

CITY OF NORTHVILLE
Local Historic District Survey Committee Meeting Minutes
September 25, 2018
Northville City Hall - Council Chambers
215 W. Main Street
Northville, Michigan 48167

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the City of Northville Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, 215 W. Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167.

Present: James Allen
Leanie Bayly
Mark Chester
Suzanne Cozart
David Field
Robert Miller (left 8:14 p.m.)
Jeff Russell

Absent: None

Also present: Elaine Robinson of Commonwealth Heritage Group, Planning Consultant Sally Elmiger, and approximately 40 citizens.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Motion Miller, support by Russell, to approve the agenda as published.
Motion carried unanimously.**

APPROVAL OF 7/19/18 MEETING MINUTES

Member Bayly noted a clerical correction on page 1 of the minutes, as noted in the motion below.

Member Bayly asked about the 4th paragraph on Page 2, which indicated that: *As a general practice, at least 60% of the resources in a historic district should be considered "contributing."* Shouldn't that percentage be 80%?

Elaine Robinson, Senior Architectural Historian, Project Team Leader, Commonwealth Heritage Group, explained that in the past that percentage had been 80%, but the National Parks and Service no longer had a threshold number.

Member Bayly referred to a comment in the same paragraph: *...the contributing percentage has been brought up to an acceptable level.* Was there a definition of *acceptable level*?

Ms. Robinson said that was a general comment; it was always the goal to have a high percentage of contributing structures in an historic district.

Motion Chester, support by Russell, to amend the July 19, 2018 meeting minutes as follows:

- Page 1, last paragraph, 4th line: *includes a fewer number of fewer number of properties . . .*

Motion carried unanimously.

UPDATE FROM ELAINE ROBINSON, COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE GROUP

Elaine Robinson, Senior Architectural Historian, Project Team Leader, Commonwealth Heritage Group, explained that tonight was a public hearing for the Local Historic District Study Committee (LHDSC). The City had received a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office for an Intensive Level Survey, a Local Historic District Study, and a National Register Nomination Update.

Tonight's public hearing would be to hear input on the Local Historic District Study (shown in green on the distributed flow chart). Ms. Robinson reminded everyone that Northville's last National Register Nomination had been done in 1972. The current Study had been a very long process, and the Study had been reviewed and commented on by the LHDSC, had been available to the public for comment and input, and had been submitted for review to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), who had commented on it a couple of times.

The process was in its final stages, and final comments had been received from SHPO. After tonight's public hearing, LHDSC had up to a year to make a recommendation to City Council regarding the Study Report.

The Study Report and the Study Survey listed "contributing" and "noncontributing" resources in the Historic District. The Study Survey was the more complete document; the Study Report was the document that would be recommended to City Council.

The State Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the submission on September 14, 2018. The Review Board had changed the recommended status for 10 of the properties, one from noncontributing to contributing, and the other 9 from contributing to noncontributing. SHPO had also asked that the submission for the National Register be condensed, from 400 pages to 100-150 pages. SHPO had devoted significant staff time to reviewing the entire submission, and their staff was also working on reducing the document. It would go back to the Review Board in January.

Any changes made tonight would need to be communicated to SHPO.

Member Bayly asked if SHPO had given any rationale for the changes they had made. What did the changes do to the overall percentage of contributing/noncontributing structures?

Ms. Robinson said the percentage was still acceptable. While SHPO had not commented on the changes they made, Ms. Robinson felt those changes had been based on the integrity of the structures.

Question and Answer:

Chair Allen opened the meeting to the public for a round-table type of question and answer period. The following points were covered:

- Q: What were the criteria used for deciding a contributing/non-contributing structure?

A: Criteria for contributing structure eligibility were set by the National Park Service. There were 4 areas of eligibility, and a property had to meet one of the 4:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

After looking at the 4 areas of eligibility, there were 7 areas of integrity that needed to be examined: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association.

- Q: If a structure had an association with someone in Northville's past, and if the house was moved to Mill Race and the land was still there but vacant, would the land have significance?

A: No. Land was not significant because something used to be there. The house could still be significant but it would have lost its integrity of association.

- Q: I live in a house built by a known historic figure, but my house is not contributing. Does it make a difference that the person who built my house was important to the history of Northville?

A: You can always make a case to have your house included. However, would the builder recognize the house if he stood in front of it, or had it been so changed that it was no longer recognizable in its original form?

- Q: Would an original carriage house be contributing, if the house was not?

A: No. The carriage house was an ancillary structure. If the main house was not contributing, ancillary structures would most often not be contributing, except in rare instances.

- Q: If someone wants to build on a vacant lot in the Historic District, would their construction design fall under Historic District Guidelines?

A: Yes. Also, changes to non-contributing structures fell under the Guidelines.

- Q: I have further information about my contributing home, including some corrections in dates, etc. What should I do with this information?

A: Send the information to the City Clerk, and copy Commonwealth, who will need to cite the information provided.

- Q: There is a proposed PUD for the Downs property that will include the vacant lots south of Cady Street that were proposed to be removed from the Historic District. Why was that vacant property being shown as being removed from the District?

A: Ms. Robinson recommended that several parcels of vacant land be removed, as vacant land was not contributing to the District, and the Committee had voted previously to follow her

recommendation. If the land needed to be protected, it should be done through zoning processes, such as an overlay district. The purpose of the Historic District was to protect historic structures, not vacant land, and vacant land did not add to the historic significance of the District.

Considerable discussion followed regarding the importance of Historic District Commission input and the imposition of Historic District Guidelines on construction on vacant land that was located within the Historic District boundaries.

As no recommendation had yet been made to City Council, currently the vacant land in question was still in the Historic District and would be subject to its jurisdiction.

- Q: Since Chair Allen was working on the Downs project, should he have recused himself from the Committee?

A: The Committee was working with the entire Historic District. Chair Allen abstained from all votes regarding the vacant land south of Cady Street.

- Q: How long will the Committee deliberate before making a recommendation to City Council?

A: The Committee had a year to make its final recommendation. Once the recommendation was made to City Council, the Study Report became final. If Council accepted the Committee's recommendation, the HDC would be bound by the Report.

- Q: Was it Commonwealth's recommendation that the Committee shrink the District?

A: Yes. Again, it was not the purpose of a Local Historic District to protect vacant land.

- Comment: Several audience members suggested shrinking the District further, while others supported expanding it to include historic buildings in other areas of the City.

Response: The contracted study was based on the borders of the Historic District as set in 1972. However, all ideas would be heard.

- Q: What benefit was it to live in the Historic District, especially when homeowners worked hard to appropriately maintain their historic home, but the HDC had allowed homes around them to become nonconforming by constructing large additions or demolitions/rebuilds. The Historic District had lost its integrity and was badly compromised by altered homes, demolition of contributing structures, construction of large new homes, etc.

A: Past mistakes did not have to be continued. Also, it was important for the District not to create donuts or isolated islands. The boundary should be contiguous.

- Q (revisited): Did SHPO give any reasons for the changes they made in status of homes?

A: No reasons were given, but probably the decisions were made based on a loss of integrity of an altered home.

- Q: How low could the percentage of contributing homes go before the Historic District lost its designation?

A: That was up to the City. At the state and federal levels, no percentage requirement was now given. However, historical significance must be justified. Once a structure was deemed historically significant, a homeowner could not simply walk away from the determination, or from the District.

- Q: Northville Public Schools was talking about demolishing 501 W. Main, which encompassed 5 city lots. Why was it counted as 1 demolition?

A: 501 W. Main was one structure, and was counted as one resource. The District did not count lots, but rather counted resources.

- Q: Did demolitions trigger any action on the State level?

A: Demolitions did not trigger updates at the State level.

- Q: Was it appropriate for the Historic District Commission to use the determinations in the Study Report, even though no formal recommendation had been made to City Council?

A: The HDC had been using the *Survey Report* (shown in blue on the provided flow chart), which did not require any formal approval. It was appropriate for the HDC to use this as a tool in making their determinations.

- Comment: The SHPO recommendations for what were contributing or not contributing were relevant as to whether or not the District was eligible on the national level, but SHPO did not have any authority at the local level, and at the local level there could be disagreement with SHPO's recommendations. While SHPO was a trusted resource, they had no actual governing authority.

Response: It was best if local determinations matched SHPO recommendations. For this Study, SHPO received over 1,000 photos from Commonwealth, and records of building permits, etc., from the City. SHPO did not make their decisions in a vacuum.

- Q (revisited): Why would a property owner want to be in Northville's Historic District?

A: Those who lived in a nationally registered historic district had a step forward if the State decided to widen roads, do modifications at the river, etc. State agencies such as MDOT had to consider historic buildings before they moved forward, and often had to come up with a mitigation strategy to deal with historic resources.

Also, an income-producing commercial property was eligible for a 20% tax credit off of any major rehabilitation. Those in the profession were hoping that a provision would pass the State Legislature this year that would give a similar benefit to residential homeowners.

Historic heritage vacation destinations were big economic drivers in the local community.

Last, there was a point of pride. People who lived in a historic district became a steward of a historic resource.

- Q: Regarding process, once the recommendation was made to City Council, if Council decided to make changes would the document return to the Study Committee?

A: City Council would accept or deny the Committee's recommendation, and they could also offer amendments. After Council action, the Study Report would become an active document.

PUBLIC HEARING - NORTHVILLE 2018 LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT STUDY REPORT

Seeing that general discussion had ended, Chair Allen opened the public hearing on the Local Historic District Study Report at 7:50 p.m.

Andi Heseltine, owner of 248 Linden, spoke regarding their home being deemed a contributing resource. She had provided the Committee with a letter dated September 24, 2018 regarding this, and hoped to have the designation changed. She reviewed the criteria for concluding why a home was contributing, and asked for further clarification as to why 248 Linden received the designation.

Chair Allen indicated that all comments would be received before responses were given. Ms. Robinson said she would be happy to talk with Ms. Heseltine one-on-one regarding this property.

Jim Long, 400 Fairbrook Court, implored the Committee not to shrink the Historic District, but to think about expanding it. He asked that the vacant land south of Cady Street from NVA#1 (106 E. Cady) to Griswold be added back in the District, so that any development there could be under the influence and direction of the HDC, and developers could be helped to co-exist with what was already in Northville.

Member Field asked if Mr. Long was suggesting the District be expanded beyond its original borders in the area. Mr. Long replied that he would like to see the Historic District go south to 7 Mile and Center Street, and incorporate the entire racetrack. Member Field indicated that was simply not possible.

Tim Luikart, 521 W. Cady Street, addressed the house at 248 Linden, which was possibly a Sears home. He did not think it a bad decision that the home was designated contributing, and thought there was a lot of potential for the structure, even though it was a small house.

Mr. Luikart said their own home and carriage house were contributing structures, and they had carefully maintained them. When they moved in in 1995 eleven homes on Cady Street were contributing; now only 5 were, and their home was surrounded by bigfoot homes. Allowing those types of homes in the Historic District put a burden on the owners of noncontributing structures and on the HDC. He would like to have his home removed from the District, because he questioned the point of being included.

Mr. Luikart said the request for the vacant land on the south side of Cady to remain in the District was driven by aesthetics. That was not the purpose of the boundary – the purpose of the District was to preserve the historic structures in the District.

Mr. Luikart noted that he was on the Board of Directors of the Northville Historic Society and wanted to clear up a misconception: Mill Race Village was self-supporting and self-funded by the Northville Historic Society. The City owned the land, provided the water and mowed the lawn, but everything else was separate from City support.

Andrew Daily, 300 E. Cady Street, said he owned land at 106 E Cady, and his business was at 120 W. Main Street. He pointed out that when he went through site plan approval for 106 E. Cady Street, he also had to receive HDC approval. The vacant land south of Cady Street was his direct neighbor, yet if that land was removed from the District, the developers would not have to abide by the same rigorous

standards that the HDC imposed on him, nor it appeared would they have to conform to the Master Plan. He supported leaving the vacant land in the Historic District.

Mr. Daily gave some further details and impressions of the current proposal for the Downs property, and invited those present to attend the Planning Commission meeting on October 2 regarding that proposal.

Mr. Daily asked the Committee to postpone making any decision or recommendation until after processes had been completed regarding the proposed development at the Downs.

Jennifer Luikart, 521 W. Cady, addressed the issue of the benefit of living in the Historic District. She pointed out her property on the map, and said she struggled as a homeowner with maintaining her historic home, when the standards had been applied inconsistently, or in some instances, it seemed not at all. She felt that the Historic District Commission badly needed to be educated. She didn't understand how the City could constantly tout Northville's history when there was so little of it left. Again, she struggled to see the benefit of living in the District.

Ms. Luikart asked about the home at Wing and Dunlap that appeared to have been inappropriately raised when a new foundation was constructed, *so that it was now too high*. Chair Allen explained that property owner had been invited to return to the HDC *in order to explain why the building was too high*.

Member Miller left the meeting at 8:14 p.m.

Janice Johns, 410 E. Main Street, thought the Study Report was a potentially life altering document. She quoted Ms. Robinson from the minutes of the July 19 meeting: *The HDC will be using this report to enforce the historic district*.

Ms. Johns said she owned a commercial building that was limited to the footprint of the home that was built 150 years ago. Therefore the use of the building was limited, and did not provide the greatest benefit to the community. She questioned its value as a contributing structure.

Ms. Johns provided information from houselogic.com and savingplaces.org, both of which dealt with preserving historic structures and neighborhoods. According to those sites:

- Historic district designation protected property values by protection against demolitions and out of character exterior remodeling.
- Home values rise when an entire neighborhood is historic. If a neighbor tears down an historic home the context of the neighborhood has changed. From an appraisal viewpoint, the market value of each home in a block of equally historic and similar homes is enhanced if none of them have been demolished or remodeled.
- A stand-alone historic designation will not add value.

Ms. Johns said that the Northville Historic District had not been protected, and homes had been demolished to make way for much larger structures in practically every block in Northville. At this point there seemed to be no benefit to anyone in the Historic District. She quoted from the minutes of the June 12 meeting, when Ms. Robinson had said that *new construction in an historic district often damages the value of the Historic District because the historic setting has been altered*. Ms. Johns thought it was time to give up the Historic District or as had been suggested by others, shrink it to a manageable size that had a high concentration of actual historic and contributing places that could co-exist with the need for development in the City.

Mary Elwart-Keys, 502 W. Main Street, read prepared remarks to the Committee, which she also submitted. She had attended the September 14 SHPO quarterly board meeting, when both the National Register Nomination for Northville and the Local Historic District Survey Update were on the agenda for review.

At that meeting and with discussion afterward, Ms. Elwart-Keys had learned more about the relationship of historic preservation at the Local, State and Federal level. She listed 10 bullet points in her submitted remarks addressing ideas that had been discussed at the public hearings regarding the Local Historic District Survey, including such things as:

- Historic structures that were moved could still be significantly contributing.
- Structures do not “age” into an established local historic district.
- SHPO did not tell a local historic district how to run itself. It did offer consultants and training resources for municipalities.
- There was a SHPO expectation that local historic districts would update their surveys on a regular basis: updates on a 5-10 year cycle were the average.
- HDC’S were not just Committees that said yes or no to local construction requests. They needed to be expert resources that suggested appropriate solutions and cost effective alternatives. Building department employees, the City Council and Mayor, and City Manager all needed to have proper training.
- Education was also imperative for homeowners in the local Historic District so that there was an understanding of the impact of any potential changes to a historic home. One key education item was how a building could be expanded and still be contributing. For example, rear additions should not overpower original facades.

Ms. Elwart-Keys encouraged the LHDSC to amend the local report so that it was was an educational tool and could be used as such by residents, builders, realtors, and current and future HDC members.

Lenore Lewandowski, 119 Randolph Street, supported expanding the Historic District to include historic homes in other areas of the City.

Mallory Bower, Southeast Michigan Field Representative, Michigan Historic Preservation Network, said that their mission was to advocate for Michigan’s historic places that contributed to the State’s economic vitality, sense of place and connection to the past. She commended all present for being involved in the process and difficult work of this Study, which would benefit the entire community. She encouraged the Committee to reach out to her office so that resources could be extended.

Colette Rizik, 208 S. Rogers Street, said that hers was the lot on the far west lower corner that was being removed from the District. They were clearly nonconforming and removal made sense.

Anthony Wickman, 412 W. Dunlap, said they always tried to meet Historic District standards. He felt shrinking the District made the work of the HDC more difficult. He also felt the HDC was not doing their due diligence as so many homes were now noncontributing. It was important to approve things that would conform and would help buildings to remain contributing structures.

Ms. Luikart added to her previous comments, saying that she agreed that education was key. Ms. Bower of the Michigan Historic Preservation Network had offered her assistance. Only 2 people on the HDC had to live in the District; she thought that number used to be 3. Also, regarding the recently filled open

position on the Commission, 3 out of the 4 people who applied had never attended a meeting. The 4th person was Leanie Bayly, who had attended meetings and had a lot of experience, but was not appointed.

Ms. Luikart said an educated HDC would know how to follow Secretary of Interior standards. She supported the idea that the City did not have to continue the mistakes of the past.

~~Ruth~~ Luci Klinkhamer, 430 Lake Street, asked that owners of noncontributing homes still be held to the District Standards.

Nancy Chiri, 661 W. Main Street, supported expanding the Historic District, which she felt brought value to Northville. There were several properties on Main that could be included in the District. She supported having zoning by neighborhood, not by lot size.

Seeing that no one else came forward to speak, Chair Allen closed the public hearing at 8:40 p.m.

DISCUSSION

Chair Allen summarized that most comments had to do with alteration of the boundary, especially on the south side of Cady Street. He asked the owners of 248 Linden to talk with Ms. Robinson after the meeting.

Chair Allen noted that there was a letter in the Members' packets from Patricia Thull, who owned both 572 and 588 Randolph. She would like 588 Randolph to be put back in the District.

Ms. Robinson said that 588 Randolph could be put back in the District, if the Committee wanted that. 572 Randolph was non-contributing; it was possible 588 Randolph could be contributing. They had not known or missed that the properties were under single ownership.

The consensus of the Committee was to move 588 Randolph back into the District.

Chair Allen asked for discussion regarding removing 521 Cady, as had been requested this evening.

Member Cozart opposed removing 521 Cady. She did not think removing a property because someone didn't see the point of the Historic District was an appropriate reason. Commissioner Field agreed, and it was the consensus of the Committee not to remove 521 Cady from the Historic District.

Noting that he would not participate in the discussion, Chair Allen invited comment regarding the south side of Cady Street.

Member Bayly pointed out that currently the area was still under HDC purview, and the Committee had a year to make a recommendation to City Council.

Member Chester asked for information regarding the Master Plan for Land Use for this area. Did the Master Plan contemplate the area being in the Historic District?

Planning Consultant Elmiger said she thought the Planning Commission expected that the vacant parcels under discussion would be in the Historic District. She gave some details regarding what the Master Plan contemplated for the area: highest density along Cady Street and then reducing density as the property moved south to 7 Mile Road.

Member Russell said that when the vacant land was removed, the Committee had been seeking a higher ratio of contributing structures. Now that need seemed to have been reduced, and he thought it was worth reconsidering bringing the area back in.

Planning Consultant Elmiger explained there was an overly district in place: Section 10.06 Cady Street Overlay. The Overlay had architectural requirements for Cady Street such as interest on the facade of a building, projections, recesses, coordination between pedestrians and buildings, etc. There were standards in the Cady Street Overlay that would work with the Historic District Standards.

Ms. Robinson reiterated that the Overlay District was a more appropriate tool for managing that area than placing it in the local historic district.

Member Field initiated a discussion of process. Was the meeting noticed properly so that the Committee could take action this evening?

Chair Allen indicated action could be taken.

Commissioner Field said he would support putting the properties south of Cady Street back in the District, based on the idea that reaching a higher percentage of contributing structures was a reduced concern.

Ms. Robinson said she still recommended the District reach a higher percentage.

Member Bayly said the Committee had received new information this evening, and she would support bringing that area back into the District.

Planning Consultant Elmiger clarified with Member Field that he was suggesting including the parking deck, from Wing to Center Street, as well as the property from NVA#1 to Griswold Street.

Member Russell wondered if the Committee should understand the Cady Street Overlay better before making this decision.

After further discussion, it appeared the consensus of the Commission was to bring the vacant parcels south of Cady Street in the area impacted by the Downs back into the Historic District.

Chair Allen suggested identifying the areas under discussion as:

- Area 1: 588 Randolph Street
- Area 2: The parking deck/parking area south of Cady Street from N. Wing Street to S. Center Street, as indicated by the dotted line on the provided map.
- Area 3: The vacant parcels located south of Cady Street from NVA#1 (106 E. Cady) to Griswold Street, as indicated by the dotted line on the provided map.

MOTION Field, support by Bayly, to include Area 1, 588 Randolph Street, in the Historic District.

Motion carried unanimously.

MOTION Field, support by Chester, to include Area 2, the area of the parking deck and parking lot, south of Cady Street from N. Wing Street to S. Center Street, as indicated by the dotted line on the provided map, in the Historic District.

Motion carried 5-1 (Russell opposed).

MOTION Field, support by Bayly, to include Area 3, the vacant parcels located south of Cady Street from NVA#1 (106 E. Cady) to Griswold Street, as indicated by the dotted line on the provided map, in the Historic District.

Motion carried 5-0-1 (Allen abstained).

A discussion of process followed. Ms. Robinson said she could modify the map before her contract ended on September 30.

Regarding recommending approval of the Study Report to City Council, the consensus of the Commission was to postpone action, and set another hearing. Planning Consultant Elmiger advised that the hearing would need to be a public one, and would require about 6 weeks for scheduling.

Member Chester noted that an individual homeowner had asked their name be removed from the Survey Report, and that was done. However, he opposed this action, which would leave a gap in the information for someone looking at the Survey Report in the future.

Ms. Robinson said other names had also been removed.

ADJOURN

Seeing that discussion had ended, Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl McGuire, Recording Secretary

Approved as amended 11/08/2018