



Section 4  
**Relocation or  
Demolition**





Both the Capehart House (above) and the Lewis-Smith House (below) were relocated within their neighborhood to Blount Street sites and were adapted to house government offices.



The Lewis-Smith House retains its original orientation, facing east, in its new location on Blount Street.



Formerly located on land acquired by Peace College for expansion, these residential structures now facing Person Street were successfully relocated instead of being demolished.

## 4.1 Relocation

Moving early Raleigh buildings or historic structures is usually undertaken to save them from demolition or to fulfill the objectives of a revitalization plan. Often these two objectives complement each other; a significant building threatened with demolition or surrounded by an environment not compatible with an adaptive use to which it could be put, can be relocated into a compatible environment. This activity can result in multiple benefits: saving the building and the embodied energy it represents, enhancing the environment, and increasing the real estate value of the building. However, relocation can also result in a loss of integrity of setting and environment due to a change in location, thus compromising the significance of the historic building itself. Therefore, the decision must be weighed carefully, especially for landmark buildings. Moving a Raleigh Historic Landmark will automatically result in its delisting unless specified otherwise in the ordinance.

### Things to Consider As You Plan

Because moving structures is complicated, time-consuming, and expensive, it should not be undertaken until every aspect of the project has been considered and evaluated. The property owner and the commission must give full consideration to the architectural and environmental aspects of the situation before addressing the practical problems of moving a structure. Attention should be given to any archaeological resources that may be affected in both the old and new location assuming they are both within the Historic Overlay District. The following questions provide a framework for evaluating the architectural and environmental context for such a decision:

- Is the structure threatened with demolition?
- Is the existing surrounding environment incompatible with the preservation of the structure?
- Is relocation the only alternative to demolition?
- Is the structure significant enough architecturally or historically to warrant moving it?
- Is the property sound enough structurally to survive a move and be adapted to its new site?
- If the structure is currently sited in a historic district, what is proposed for the site once the structure is removed?
- Will the move adversely affect the overall character of the historic district or of remaining historic structures?
- Will the move damage significant district site features, such as a tree canopy, en route or on the site?
- If the proposed site for a relocated structure is in a historic district, does the structure fit into the era of the district; is its style, architectural quality, size, and scale compatible with the district?
- If the proposed site for a relocated structure is not in a historic district, what covenants, if any, will be established to preserve the distinctive character of the relocated structure?
- Is there an appropriate and practical new use for the structure on its new site?

The Raleigh Historic Development Commission must issue a certificate of appropriateness for the move before any other necessary permits can be obtained. The commission will make every effort to help the property owner through the process.

## 4.1 Relocation: Guidelines

- .1 Before moving a historic structure, document its original setting and context. Use photographs, site plans, or other graphic or written statements to record the existing site conditions.
- .2 Enlist contractors experienced in moving historic buildings to do the following:
  - Determine the structural condition of the property before the move.
  - Coordinate the move with the utility companies and appropriate City departments.
  - Protect the structure from vandalism or weather damage before, during, and after the move.
  - Minimize structural damage during the move.
- .3 Relocate a structure within the historic district only if it is determined to be architecturally congruous with the special character of the historic district according to the guidelines for new construction.
- .4 Relocate a structure on a site within a historic district according to new construction guidelines for siting, orientation, plantings, and other pertinent aspects of site and setting.
- .5 Ensure that the relocation of a structure will not diminish or damage existing historic district buildings or the overall character of the district. Pay particular attention to the tree canopy along the route of the move.
- .6 Provide the RHDC with site plan information for proposed site features and plantings of the new setting, including information on accessory buildings, driveways, site lighting, and parking areas.
- .7 If the original site of the structure to be relocated is within a historic district, before the move, submit to the commission a site plan for proposed site features and plantings of the original site after the relocation. It is appropriate to implement a tree protection plan prior to the commencement of construction activities.
- .8 Protect significant site features of the original site, the new site, and the route of the move during the relocation.



*Even the two story portico of the Lewis-Smith House remained attached during its relocation.*

## 4.2 Demolition

Demolition of significant buildings, structures, sites, archaeological resources, objects, or trees is discouraged. Given the irreversible nature of demolition, full deliberation of all alternatives before action is essential. State enabling legislation and city ordinances provide that an application for a certificate of appropriateness authorizing demolition of a building, structure, or site may not be denied, unless the State Historic Preservation Officer has made a determination that the property has statewide significance. However, the authorization date of such a certificate may be delayed by the commission for up to 365 days from the date of approval. The purpose of this delay period is to give the commission adequate time to explore every alternative to the destruction of the historic resource. Because the commission and the City Council take the loss of resources in the historic districts and proposed historic districts very seriously, use of the delay time is extremely important in reviewing all possibilities for saving a threatened structure. During the delay, it is important that the building is protected so that it does not deteriorate.

In addition to the loss to Raleigh of a historic resource, demolition is an inherently environmentally unfriendly act considering the loss of embodied energy contained in the building and the enormous amount of materials to be added to the local landfill. Such unsustainable actions are in conflict with the goals of the city.

A property owner's failure to properly maintain a historic building or site can result in its eventual demolition due to the loss of its structural integrity. Such irresponsible treatment of historic resources conflicts directly with the goals of the city in establishing the historic districts. Consequently, demolition by neglect may result in enforcement action by the Housing & Neighborhoods Department per the Unified Development Ordinance Article 11.8 "Demolition by Neglect of Historic Landmarks and Structures Within Historic Overlay Districts." This article specifies standards under which deterioration may be evaluated to determine if a structure is undergoing demolition by neglect. If so, enforcement may be initiated to require the repair of the property. "Mothballing" a building to preserve it for future rehabilitation work will ensure it does not deteriorate further when empty.

### Things to Consider As You Plan

In considering a request for a certificate of appropriateness to demolish a structure within a historic district, the commission will weigh the impact of the proposed demolition on the overall character of the historic district as well as adjacent contributing buildings. In addition, the commission will consider whether any specific use for the site has been proposed to mediate the loss of the historic structure.

A site plan illustrating any proposed development or introduction of plantings following demolition should be developed and submitted to the commission at the time the request for a certificate of appropriateness is made. Before authorized demolition of a property, the owner is responsible for recording a significant structure through documents such as photographs and measured drawings as specified and approved by the RHDC. The documents shall be kept in the commission's files. Because clearing the site will likely destroy any archaeological resources that are present, consideration should be given to identifying and mitigating any significant archaeological resources prior to demolition.

## 4.2 Demolition: Guidelines

- .1 Before demolition, work with the RHDC to pursue all alternatives to demolition.
- .2 Before demolition, record significant structures through photographs and/or measured drawings as specified by the RHDC.
- .3 Before demolition, work with the RHDC and other interested parties to salvage usable architectural materials and features.
- .4 Before demolition, submit a site plan to the commission illustrating proposed site development or plantings to follow demolition.
- .5 During demolition, ensure the safety of any adjacent properties and historic resources. Also, during and after demolition, protect trees on the site from damage due to compaction of the soil by equipment or materials.
- .6 It is appropriate to implement a tree protection plan prior to the commencement of demolition activities.
- .7 After demolition, clear the site promptly and thoroughly.
- .8 After demolition, plant or develop the site promptly as approved in the proposed site plan.



*The demolition of historic buildings depletes a community's built heritage. It also results in the loss of the energy expended in their construction and adds to the waste in landfills.*