

**NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING
October 22, 2014
Wednesday 7:00 P.M. – Northville City Hall – Council Chambers**

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

Mayor Pro Tem Allen called the Historic District Commission public hearing to order at 7:04 p.m.

Present: Allen, Argenta, Field, Gudritz, Hoffman, Vernacchia
Absent: Johnson - excused
Also Present: Consultant Elmiger

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: none

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION Gudritz, support by Vernacchia, to approve the agenda as published. **Motion carried unanimously.**

4. PUBLIC HEARING – 500 W. Cady Street Demolition

Mayor Pro Tem Allen explained that the purpose of tonight's public hearing was to hear comment regarding the proposed demolition of the home at 500 W. Cady Street, located in Northville's Historic District. He further explained that the Commission would first hear a presentation from the applicants, and then he would open the hearing for public comment.

Gregory Presley, 317 West Dunlap, Northville, MI and architect for the proposed project, was present to speak on behalf of this application.

Mr. Presley introduced property owners Julie and Mike Malloure.

Applicant Julie Malloure gave some of her personal background, growing up in New England, and spoke of falling in love with Northville, which was her husband's childhood home. She explained that they had been constantly looking for a location close to downtown Northville where they could raise their family. She affirmed that they would help preserve Northville's historic charm and character.

Applicant Mike Malloure also gave some of his personal background, including his long-standing and current family ties to Northville. He had a deep respect for Northville and especially the Historic District. He explained that they wanted to remove a nonconforming structure and replace it with something that was more complimentary to the District.

Because of rumors he had heard regarding how much they had paid for the property, Applicant Malloure wanted the record to show that the asking price had been \$297,000 and they had purchased the property for \$310,000. They had not yet selected a builder.

Utilizing graphics on the overhead projector, Applicant Malloure pointed out that the age of the subject property (1952) was an outlier among the immediate neighboring properties, the youngest of which was built in 1926. He also pointed out that they had received 58 letters of support, representing 68 people; he gave these letters to the Commission. He referred to a second graphic, which showed the immediate surrounding neighbors who supported this demolition request. One neighbor, represented as neutral on the graphic, had handed him a letter of support this evening. Mr. Malloure thanked all those people who

were supporting this project, and spoke again to his desire to live in Northville and his respect for the Historic District.

Architect Presley continued the presentation. Utilizing a further PowerPoint presentation on the overhead projector, Mr. Presley said that the proposal to demolish was based on the grounds that retaining the resource was not in the interest of the majority of the community. He reviewed the application as follows:

- The HDC needed to balance preservation with appropriate change.
- Two questions were:
 - Was the property historically significant?
 - Was the property architecturally significant?
- The historical record, including the records of the Historic Society, showed no historical significance in this case.
- Regarding architectural significance, Mr. Presley reviewed original 1972 documents regarding the Historic District, emphasizing that the architectural styles called out at the time were Greek Revival, Victorian, and Carpenter Gothic.
- 61 homes were listed in 1972 (approximately 1/3 of the homes in the District), with others “equally worthy.”
- A complete historic inventory within the District had never been completed.
- While what was considered historic and worthy of preservation changed over time, the overall intent of the District seemed to be to preserve homes that predated the automobile. These homes shared the following characteristics:
 - Close to tree lined streets
 - Close to public sidewalks
 - Close to front covered sitting porches
 - Detached garages including former carriage houses in the rear

Mr. Presley argued the following, from his own residential survey:

- Out of 200 structures west of Center Street, 165 were contributing, including 59 homes originally listed in this area (the others were listed east of Center Street). Additionally, 25 structures were compatible, echoing the themes of the Historic District.
- There were 10 noncontributing structures in the District: modern ranches, tri-levels, bi-levels, and one-story structures. These modern homes did not represent any unique architecture or any historical events, and existed by the thousands outside the historic district.

Mr. Presley reviewed the existing homes on Cady Street, including their conformance to the characteristics listed above (tree lined streets, public sidewalks, locations of porches and garages) and also if they were 1, 2, or 1.5 stories (bungalows).

Mr. Presley reviewed Historic District Design Standards regarding mass, height, proportion, hierarchy/rhythm, and garage and carport guidelines, and how these standards related to the home under consideration this evening. In every instance, Mr. Presley argued that the subject home did not meet these standards. If the subject site was vacant, the current home was so far outside the standards of the Historic District that it would not be permitted.

Mr. Presley addressed the difficulties of enlarging and opening up this 1200 square foot home architecturally. He also noted a foundation problem in the basement. These issues presented a practical difficulty for any updating, and would require gutting inside and out. Additionally, because the front facing garage would have to remain if this was deemed a historic resource, the home would never fit the characteristics of the Historic District.

Mr. Presley closed his presentation by saying this ranch had been duplicated many times throughout the greater metropolitan area and throughout the country, and was therefore not unique and was not worthy of preservation. Further, this specific structure was functionally and physically obsolete; the applicants believed they could create a more complimentary home for the Historic District. He asked for affirmative action on the demolition request.

In reply to a question from Commissioner Field, Mr. Presley gave the background to the 1972 documents regarding the Historic District, and noted that these were on the City's website. The work done in 1972 did not list every home of historic significance, but did list enough in order to be recognized by the Secretary of the Interior as an Historic District.

Mayor Pro Tem Allen opened the hearing for public comment.

Note: twenty-seven residents spoke at this public hearing. Many people commented about their personal histories as these related to Northville and their love for the City and the Historic District generally. The record will show whether or not each speaker supported this demolition application and a brief summary of the reasons given. Every effort has been made to spell names correctly.

1. Ming Louie, 820 Spring Drive, opposed the application to demolish. He was concerned about the reduction of older homes in the Historic District and wanted to preserve those homes remaining, including the 10 Mr. Presley thought were non-contributing. He was concerned about this demolition setting a precedent for future demolitions. While a 1950's home might not seem worthy of preservation today, as time passed it might seem very worthy. Part of what constituted living in an Historic District was accommodating life in a smaller home.
2. Tim Rodgers, 487 West Cady, supported the application to demolish. The subject property had no historic significance and no architectural significance.
3. Mike McClish, 647 Thayer Street, opposed the application to demolish, based on the District's demolition guidelines, from which he quoted at length, and which read, in part: *"The demolition or moving of even a non-contributing resource can have serious consequences for the District as a whole. Consequently, demolition and moving are strongly discouraged. The demolition or moving of historic resources within the Historic District must always be the last resort."* A new home might look old but it had zero history and no historic value.
4. Rick Birdsall, 1030 Portsmere Court, supported the application to demolish. The current structure detracted from the Historic District; the purpose of the District was not to preserve a cookie cutter home such as this one.
5. John Libbe, 504 West Cady, supported the application to demolish. He lived next door to the subject property, and could not see its historic or architectural significance.
6. Ryan Racine, 501 West Cady, supported the application to demolish. The subject property was not a good example of mid-20th century architectural design and was not architecturally significant. It was out of place in the Historic District.
7. Shawn Riley, 335 Eaton Street, supported the application to demolish. The subject property was not architecturally significant, did not fit in the Historic District, and was historically and functionally obsolete.
8. Tim Luikart, 521 West Cady, opposed the application to demolish. Referencing a comment made earlier by Mr. Presley, Mr. Luikart clarified for the record that his garage was not on the National Register of Historic Places. Reading from his October 21, 2014 letter to City Manager Sullivan, and which he distributed to the Commission, Mr. Luikart outlined his reasons for opposition in detail, concluding that there was a dangerous trend to demolish non-contributing structures, so that large homes could be built in their place.

9. Dan Hackett, 248 First Street, supported the application to demolish. The subject property was out of place in the Historic District. The applicants were proposing to build something more in character in terms of scale, proportion, mass and design.
10. Robert M. Sochacki, 223 Linden Street, opposed the application to demolish. The Historic District was not just a group of houses and their significance was not based just on their architectural correctness. The District was preserved to tell a story, reflected in the structures in the District. The subject property was an important part of that story.
11. Tom Guy, 433 Dubuar Street, supported the application to demolish. The subject property was out of place in the Historic District.
12. Donna and Oliver Owens, 255 West Street, opposed the application to demolish. They had gone through this same process when they had built their home, and now regretted their actions. Building a large home on a small lot had unintended consequences in terms of building standards. Their house was built larger than approved by the HDC, significant problems resulted, and there was no follow-up from the City.
13. Michelle Hutto, 333 North Rogers, supported the application to demolish. The subject structure was an eyesore.

In response to a comment from Ms. Hutto, Planning Consultant Elmiger clarified that the Historic Guidelines were enabled through State legislation and were legally binding.

14. Jim Long, 400 Thayer Court, supported the application to demolish. A 1952 ranch style home was not historically significant and did not merit preservation.
15. Denise Nash, 417 West Dunlap, opposed the application to demolish. Living in the historic district meant adopting one's life style to an older home. Wanting a new large home in the Historic District represented a conflict with the District itself. New homes – no matter how old they appeared - had no history. The subject property was part of the history of Northville.
16. Maureen Hayes, 418 Randolph Street, opposed the application to demolish. This kind of activity made investing in existing historic homes very difficult; allowing tear downs and new builds impacted negatively on those who were spending money preserving their historic homes. Ms. Hayes also distributed a written document to the Commission.
17. Anne Smith, 425 East Street, supported the application to demolish. She felt the subject property was not historically or architecturally significant.
18. Dan Smith, 960 McDonald Drive, supported the application to demolish. The subject property did not fit in the Historic District. Over 100,000 homes with the same footprint had been built in Michigan, and thus this home was not historically significant.
19. Ed Funke, builder, supported the application to demolish. The subject home was not architecturally or historically significant. As a builder in Northville, he knew that a new home with correct architectural style, proportion and massing could be complimentary to the Historic District.
20. Leanie Bayly, 223 Linden Street, opposed the application to demolish. Reading from her October 22, 2014 letter to City Manager Sullivan, and which she distributed to the Commission, Ms. Bayly outlined her reasons for opposition in detail, explaining her history of service on the HDC and her expertise in this field. She felt the demolition request and proposed new home was completely inappropriate.
21. Jennifer Luikart, 521 West Cady Street, opposed the application to demolish. She spoke to the need to preserve and protect the Historic District. She referenced page 7 of the Demolition Guidelines and wondered if the home was too small for the applicants, why did they purchase it? If the subject property "did not fit" in the Historic District, a new home that was larger than any other home on the block would not fit in any better.
22. Sidney Migoski, architectural student and Northville native, supported the application to demolish. The subject home was not authentic in that nothing important or unique was represented by that

home. It was a non-contributing structure. It had a lack of relationship to the street and preserving it was not in the best interests of the community.

23. Peter Maise, 729 Grandview, supported the application to demolish. The subject structure was out of character with the Historic District.
24. D. J. Boyd, 718 Grandview, supported the application to demolish.
25. Kim Voytal, 113 West, supported the application to demolish. The subject structure, which did not fit the image of Northville, did not contribute to the nature and vitality of the Historic District.
26. Louis Ronayne, 310 West Dunlap, supported the application to demolish. A 1952 ranch was not historically significant and was not worthy of preservation.
27. Ken Dobson, 121 West Street, supported the application to demolish. He did not think the subject home could be built today within the Historic District and was not historically significant.

Seeing that no one else came forward to speak, Mayor Pro Tem Allen asked for a motion to close the public hearing.

MOTION Field, support by Argenta, to close the public hearing. Motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION CONSIDERATION OF DEMOLITION REQUEST

Commissioner Gudritz thanked everyone for coming this evening and sharing their perspectives. Public hearings like this were of value to the community and to the Historic District Commission.

Commissioner Gudritz continued that the struggle regarding this case had been repeated many times this evening, and was represented by comments made to the importance of architectural consistency vs. a home built in the early 1950s that represented a specific architectural style of the time (modern ranch) and an era (post World War II) in Northville history. What was the value of this home to Northville history? While the home may not be contributing to the architecture of Cady Street, it could be argued that this diversity of architecture was a good thing, and to remove the home removed that part of Northville's history. The charge of the HDC was to protect the resources and the homes in the Historic District.

Commissioner Argenta said that the HDC was governed by the Secretary of Interior Standards and by State law. He referenced Bulletin 15 by the Secretary of the Interior, adopted by the State of Michigan regarding whether a structure was contributing or non-contributing. A State of Michigan document entitled *Evaluating Historic Resources* defined non-contributing as follows:

A non-contributing (non-historic) resource is one that does not add to the historic architectural qualities or historic association of a district because it was not present during the period of significance, does not relate to the documented significance, or due to alteration, additions, and other changes it no longer possesses historic integrity.

Mr. Argenta also referred to the Foreword of the 1972 City of Northville Historic District Guidelines, which mandated the preservation of the theme of the Historic District, described as mid to late 19th century homes, primarily Victorian, Gothic Revival, etc.

Commissioner Argenta continued that he didn't think the house in question added to the architectural qualities of the Historic District and it didn't fit in with the theme of the District. If the Historic District had been created in 1952, when the house was built, it would probably not have been permitted in the District. It was a mass produced post-war home that could be built anyplace, anytime, anywhere. It was out of place and had no significance.

Commissioner Argenta further commented that each demolition request was heard and decided separately, on its own merits.

As others had already done, Commissioner Field referred to the Foreword of the Historic District Design Standards, especially noting the theme called out there: Victorian homes from the 1850s to the later 1800s, especially Gothic Revival. Commissioner Field quoted from the Foreword as follows: *The Historic District Commission exists to encourage preservation of the theme and to provide information which will educate and assist property owners in keeping their properties compatible with the theme.* Commissioner Field felt that a 1952 home did not fit with this theme.

Commissioner Field then directed the Commission's attention to *Michigan Local Historic Districts Act 169 of 1970, 399.201a Definitions: (k) "Historic preservation" means the identification, evaluation, establishment, and protection of resources significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.* Commissioner Field did not find the subject home significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture. Commissioner Field also felt that if a home was not found to be a historical resource, the standards in the guidelines for demolition did not apply. The definition of a resource was: *(l) "Historic resource" means a publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture of this state or a community within this state, or of the United States.* Commissioner Field felt the subject home was not significant as referred to in this Act.

Commissioner Field pointed out that the standards and parameters of the home that would be built would be the purview of the Building Department.

Referring again to the State document, *Evaluating Historic Resources*, Commissioner Argenta read the definition of a contributing resource: *A contributing (historic) resource, is one that adds to the historic association, historic architectural quality, or archaeological values for which a property is significant because it was present during the period of significance, relates directly to the documented significance, and possesses historic integrity.*

Because of comments made this evening, Commissioner Argenta clarified that Cabbagetown and Beal Town were not protected as the Historic District was. The HDC was doing its best to protect the quality and fabric of the Historic District.

Commissioner Vernachia said that he did not think the subject home rose to the level of historical significance as set forth in the Northville Historic District Standards. Regarding several comments made this evening about what happens next to other properties in the District, regarding how the Commission would deal with potential big foot issues and potential home styles, many determining factors were Zoning Ordinance and Building Code driven. The HDC could only act within its charge and scope of influence. Because of the information presented tonight and because of the legal information that Commissioners Argenta and Field just reviewed, he would support the demolition going forward.

Commissioner Hoffman said that he thought it was important to hold tonight's public hearing. He reviewed the comments made this evening, based on personal perspective, law, and fact. He thanked everyone who came this evening and were a part of this process.

Commissioner Hoffman continued that per the Secretary of Interior Standards and the Historic District Design Standards, he did not think the subject structure met the definition of a contributing structure. In terms of the proposed new home, the Commission needed to exercise due diligence in how the new structure would fit into the fabric of the Historic District.

Mayor Pro Tem Allen agreed the subject home was a non-contributing style and structure, in that it represented a 1950s mass produced home, and to try to add on to it within Historic District Design Standards would very likely make it worse instead of better.

Commissioner Argenta noted that the HDC reviewed construction plans for compatibility with the Historic District. Actual construction follow-up and enforcement, including standards regarding lot coverage, height, size, drainage, etc., was under the purview of the Building Department and its new Building Official.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hoffman, Planning Consultant Elmiger said that the application had been accepted as complete at the September 17, 2014 meeting.

MOTION Vernacchia, support by Field, that the Commission find that the structure is not historically or architecturally significant. Motion carried 5-1 (Gudritz opposed).

MOTION Vernacchia, support by Field, to grant a Notice to Proceed with the demolition of the structure at 500 West Cady Street, based on tonight's discussion, and the finding that the structure is not historically or architecturally significant. Motion carried 5-1 (Gudritz opposed).

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Allen adjourned the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl McGuire
Recording Secretary

Approved 11-19-2014