



## Historic Preservation Initiatives Update

Date: September 11, 2018

To: Davidson Board of Commissioners

From: Dawn Blobaum, Assistant Town Manager

### 1. OVERVIEW

**Numerous historic preservation initiatives are listed in the board's strategic plan. This is an update on those we are currently pursuing. They include:**

- **New or expanded local historic district:** A group of North Main residents have asked that the town begin the process of designating the North Main Street neighborhood a local historic district (LHD). We have a draft RFP for a consultant, but need a committee to vet both the RFP and the consultant responses and bring a recommendation to the BOC.
- **Potential expansion of landmarked properties:** We partner with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission to designate historic landmarks in Davidson and its ETJ. Expanding the number of designated landmarks may help decrease the number of tear-downs in our village area. Landmark designation accrues a tax benefit to the property owner and gives the town or Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission 365 days to find an option to demolition. We have scheduled a meeting for property owners of potential landmarks in Davidson and the ETJ to discuss the benefits of designation.
- **Certified Local Government process:** Our CLG application was approved by the NC State Historic Preservation Office and sent on to the National Park Service for final approval. The state approval included several advisory recommendations for improving/updating our Historic Preservation Ordinance (new draft ordinance attached) and the archeology section of our Historic District Design Guidelines. A certified local government is eligible to receive state funding (as a matching grant) for surveying and planning for potential historic districts. Federal funding may be available for restoration or stabilization projects. The state also offers training for CLG jurisdiction staff and Historic Preservation Commission members.
- **Conservation districts:** Numerous jurisdictions in North Carolina have regulated the exterior appearance of residential structures, including single-family homes, in neighborhoods that are significant, but not eligible for historic district status, through the use of Conservation Districts. They employ specific design guidelines for these districts. (Many of those design guidelines were severely impacted by the "Aesthetics Bill" of 2015.) The Town of Davidson has never regulated the exterior design of single family structures unless they are in the local historic district; however, in the Village Infill planning area we regulate setbacks, height, and mass through the Village Infill Overlay Districts, which are similar to Conservation Districts. This is a vehicle we can review to be sure we have appropriate floor area ratios, setbacks, heights, etc. to ensure that new construction is complementary to existing.
- **Other:** We are discussing National Register Historic District signage with NC-DOT, and are working on additional planning department webpages to explain our historic programs and resources.

Historic Preservation economic development ongoing, Main Street grants underway with \$15k budget.

**The historic preservation report, sent July 13, is attached. It explains the details of our historic districts and the variety of other historic resources in Davidson.**

## 2. RELATED TOWN GOALS

**Strategic Plan:** Goal 3, Tactical priority 1: Create/expand local historic district, Tactical priority 2: Investigate historic preservation tools

**Core values:** Davidson's traditional character is that of a small, historic college town, so land planning will reflect its historic patterns of village-centered growth including connection of neighborhoods, preservation of our historic resources, conservation of rural area, and provision of public spaces.

**Constituents:** All Davidson residents.

## 3. FYI or RECOMMENDED ACTION

**Decision requested:** Determine the process for choosing a committee to vet RFP and consultant for the local historic district expansion/creation.

## 4. OPTIONS/PROS & CONS

**There are several ways to choose a committee for the LHD initiative.**

**1) Appointment process:** Directly request that one or two people from the following groups serve on the committee:

- Board of Commissioners
- Member(s) of Historic Preservation Commission (aka Design Review Board)
- Member of Davidson Historical Society
- North Main residents
- At-large citizens (particularly residents from other areas of National Historic District)
- Staff of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Landmarks Commission
- Davidson College representative

**Pros:** Can be completed relatively quickly, insures that we have direct stakeholders on committee.

**Cons:** Opportunity not available to all Davidson citizens.

**2) Application process:** Advertise for committee members through typical channels (eCrier, social media, Manager's report, etc.). Collect applications and bring to the BoC to choose members.

**Pros:** Transparent, provides opportunity for involvement for more citizens.

**Cons:** Lengthier process, less chance of getting direct stakeholders.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

- **Meet with HPC/DRB September 19 to review all initiatives.**
- **New or expanded local historic district:** Issue RFP, choose consultant, begin process.
- **Potential expansion of landmarked properties:** Meeting on October 22 at 6:00 p.m. for property owners of potential landmarks (plus interested public).
- **Certified Local Government process:** Updated Historic Preservation Ordinance approval process in coming months.
- **Conservation districts:** Continue investigation and discuss with BoC at later date.
- **Other:** Determine location of HP signage, develop new webpage information, FAQs, etc., discuss legislative opportunities with board at future date.