to give away the Hoke House for free, sell the land at a reduced price, and/or contribute to the costs of moving the structure off the property. Fincastle placed the Hoke House on the 2018 Filson Society Distinctive Dwellings House Tour. Fincastle advertised the Hoke House in This Old Home Magazine. In addition to these efforts, Fincastle showed the property to several builders to see if it could be saved as a guest house or annex for a new home built on the Hoke House property.

When none of these options worked, Fincastle also discussed the possibility of salvaging the Hoke House and donating the proceeds to the WPPA. Unfortunately, these efforts were all unsuccessful. No interested buyers came forward and WPPA would not agree to the salvage arrangement. The lack of an interested buyer—even on the extraordinarily generous terms offered by Fincastle—and WPPA’s own refusal to cooperate in the salvage of the Hoke House structure, demonstrates that Hoke House has no significant cultural or historical value. Accordingly, WPPA’s petition should be denied.

Cynthia Johnson Elmore
Louisville Metro Preservation Officer
Division of Planning & Design Services
October 8, 2019

On behalf of Fincastle, I hope that you will take this information into consideration during the technical review of the WPAA's petition. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information during your review.

Sincerely,



Clifford H. Ashburner

CHA/slw

15358680v1