

AGENDA ITEM 4C: Wedge Neighborhood Historic District Request

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BACKGROUND

On June 27, 2008, residents of the “Wedge” Neighborhood submitted a written request for consideration of the neighborhood as a historic special review district overlay zone. The proposed area extends roughly from Division Avenue to the north, to 6th Avenue at the southern boundary, and L Street at the eastern boundary. The western-most point is the location where Division Avenue meets 6th Avenue at Sprague (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Area of Proposed Historic Special Review District



PROCEDURES

On September 24, 2008, the Landmarks Preservation Commission adopted a tentative review schedule and has thus far conducted the following meetings:

- 10/8/08 – Public Information session regarding the historic district designation
- 11/12/08 – Discussion of historic district significance and designation criteria

ANALYSIS

The proposed district nomination includes only the residential buildings within the proposed study area. Based on county assessor records, there are approximately 115 parcels within the “Wedge” area. Of these, 92 have improvements (buildings) and approximately 76 have buildings constructed prior to 1958 (50 years ago).

The preliminary analysis for proposed district boundaries is based upon the following:

1. Historic character and age:

- a. The district nomination request stipulates that historically residential buildings are to be the focus of the historic district, and that commercial properties, religious properties and other nonresidential buildings should be excluded.
- b. The prevailing architectural characteristics of areas that are included in the district should be within the period of significance for the district. An analysis of buildings that are 50+ years of age within the district shows that the oldest known build date is 1889 and the most recent is 1931.
- c. Staff has completed a preliminary analysis for the buildings inventory, excluding modern construction (less than 50 years of age, nonresidential, vacant properties) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Illustration of Study Area with non-historic, nonresidential buildings blacked out, with underlying zoning.



2. Underlying zoning and land use development regulations

- a. The core of the area is zoned R2-SRD, which is bordered by HM (Hospital-Medical) to the east at M Street, and C2 (Commercial) along 6th Avenue.
- b. Portions of the district are zoned consistently, in terms of density, with low density detached dwellings, the historically predominant use of the area.
- c. There are portions of the district, including Sixth Avenue to the south, and the Hospital-Medical zone to the east, are not consistent with the aims of the district. In some cases, this zoning has resulted in development that has removed the historic character of the area, and should be excluded from the district.

Based upon the above information, it is clear that there is a core intact residential area within the study area, and areas where there is clearly no justification for creating a historic overlay. However, there are several critical points that should be considered by the Commission, as follows (see reference numbers in Figure 2 above):

1. Creso Court at 1521 Sixth Avenue is a relatively intact 1927 Bungalow Court apartment structure. It is within the C2 zoning designation, but is also within the development period of the district and represents a form that was very common prior to WWII.
2. The Berg Apartments, built in 1916 at 1304 Division Avenue, are within the Hospital Medical zone, but are architecturally intact. The Berg, along with the apartments at the 1300 block of Sixth, represent historic multifamily housing along the arterials at the periphery of the district.
3. The homes along the 500 block of South L Street are some of the earliest homes in the district. However, they are somewhat isolated from the remainder of the district.
4. The vacant parcels in the 500 block of South M Street create a substantial nonhistoric area within the district, especially on the eastern side of the street, where the nonhistoric development extends to Sixth Avenue.
5. The 1300 block of Sixth Avenue is zoned C2 Commercial, although the buildings on this block are excellent examples of early historic apartments.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above criteria, staff recommends establishing the boundaries shown below as the working boundaries for the district (Figure 3). This omits a significant portion of the existing hospital campus, commercial and nonhistoric structures.

Staff will provide a preliminary buildings inventory at the meeting on December 10.

Figure 3: Recommended working boundaries for the proposed Wedge Neighborhood Historic District.


