

CITY OF NORTHVILLE  
Local Historic District Survey Committee  
March 1, 2018  
Northville City Hall – Council Chambers

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Allen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Present: James Allen  
Leanie Bayly  
Mark Chester  
Jeff Russell

Absent: David Field (excused)  
Suzanne Cozart (excused)  
Robert Miller

Also present: Pat Sullivan, City Manager  
Sally Elmiger, Planning Consultant  
17 residents

Chair Allen explained that tonight's meeting was the kick-off for the Intensive Level Historic District Survey. Tonight was one of three meetings that would be held with the Commonwealth Heritage Group, who were conducting the survey.

Present on behalf of the Commonwealth Heritage Group, 3215 Central Street, Dexter MI, were:

- Elaine Robinson, Senior Architectural Historian, Project Team Leader
- Scott Slager, Architectural Historian

Utilizing a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Robinson and Mr. Slager presented the background and timeline for the City of Northville's Historic District Survey, Updated National Register of Historic Places Nomination and Local Historic District Report.

The project's sponsors were the City of Northville and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), which included the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Commonwealth Heritage Group had completed projects throughout the Midwest, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York and Pennsylvania, with ongoing projects in Missouri, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Members of the team would be in the District taking photographs and recording GPS points of buildings and structures, talking to people about their buildings, and gathering information from that work and other background research.

The process for identifying historic properties and resources was set forth in the Criteria of Evaluation developed for the National Register of Historic Places.

In order for a resource to be historic it must:

- Be at least 50 years old.
- Retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.
- Meet one or more of the National Register Criterion of Evaluation:
  - A. Association with events or broad patterns of history.
  - B. Association with a significant person.
  - C. Architecture or design or traditional building type or works of a master.
  - D. Potential to yield information (archeological criteria).

In Northville, the first survey was done in 1972, two years after state enabling legislation passed. That early survey discussed 61 of over 300 designated buildings, and was only 13 pages long, with two pages of text. No context or period of significance was established.

The most recent survey was completed in 2003-2007. That survey:

- Addressed the illegal use of the 200-foot beyond the boundary description in the earlier survey.
- Did not include any additional building descriptions, photography, or historic contexts.
- Updated the City Ordinance to the new boundary.

A new survey was needed in order to:

- Update the Local Historic District Report in order to include features that would make it easier for the Historic District Commission and city planners to use. Updated features would include photographs of all properties, a list of contributing/non-contributing buildings, and more information on why something was historic, so that better decisions could be made during the review process.
- Update the National Register of Historic Places Nomination.
- Provide inventory forms for each property, with copies available for city planning. Information on each property would be especially valuable for the Historic District Commission. Basic information would eventually become part of the State Historic Preservation Office database.

The 2018 Intensive Level Survey would:

- Require photographs of every building/cultural resource within the current district boundaries.
- Require background research on the history of each of the surveyed properties.
- Result in a determination of Contributing and Non-Contributing for every property.
- Provide a completed inventory form for each resource.

The 2018 Intensive Level Survey also would provide context/thematic development for the Historic District. A resource might be historic if it had significance during community development, development of commerce, recreational history, development of arts and entertainment, religious, educational or governmental significance, historically significant cemeteries and burial sites, etc.

The Updated Local Historic District Report would:

- Be in compliance with updated enabling legislation (PA 169 of 1970, as amended).
- Establish if there were buildings that had gained significance since the original survey was completed.
- Determine if the boundary remained appropriate or should be altered to include the highest percentage of contributing resources.

The Updated National Register of Historic Places would:

- Be compliant with current standards for nominations.
- Include contributing and non-contributing status for each property.
- Provide and justify the period of significance for the district.
- Describe and provide historic background on all properties.
- Provide and justify the district boundary.

The project timeline was very tight:

- The contract was signed in January, and must be completed by September 2018. This timeline was determined by the terms of the grant for this project.
- A series of meetings would be scheduled.
- Photographs would be taken as soon as possible, but could not be taken in snow.
- At the end of this project Northville would have a Local Report and a National Register nomination. The nomination would be presented to the State Historic Review Board, and the materials would be presented to City Council.

What did designation in a Local District or in the National Register mean to property owners and the local community?

- Knowing where the historic resources were and why they were important meant that future city planning could be done with this information, resulting in better plans.
- Projects done with federal funding, licensing or permits, required identification of National Register Properties. By having the completed district in place, city planning could begin with those resources in mind.

Why designation?

For local historic districts:

- Local designation was the strongest protection for historic resources.
- Certificates of Approval were required for work on the exterior of buildings.
- Reviews would be done by the local Historic District Commission, which was appointed by the mayor.
- Appeals could be made to the State Historic Preservation Review Board.
- Designation could result in higher property values.

Regarding National Register Historic Districts:

- There were no restrictions to what could be done to a historic resource on the national level; all restrictions were local. This included painting, siding, demolition, etc.
- No one would be required to open the building for tours or other sightseeing opportunities beyond when a commercial building was normally open for business.
- There was an opportunity to get Federal Tax Credits if a building was restored following Secretary of the Interior Standards and by working closely with the State Historic Preservation Office. The federal credit was up to 20% of the rehabilitation project cost for income producing properties only.
- Possible reinstatement of Michigan Historic Tax Credit.

Local and National Register Historic Districts:

- Cultural Heritage Tourism. People who were seeking an educational experience when they traveled sought out historic places to visit, and tended to stay longer, and spend more money.

Next Steps:

- Begin background investigation and development of district inventory, including all photography.
- Prepare Local Historic District Report and Draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for State Historic Preservation Office review.
- Presentation to State Historic Preservation Review Board – September 2018.
- Local Historic District Report reviewed and approved by City Council.
- National Register of Historic Places nomination submitted to the National Park Service for review.
- Updated listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Ms. Robinson and Mr. Slager concluded their presentation. The following discussion included:

- Any vacant lots on the edge of the Historic District should probably be removed from the District – vacant lots did not usually have historic significance.
- The Local Historic District Survey Committee would approve any boundary changes.
- Contributing and noncontributing properties would have the same rules for updating their properties and all must have a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to move forward.
- There was an established process used to research each property in the District.
- Every structure would be photographed from 2 angles. As much as possible, freestanding garages and other accessory buildings would also be photographed.
- The public would be notified when a draft report was ready.
- The webpage on the City's website would have updates on this project, including when team members would be photographing sites. A video of tonight's meeting and its accompanying PowerPoint presentation would also be linked on the webpage.

Seeing that discussion had ended, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl McGuire  
Recording Secretary

Approved as presented 06/12/18