

MINUTES
Regular Meeting of the
Edina Heritage Preservation Board
Edina City Hall – Community Room
September 13, 2011
7:00 p.m.

Welcome Student Members: Samuel Copman and Anna Ellingboe

I. ROLL CALL 7:00 P.M.

Answering roll call were Chairman Stegner, and Members Ahlstrom, Carr, Curran, Davis, Moore, Schwartzbauer, Copman and Ellingboe. Absent were members Anger and Rehkamp Larson. Staff Present were Planner Joyce Repya, and Planning Director Cary Teague.

II. MINUTES APPROVED Regular meeting of August 9, 2011

Member Schwartzbauer moved approval of the minutes from the August 9, 2011 meeting of the board. Member Davis seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

III. COMMUNITY COMMENT None

IV. REPORTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

A. 1. History of Massing Issue in Edina

Planner Repya explained that during previous meetings of the HPB, the White Oaks Neighborhood Association had approached the board to discuss their concerns about the teardown and construction of new homes in their neighborhood. Neighborhood representatives observed that since the Country Club District had been designated a heritage landmark district (which precluded the teardown and new construction of a majority of its homes), White Oaks has experienced an increase in the teardown/new construction activity.

The construction of larger replacement homes appearing out of character for their neighborhoods has raised concerns in some neighborhoods in Edina over the years; and responding to those concerns, the Planning Commission completed a “Massing” study in 2006. Ms. Repya explained that since none of the current HPB members were serving in 2006, she invited Planning Director Cary Teague to the meeting to explain the massing study, the results, and the City Council’s response, as a means of providing background information.

Planner Teague thanked the HPB for the opportunity to explain the work the Planning Commission had undertaken regarding the construction of large replacement homes in established Edina neighborhoods. He referred to a timeline of the study, research materials and a comparison with surrounding cities as he explained study process.

During the study, undertaken by a citizen massing task force, a moratorium was considered on the teardown and new construction of homes; however due to an outcry from the construction community, the moratorium was not enacted. The task force’s work concluded in 2006 with a report to the City Council; and meetings continued with the Planning Commission and City Council until 2007, when ultimately the Zoning Ordinance was

changed to require an increased side yard setback relative to building height, and restrictions for the first floor elevation for new homes.

Mr. Teague further explained that in 2008 as part of the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Planning Commission recommended neighborhood character districts be created for residential neighborhoods in Edina. This proposal would have entailed a rezoning of neighborhoods into specific districts with the attempt to preserve the character through design review criteria established for each district. Ultimately, the Council did not support the concept of creating new zoning districts based on character districts for Edina neighborhoods, and the idea went no further.

Member Stegner asked if there had been further discussion since 2008. Planner Teague responded that there had not been with the exception of concerns expressed from builders in response to the code revisions that affected building height and first floor elevation. However, with the downturn in the economy, the push from speculative builders has diminished considerably; and that was the root of many neighborhood complaints.

2. Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD) Research Findings

Planner Repya reminded the Board that at the August meeting, Member Carr offered to research the topic of Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts and report back to the Board. Ms. Carr provided the Board with the results of her internet search prior to the meeting. The information included a history of history overlay districts as well as definitions and links to established districts in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, as well as Hopkins, MN. The Board thanked Ms. Carr for her search pointing out that the data was very informative.

Member Carr explained that she appreciated the previous work the City has undertaken regarding the neighborhood massing issue, however she recalled that in addition to White Oaks neighborhood concerns that much larger homes were being built, the neighborhood was also troubled that the new construction did not respect the character and culture of White Oaks natural surroundings. She pointed out that originally, the homes in White Oaks were designed to take advantage of the natural setting, and there is now fear that without some type of oversight, the neighborhood ambiance will be lost.

Ms. Carr added that her research into conservation overlay districts proved that some communities are using it as a tool to protect the natural setting of their neighborhoods. She further opined that the White Oaks concerns appeared to be less about the new larger homes, and more to the point that some of the new construction did not fit with the character of the neighborhood.

Member Davis expressed his concern that speculators would purchase, teardown and build new homes in White Oaks disregarding the natural character of the area. He added that he would like the City to take a stand to preserve neighborhood character.

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Planner Teague explained the City Council has demonstrated an interest in neighborhoods, as evidenced by a recent work study session where they discussed the merits of neighborhood associations. At that time, the City of St. Louis Park's neighborhood identification program was presented as a model.

Member Carr pointed out that through her research she discovered that the City of Hopkins has established an overlay district. Planner Repya offered to research Hopkins' overlay district and report back to the Board.

Member Schwartzbauer recalled that Consultant Vogel has pointed out that for a neighborhood to qualify for an overlay designation, it must have defining characteristics which is difficult to do in a large part of Edina. Vogel has questioned whether the identifying character of an area can be possible if there are not historic structures or resources.

Member Carr explained that she foresees a different approach with the overlay districts – rather than protecting individual properties or structures, the emphasis would address the character of an area.

Member Stegner opined that due to the age of Edina, it is important to build heritage awareness into the character of community.

Member Curran advised the Board that as she was researching the massing issue, she came across the Heritage Section of the Comprehensive Plan which includes a reference to neighborhoods. Ms. Curran pointed out that the plan states that a voluntary program is needed to complement the formal review process. Within the goals and policies section, it states that the HPB will sponsor heritage preservation programs that stress empowerment of individuals and communities through stewardship, advocacy education, and partnership. Furthermore, under benchmarks to be achieved by 2020, it states that the HPB will survey the Morningside, Browndale Park, West Minneapolis Heights, and Minnehaha Creek neighborhoods and Southdale Mall to determine heritage preservation potential of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts.

The Board briefly discussed the Heritage Preservation section of the Comprehensive Plan agreeing that it should be an important tool when crafting the HPB's annual work plan. Planner Repya agreed to provide each Board member with a copy of the HP section of the Comp Plan.

The Board discussed the next steps to take and agreed that further research into the Hopkins Overlay District would be helpful. Member Carr moved to invite a member of the Hopkins city staff to the next meeting to discuss their overlay district. Member Davis seconded the motion. All voted aye. The motion carried.

B. Southdale Center

Planner Teague updated the Board on the current status of the Southdale Center explaining that the City Council had been in discussions with the center ownership regarding the City providing funding assistance for improvements to the center. The center ownership envisioned the funds being directed toward changes to the

interior of the center, while the City Council desired the funds be spent on improvements that provided more public value. Due to the lack of a common vision, the discussions did not continue.

Mr. Teague also explained that recently there has been some discussion about an upscale apartment building to be developed in the southeast corner of the Southdale parcel - directly north from the Westin building. There have been no plans submitted, so it will be interesting to see if this potential project materializes.

The Board briefly discussed the current status and future of the Southdale Center. Member Moore wondered if the owners were more interested in the property for its real estate value, or if they were committed to revitalizing the shopping center. Member Davis observed that Simon Properties, the center's owner is one of the most successful mall developers in the country – and to them, Southdale may not be as important as it is to our community. However, since they are so successful, that could bode very well for the community. Further discussion ensued. No formal action was taken.

V. **CORRESPONDENCE AND PETITIONS** None

VI. **CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Member Carr inquired about the status of the Edina Women's Study. Ms. Repya explained that Consultant Vogel will present the study to the Board at the October meeting. The Board agreed that they looked forward to seeing the results of the project.

Member Moore announced that he has home movies which depict the construction stages of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church that he would be happy to share with the Board. Chair Stegner commented that since the December HPB meeting will be televised with the Board sharing the work of the past year, perhaps showing the home movie during the explanation of St. Stephen's receiving the 2011 Heritage Award would be interesting. The Board agreed with Stegner's suggestion.

VII. **STAFF COMMENTS** None

VIII. **NEXT MEETING DATE** October 11, 2011

IX. **ADJOURNMENT** 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Joyce Repya