

CITY OF NORTHVILLE  
Local Historic District Survey Committee  
June 12, 2018  
Northville City Hall – Council Chambers

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Present: James Allen  
Leanie Bayly  
Mark Chester  
Suzanne Cozart  
David Field  
Robert Miller  
Jeff Russell

Absent: None

Also present: Sally Elmiger, Planning Consultant  
3 residents

**APPROVAL OF 3/1/18 MINUTES**

**MOTION by Chester, support by Field, to approve the March 1, 2018 meeting minutes as presented.**

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**DISCUSSION AND LHDS COMMENTS ON 1<sup>ST</sup> DRAFT OF LHDS REPORT  
ELAINE ROBINSON OF COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE GROUP**

Elaine Robinson, Senior Architectural Historian, Project Team Leader, Commonwealth Heritage Group, 3215 Central Street, Dexter MI was present this evening to receive feedback and hear discussion on the Preliminary Local Historic District Survey report.

Documents used during this meeting included:

- Map: National Register Boundary: Northville Historic District, with portions that were proposed to be removed from the District outlined in blue.
- Appendix B. List of Contributing and Non-contributing Resources within the Northville Historic District.

Member Bayly asked for discussion regarding the areas that were proposed to be removed from the Historic District.

Ms. Robinson made the following points:

- The contributing to non-contributing ratio in the District was 60/40%, which was a little low. Areas that had solid sections of non-contributing resources and that were located along the perimeter were

outlined in blue and were proposed to be removed. That action would bring the ratio closer to 70/30%.

- A District should not contain “donut-holes,” but have a single contiguous boundary.
- The local district and National Registry District should be identical.
- A higher ratio would create a district that was more defensible in court.
- The boundaries of an historic district should not be arbitrary and capricious, but should be demonstrably well thought out while not eliminating any resource that should be included.
- If the tax credit passed in the State Legislature, a positive impact on contributing resources would result.
- All contributing resources within the district should be retained.

Chair Allen noted that non-contributing structures had higher property values because they were within the Historic District. For example, if the homes in the northwest corner were removed, would their property values decrease? Ms. Robinson said that new construction in a historic district often damaged the value of the historic district because the historic setting was altered.

Chair Allen said that many homes in the District had additions, but still followed Secretary of Interior Standards, with the original home being prioritized and the addition added in the rear. However, some of those homes were now shown as non-contributing.

Ms. Robinson explained that an addition on a historic home needed to be clearly delineated; for some of the buildings it was not apparent what was original and what was new. Other examples showed additions that were not subservient to the original home. For example, a home with an addition that was visible from 3 sides could no longer be considered contributing.

Planning Consultant Elmiger said one reason to leave a non-contributing resource in the Historic District was to prevent further damage to the original structure, since any changes would need to be approved by the Historic District Commission. There was also the potential of bringing a resource back to its original integrity.

Ms. Robinson said additions should echo the original structure, but be clearly separate from the original. An example of this was an addition added to the Carnegie Library in Howell, where the addition was clearly separated from the original structure.

Member Chester said that mass was given as one reason to remove a resource’s contributing status. How was this determined? Ms. Robinson said if the addition was equal to or larger than the original structure, the historic integrity was often lost. Additions should be lower and behind the original structure, again making the addition subservient to the historic resource.

Member Bayly appreciated the details included in the report, especially those that listed why a home became non-contributing, and also, in some instances, how a resource could be brought back to its original integrity.

Member Field spoke to the number of homes that had additions. Even if those resources were non-contributing, if they were removed from the District the City would lose control over them in terms of appearance, style, etc.

Ms. Robinson said that ultimately the Committee would make decisions as to what was included in the District.

Member Field asked for more information regarding the 60/40% mix. Ms. Robinson explained that the City needed to be able to defend the District boundaries. There was not a required percentage mix, but generally 80/20% was preferable. In this instance, if the portions outlined in blue were removed, the resulting mix would be closer to 70/30%.

Ms. Robinson emphasized that a National Historic District would be part of the National Parks Registry; it was difficult to justify including empty lots or construction zones in the Historic District.

Member Bayly said she had been asked many times: What is the contributing factor when you remove a certain percentage of contributing structures from the District? Ms. Robinson said the Historic District could be lost, along with any tax credits that would apply for renovating a historic structure. Currently a commercial income-producing property had access to a 20% Federal tax credit. The tax credit law moving through the State legislature would include a 25% tax credit for homeowners who were renovating a contributing resources, and would also increase the commercial tax credit another 5%. If the District was lost, there was no historic preservation tax credit. The CLG (Certified Local Government) status might also be at risk.

Ms. Bayly said the last time the Historic District boundaries were changed was in 2003. The changes proposed this evening made sense, but it was important to clearly communicate the reasons to the greater community.

Ms. Robinson said another tool of historic preservation was an overlay zone; however that discussion was outside the scope of tonight's meeting.

Ms. Robinson said that there was an apparent natural separation in the Historic District between Industrial, Commercial and Residential. However, for a district that had existed as long as the one in Northville had, it was important to keep as much as possible. Again, the overall size needed to be reduced before it went to the Park Service for review.

Ms. Robinson further explained that the application for a recognized Historic District had to go through the State Historic Preservation Office, be reviewed by the State Historic Review Board, and then go to the National Park Service. The argument needed to be convincing that this should be a recognized Historic District.

Ms. Robinson said any building that was labeled non-contributing could be re-opened if further information was brought forward.

In response to a question from Member Chester, Ms. Robinson said that even a home that was recognized as possibly the first home in Northville might be so unrecognizable from its original structure that it was no longer architecturally significant. It might be significant for historical reasons however. Still, if the integrity was not there, the home was not architecturally contributing.

Ms. Robinson said the period of significance under the National Park Service was from 1830 – 1968.

Member Field said the Northville Historic District Design Standards stated: *The architectural theme for the Northville Historic District is Victorian, in the era from mid 1850's to the latter 1800's.* The HDC had followed that direction religiously.

Ms. Robinson said her team had followed National Park Service guidelines in finding buildings contributing or non-contributing.

In response to a further comment from Member Field, Ms. Robinson said a building such as an old church that had significant additions could be considered contributing if the additions were more than 50 years old. Decisions made regarding contributing/non-contributing were made logically and cautiously, based on Secretary of Interior Standards, National Park Service criteria for eligibility, and the 7 aspects of integrity as listed by the National Park Service: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, association.

Planning Consultant Elmiger asked if the HDC or this Local Historic District Survey Committee had any leeway to disagree with the report's findings. Ms. Robinson said the HDC did not, but the LHDSC did. If the Committee disagreed with a finding, they would re-examine the property and make changes if appropriate.

Ms. Bayly reiterated that the report gave more history and more detail than they had ever seen. Additionally the report outlined characteristics that changed the structure's integrity, although some of the characteristics were difficult to explain to the layperson. She also thought there might be a few properties whose designation might be changed upon further study and information.

Ms. Robinson suggested dividing the District among Committee members in order to review the individual findings. However, the time schedule was very tight.

From the audience, Chuck Murdock asked about historic homes that were not in the District. Could the District be expanded? Ms. Robinson said that was outside the scope of the project, as any new homes would need to be researched, analyzed, etc.

Ms. Robinson said many non-contributing parcels were vacant lots, parking lots or modern buildings.

Planning Consultant Elmiger suggested the Committee concentrate this evening on the areas proposed for boundary revision.

In response to a question from Member Cozart, Ms. Robinson said most Historic Committees revisited their districts every 10 years. Regarding homes/structures that were 50 years old, Ms. Robinson said that structures needed to meet certain criteria, as explained in the chapter on context development. The building had to have a story that contributed to the context of the District.

Member Field suggested removing the 2 parcels at the northeast portion of N. Center Street (250 and 117-12).

Member Cozart asked if the size of the lot had any significance. Ms. Robinson said it usually did not.

The consensus of the Commission was that lot 589 in the northwest portion of the District could also be removed, as that was actually a new building. With that removal, non-contributing resources 588, 571, and 627 could also be removed.

Member Field asked again about the period referenced in the Northville Historic Design Standards: Victorian/Gothic. Ms. Robinson said keeping to that period would exclude revival styles, bungalows, four-squares, etc.

Member Field questioned the idea that a 1950's ranch-style tract home should be considered a contributing resource. Ms. Robinson explained that ultimately the Committee would make the decisions as to what was contributing and non-contributing. However, the house in question was an example of mid-century architecture and was an important part of the City's timeline, representing people who came to Northville to work in the shops or the dairy industry, etc. Member Bayly agreed the home was part of Northville's heritage.

Member Field spoke to structures that had been added on to. For example, 213 on High Street was originally a little cottage with an added 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. The stucco had been covered with asbestos siding. The house was non-contributing, but Member Field thought it had character. He found it difficult to find that home was non-contributing, while a little ranch home similar to thousands of others in southeast Michigan was contributing.

Ms. Robinson explained that as a professional she was charged with following the standards from the National Park Service. The small ranch house represented a time period in the City. GI's were coming home from the war and they needed some place to build. The home could have been FHA funded. The resource represented a time period and a style appropriate to the time period; all of those things led to the structure being contributing.

Member Chester suggested that the different areas outlined in blue be voted on separately in terms of removing them from the district. By consensus, the Committee agreed to number the different areas proposed to be revised and act on them by motion.

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action on the portion outlined in blue on the northwest corner of the map of the Northville Historic District and labeled this evening as Section 1.

**MOTION by Chester, support by Bayly**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the northwest corner of the map of the Northville Historic District and as labeled this evening as Section 1:

- Properties identified as 631, 633, 629, 630, 620, 610, 600, 388, 383, 384, 373, 374

And further to remove the following properties:

- Properties identified as 589, 627, 571, 588.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action on the portion outlined in blue on the southwest corner of the map of the Northville Historic District and labeled this evening as Section 2.

**MOTION by Field, support by Chester**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the southwest corner of the map of the Northville Historic District and labeled this evening as Section 2:

- Properties identified as 146, 208.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Member Chester supported keeping the properties labeled this evening as Sections 3 and 4, on the southern boundary of the Historic District, so as to provide buffer zones to the District. Discussion

followed. Removing those sections would increase the percentage of historic homes in the District. However, perhaps the District could be expanded south of Section 3 (NVA #16).

Chair Allen suggested acting on Sections 3 and 4 last, to allow more time for discussion.

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action on the portion outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map north of Main Street and East of Hutton and labeled this evening as Section 5.

**MOTION by Chester, support by Field**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map north of Main Street and East of Hutton and labeled this evening as Section 5:

- Properties identified as 201, 215, 311, 333, NVA #15.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action on the portion outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map south of Main Street on the far east boundary of the District and labeled this evening as Section 6.

It was brought out in discussion that the property identified as NVA 13 helped the viewshed of the District. It was the consensus of the Committee that NVA 13 remain in the Historic District.

**MOTION by Russell, support by Field**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map south of Main Street on the far east boundary of the District and labeled this evening as Section 6:

- Properties identified as 470, NVA #8.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action on the portion of the Historic District at the far northeast portion of North Center Street, as shown on the Northville Historic District map and labeled this evening as Section 7. This portion was being added by the Committee and was not outlined in blue.

**MOTION by Cozart, support by Miller**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, located at the far northeast portion of North Center, as shown on the Northville Historic District map and labeled this evening as Section 7:

- Properties identified as 250, 117-123.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action regarding the area at the southern boundary of the Historic District known as NVA #16, and labeled this evening as Section 3.

Discussion focused on the fact that currently the District included the northern 1/3 of a parking lot. Should the entire parking lot be included in the Historic District? There were several discrete tax parcels in the southern 2/3 of the parcel. Would the property owner(s) object to being brought into the District? Adding the remainder of the parking lot would add a non-contributing resource to the District. Could this be justified?

Member Cozart saw no reason to keep NVA #16 in the Historic District.

**MOTION by Cozart, support by Field,** to remove the following property from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map and located south of Cady Street and labeled this evening as Section 3:

- Property identified as NVA #16.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Allen asked for discussion and/or action regarding the area outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map at the southern boundary of the Historic District, with portions south and north of Cady Street, east of S. Center Street and west of Griswold, and labeled this evening as Section 4.

Chair Allen noted that because of his interest in the development south of Cady Street, he would abstain on any vote on Section 4.

Member Russell suggested removing the portion south of Cady Street only. Member Chester supported keeping the entire area; the boundary existed and there was no reason to eliminate it.

Member Russell pointed out that when the racetrack was developed, leaving the southern portion in the Historic District would force the developer to go through the HDC approval process for new construction.

Member Miller said that when developed, the property lines would change, new roads might be constructed, and the boundary of the Historic District might end up going through the middle of someone's property. In order to provide a more cohesive possibility of design it made sense to remove the area south of Cady Street.

Planning Consultant Elmiger advised that any portion of a property in the Historic District, even if that portion went through the middle of a building, was under the jurisdiction of the Historic District Commission.

Member Chester spoke to the advantages of leaving the area in the Historic District, including ensuring design elements that would complement the District along the south side of Cady Street.

Ms. Robinson said it was important for the Historic District to protect its historic resources. However, the District was not charged with controlling design of vacant lots. It might be difficult to justify excluding most of the non-contributing resources on the edge of the District, but not this one.

Member Bayly was concerned with protecting the property identified as 201, which was the southernmost building in the District, located at the corner of Cady and S. Center Street. Member Field suggested expanding the Historic District to the property immediately south of 201. Member Miller agreed, and further suggested expanding the Historic District even further south on S. Center Street.

Ms. Robinson said expanding the Historic District was not part of the study and not part of the Committee's action this evening.

Member Field didn't think it was the District's job to protect parking lots. Member Bayly suggested keeping 201, 102, and NVA#1 in the District, thus creating a block of properties there. Ms. Robinson said 102 could be changed to contributing because it supported 201.

**MOTION by Field, support by Miller**, to remove the following properties from the Historic District, as outlined in blue on the Northville Historic District map south of E. Cady Street, east of South Center and west of Griswold, and labeled this evening as Section 4:

- Properties identified as 118, NVA#2, NVA#3, NVA#4, NVA# 5, and NVA#6.

**Motion carried 6-0-1 (Allen abstained).**

Planning Consultant Elmiger asked the Committee to consider modifying the boundary on the Foundry Flask site to follow the Foundry Flask property line. Since the property and use had been researched as part of the current study, this could appropriately be done.

Chair Allen labeled the Foundry Flask area as Section 8.

**MOTION by Chester, support by Russell**, to change the boundary of the Northville Historic District to follow the property line of the entire Foundry Flask property. This area was labeled this evening as Section 8.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

It was noted that the parcels affected by the change to the Foundry Flask boundary included lots 84, 92, 66.

#### **PROJECT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS**

Chair Allen noted that discussion on the report should be complete by June 22. Members should communicate their specific concerns and comments via email with Ms. Robinson, with a cc to Chair Allen. To comply with the Open Meetings Act, no group email discussions could be held. The next meeting would be in 4-6 weeks, and would be a discussion of the revised draft.

Planning Consultant Elmiger noted that the City's website had a link for public comment.

#### **ADJOURN**

Seeing that there was no further discussion, Chair Allen adjourned the meeting at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl McGuire  
Recording Secretary

Approved 7/19/18