



THE CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND – AMERICA’S FIRST RESORT  
Department of Planning, Zoning, Development & Inspections

MEMORANDUM

To: Patricia Reynolds, Director of Planning  
From: Helen Johnson, Preservation Planner  
Subject: Review of Demolition Proposal: 25 Waites Wharf (32-155), 1 Waites Wharf (32-268), 16 Waites Wharf (32-248), 20 W Extension Street (32-267), and 23 Coddington Wharf (32-293)  
Date: November 15, 2019

There are currently conflicting reports concerning the question of what, if any, historic resources will be impacted by the proposed demolition application submitted by Harbour Realty LLC, Harbour Realty LLC, Tomorl LLC, 20 West Extension LLC, and Thomas B. Abruzese, respectively. My findings as of today, November 15, 2019 are as follows:

1. 16 Waites Wharf (32-248) and 23 Coddington Wharf (32-293) are listed as contributing buildings in the 2008 Southern Thames National Register Historic District Nominating Papers.

*23 Coddington Wharf*

*J.J. Buckley House (ca 1900): A shingled 1½-story, end-gable-roof house with an uncoursed stone foundation, enclosed full-width front porch, 2-over-2 windows, and a small chimney on the west side of the ridgeline.*

*16 Waites Wharf*

*Lynch Stables (ca 1890): A low, wide, stone-and-brick 1-story building with a shallow end-gable roof, irregular fenestration and vehicular and pedestrian entrances on the façade, and a low irregular stepped pediment across the upper wall of the façade. This functional structure recalls the historic working waterfront.*

2. 20 W Extension Street (32-267) is listed as 14 W Extension in 2008 Southern Thames National Register Historic District Nominating Papers.

*14 W Extension Street*

*Warehouse (early 20th century): A rambling wood-frame and concrete-block 1-story U-plan warehouse with a gable-roof section to the east and flat roofs to the west. This is one of the utilitarian buildings associated with the historic working waterfront. Its accretive*

*quality makes it a fine, typical example, though hardly picturesque or winsome. Another example is across the street at number 15 (q.v.)*

3. 1 Waites Wharf (32-268) is listed as 24 and 26 Waites Wharf in 2008 Southern Thames National Register Historic District Nominating Papers.

*24 Waites Wharf*

*Commercial/Industrial Building (ca 1920): A brick 1-story, end-gable-roof building with a center entrance, small windows high on the east and west elevations, and a round metal chimney near the center of the ridgeline. Now a glassworks, this was probably a waterfront-related maritime-oriented building.*

*26 Waites Wharf*

*Commercial/Industrial Building (ca 1920 et seq.): A brick, 1-story, flat-roof building with a 4-bay façade, paired windows, and extensive additions to the east and west. This was probably a waterfront related maritime-oriented building.*

4. The Statement of Significance from 2008 Southern Thames National Register Historic District Nominating Papers states the following:

*“The Southern Thames Historic District is locally significant because it exemplifies and illustrates some of the important forces which shaped Newport's history. The district meets Criterion A under the Community Planning and Development area of significance, since the buildings that line the district's wharves, the commercial buildings along Thames Street, and the many houses set on the district's side streets are important documents that elucidate Newport's history. The district evinces the town's development as a 19th-century port with adjunct industrial and commercial development, the development of neighborhoods to house those who built and staffed the great houses which characterized Newport's transition into a premier resort, and the provision of commercial opportunities. While most of the district's buildings are plain vernacular examples of trends in American architectural history, a few of the district's buildings, especially 18th- and 19th-century merchants' houses and churches, are unusually fine examples of the architect's art and are the work of masters, and thus the district meets Criterion C with the Architecture area of significance. The district's period of significance runs from 1750, when the first buildings in the district were constructed, to ca 1940, when Newport's economy experienced a decline and construction in the district declined to a slow pace. The Southern Thames Historic District retains physical traces of all periods of its development. The residential area, business district, and waterfront played significant parts in the growth and expansion of the city's social, economic, and civic life. The network of streets reflects the evolution of Newport's settlement pattern from the 17th century through the early 20th. A thriving maritime trade during the colonial era created a cultural climate that produced the distinctive eighteenth-century houses in the district. In the mid- and late 19th century, the grid of narrow streets between Thames and Spring Streets evolved; land was subdivided for intensive residential development; row upon row*

*of simple residences, rental cottages, and tenements were built to accommodate the city's working-class population during Newport's growth as a summer colony. Second-generation natives of Irish and English descent, with new Irish, English, and Scottish immigrant workers, made their homes in this neighborhood. Many worked in the textile mills, factories, and gas works that were located in the vicinity of the waterfront. The fine Victorian commercial buildings along Thames Street helped to meet the community's new retail needs.* Section 8, pg 1-2.

4. The Lower Thames Street Management Plan states the following:

*“The character of Newport’s waterfront is a multifaceted reflection of Newport’s history, with each distinct era contributing varied development patterns and styles. Such examples include the colonial layout of wharves; the 19<sup>th</sup> century mill buildings; the street design completed by 1870; and the diversity of building styles from all eras.”* The Lower Thames Street Management Plan, circa 1983, pg 1. These contributing buildings are representative of the historic working waterfront and the residences

5. The demolition of a contributing building listed in the nominating papers of a National Register Historic District should be considered an adverse effect to both the individual resource and the National Register district in which the resource is located.

Staff is still in the process of analyzing the discrepancies in addresses between the application and the 2008 Southern Thames National Register Historic District Nominating Papers. More time is needed to assess the demolition application.