Expanding Local Historic Districts

East Tennessee Preservation Alliance Conference
Knoxville, Tennessee
Kaye Graybeal, AICP, Historic Preservation Planner
Knoxville-Knox Metropolitan Planning Commission
October 22, 2015
Historic Property Designation Criteria

- historical event
- lives of persons significant
- type, period, or method of construction, work of a master, or high artistic values
- archeological information
Historic District Designation Criteria
article IV, section 5.1 F

- geographically definable area
- concentration, linkage or continuity of historic sites, buildings, or structures
- united by past events, or visually by plan or physical development (historical development pattern)
- reflects social history of the area
Base Zoning vs. the Historic Overlay

Resolve conflicts between the goals of the base (underlying) zoning and the historic overlay.

Which dimensional requirements of the zoning code would be overridden by the design guidelines, i.e. . . .

Which dimensional compatibilities are determined by the Historic Commission?

Historic overlays cannot trump the base zoning land use regulations.
# Design Guidelines vs. other regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zoning code vs. Design Guidelines vs. Building Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Side and rear setbacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height of fences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HDO Designation Political Process

**Recommend**
- Elected official(s) or property owner - *initiate* an application
- HZC - *submit a recommendation* to elected official(s)
- Elected official(s) may sponsor an application with resolution

**Review**
- HZC *and* the Planning Commission review all applications
- Public hearings are held
- Make recommendation to the elected official(s)

**Designate**
- Elected officials --make the final designation
District designation process (neighborhood)

Neighborhood representatives meet with planning staff to determine eligibility and informal boundaries.

Neighborhood-level meetings to provide info, address concerns, and assess level of support.

Neighborhood discussions with elected official(s) to sponsor.

Further neighborhood meetings to draft and finalize boundaries and design guidelines.
Update the Design Guidelines
District designation process (formal)

- Historic Zoning Commission public hearing
  - Recommendation to elected official
- Planning Commission public hearing
  - Recommendation to elected official
  - First reading
  - Second reading
Deciding if a HDO expansion is right for the neighborhood

- Ideally, a grassroots effort following a study by the HZC or its staff
- Part of an historic preservation planning effort which includes:
  - Comprehensive assessment of historic resources via . . .
  - An ongoing process of inventorying historic resources to identify
  - Development of a local preservation or master plan
Gauging Public Opinion and Building Support

- Prepare a street address list and inform property owners early in the process.
- Opinion survey mailed to each address and/or neighborhood meetings to discuss the proposed local historic district.
- The last thing you want to hear during a public meeting draws closer is "I never heard about this proposed expansion."
- Property owner consent is not required for a local historic district.
- But process will be smoother with early, clear, frequent information.
- Inform about current status and next steps
- Newspaper articles about the local historic district
The Community Meeting - Opportunities

- Help head of charges that the expansion is a done deal – not an end run around the community
- Squelch rumors and correct misinformation
- Provide opportunities to persuade others through advocacy
- Settle at least some differences before appearing in front of elected officials
- Opportunity to gauge and isolate opposition before heading into formal process
- Opportunity to hone message and presentation of factual info
- Provide a forum for building public confidence in the neighborhood leadership
Community Resources and Buy-in

- Local Historic Commission Members
- Architectural Historians
- Historians
- Historic society

- Business Owners
- Chamber of Commerce
- Conservation Commission Members
- Real Estate Professionals
- Landscape Architects

- Building Contractors or Tradespersons
- Affordable Housing Advocates
- Elderly Housing Advocates
- Open Space Advocates
Is the juice worth the squeeze?
I would say gently and respectfully, they need to make up their minds. They need to fish or cut bait. -Chris Vance
Other strategies to protect historic resources

- changes in local zoning and development policy
- facade grants
- home improvement or other preservation incentive programs
- targeted planning efforts
- preservation easements
- demolition delay ordinances
- neighborhood conservation districts
- technical and design assistance
- public investments
Getting Started

- Count on a year or more – time for public education /input
- Investigation and report on the historical and architectural significance of the buildings
- Review community’s comprehensive historic resources survey to gain a sense of the overall historical/architectural development
- Base map – boundaries of an historic district must be defendable and easily discernable
Delineating boundaries

- Use property lines
- Physical barriers such as highways, railroad lines, a river, or other objects that form an edge
- Visual connections such as architecture, street patterns, open space
- Maps showing the historical associations, development patterns, land uses
- Avoid using the street as a boundary - future construction along these corridors may have an impact on the character of the district
- Consider forming a separate district
Delineating boundaries

- Consider how the buildings on the edges impact the historic character
- Contemporary or severely altered structures or other intrusions may be included
- Buildings which have been altered, lack integrity, or are later that are along the edges – exclude from district boundaries?
- Goal of HDO is to maintain and improve the setting of historic properties
Local boundaries vs. National Register Boundaries
Open space and vacant lots

- Open space or vacant lots may be included.
- New construction can have a profound impact on the existing district, so it should be reviewed for compatibility.
- Local historic cannot prevent development from occurring.
- District boundaries should provide not only for the protection of individual historic resources, but for their settings as well.
Political Field of Play

The “Makers”

- Vision, resources, and leadership qualities
- Best to secure our valued property/related interests
- Promotes the Common Good
Political Field of Play

The “Breakers”

- Inclined against districting from the start
- Have resources to mount an effective opposition
- Find that designation is a disadvantage for their interests
- Unresponsive to appeals to civic virtue
- Must be co-opted, neutralized, blunted, or defeated
The “Takers”

- Unconvinced but persuadable
- More or less satisfied with the status quo
- May have more limited resources of time and money
- Will not make a whole lot of difference to them
- Not all that excited, but not motivated to oppose
- Will take it in stride
Find the Middle Ground
Political Field of Play

The “Shapers”

- Individuals or associations
- Act independently of property status
- Can nonetheless influence the outcome of the proposal
- May have more limited resources of time and money
- May act alone or in cooperation with makers or breakers . . .
- Who may be members of their organizations
Practical Vision vs. Political Reality

- What is framed by preservation principles
- What property owners desire for themselves
- What can be concretely offered and assured
- What property owners can accept/tolerate
- What can actually get approved
FAQs

- What is a local historic district?
- How is a local historic district different from a National Register District?
- Is this area already a National Register District?
- Why is a local historic district needed?
- How will a local historic district benefit the community?
FAQs

- How will a historic overlay affect me?
- Will historic overlay require improvements to my property?
- How will property owners benefit?
- What kind of work is regulated?
- How are design guidelines drafted and what will they require?
- Will a historic overlay burden low-income residents?
- How will the elected officials decide whether the overlay is supported?
The Parking Lot
Residential Historic District Overlay (HDO)
Commercial Historic District Overlay (HDO)