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'Leprosy' of neglect claimed 1407 Caroline

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Leprosy' of neglect claimed 1407 Caroline

In the face on the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Fredericksburg, would history buffs be glad that historic Fredericksburg is dwindling away through a slow process of tearing it down that continues to spread like leprosy?

Recently, a historically significant house at 1407 Caroline St. was torn down because one city official made the call on a Friday and over the weekend it disappeared forever. The owners all knew the significance. For more than 12 years, the city of Fredericksburg has turned a blind eye to that building.

We are all to blame for not protecting our heritage. We allow a few to destroy what we should be protecting for future generations. The historic district is tiny, barely a few city blocks. And yet there are no guardians who can protect it.

What just happened here and what continues to happen in this city is rooted in control, not preservationists' inability to provide sanctuary. The Architectural Review Board has little power because the commonwealth of Virginia and contractors during the height of the boom a few years back removed the board's teeth.

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Preservationists never had a chance to plead the case for saving the circa 1790s house.

To follow a mandate to provide a historic district is a top-down effort. This city needs to hold its city officials accountable and force a means to protect historically significant buildings.

The fact that one person has the power to override so many agencies and organizations makes it glaringly obvious that the present system is failing miserably.


Marilynn Deane Mendell

Fredericksburg



The writer was chairman of the Architectural Review Board.

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