

NORTHVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
August 20, 2014
Wednesday 7:00 P.M. – Northville City Hall – Council Chambers

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman called the Historic District Commission meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Argenta, Field, Hoffman, Luikart, Vernacchia
Absent: Gudritz, Johnson (both excused)
Also Present: Consultant Elmiger
DDA Director Ward

2. PUBLIC COMMENT: none

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

The agenda was amended so that Case 5 would be heard before Case 4.
Agenda as amended approved by consensus.

4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES: July 16, 2014

Motion Vernacchia, support by Field to approve the minutes of July 16, 2014, as published.
Motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS:

- A. CITY ADMINISTRATION: none
- B. CITY COUNCIL; none
- C. PLANNING COMMISSIONER: none
- D. OTHER COMMUNITY/GOVERNMENTAL LIAISONS: none

6. PUBLIC HEARING: None.

7. CASES TO BE HEARD – BY CASE:

CASE #1

DAN FERRARA
123 E MAIN ST.

PAINT

Dan Ferrara, owner of Northville Gallery at 123 E Main Street, said that the building owner, Joe Spagnuolo, had agreed to paint the front of the gallery only. Nothing above the gallery would be painted. The paint chips included with the application were no longer accurate; the colors had been changed slightly. Mr. Ferrara handed out new color samples to the Commission. These updated colors were:

- Behr Premium Mossy Bank PPU8-21
- Behr Premium Basketry PPU4-5

He further explained that the project involved basic painting and minor repair where needed.

Commissioner Argenta said he thought the proposed colors fit in very well with the colors already utilized by other downtown buildings, and also with the colors of the proposed wayfinding signs that would be discussed later this evening.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Field to accept the application as complete. **Motion carried unanimously.**

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman opened the meeting for public comment. DDA Director Ward mentioned that she had discussed this building with the property owner. She thought that perhaps if the Façade Grant Program was reinstated the property owner might be able to improve the entire façade.

Seeing that there was no further public comment, ~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman brought the matter back to the Commission.

- **Motion Argenta, support by Vernacchia**, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 5.18 paint and color, for the colors as submitted this evening: Behr Premium Mossy Bank PPU8-21 and Behr Premium Basketry PPU4-5. **Motion carried unanimously.**

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman noted that the new paint samples would be part of the HDC’s permanent record for this application.

CASE#2

**COMERICA BANK/CBRE
129 E. MAIN**

PAINT

Thomas Chubb, facility manager for Comerica Bank/CBRE, was present on behalf of this application, which was to paint the rear facades at 129 E. Main Street: 1) rear of building next to theater, 2) side of building near rear entrance, 3) second story wall with Comerica sign. He explained that the colors chosen would complement the brick of the bank’s new rear entrance and the creamy color of the theater next door. The color would be the same as the sample supplied in the application packet:

- Benjamin Moore Driftwood 2107-40.

Commissioner Field suggested that the HVAC unit on top of the rear portion of the building be painted to match the new color being approved this evening, and/or be screened. This would not be a requirement of tonight’s motion, however.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman asked the applicant to address item #1 in the Consultant’s letter dated July 30, 2014: “Will any additional, related work (such as repairs to any of the trim materials, etc.) be conducted at the same time? If so, then a description of this work needs to be provided.” Mr. Chubb said that this application was for paint only; the façade would be thoroughly and carefully prepared before painting would proceed. Some work would need to be done around the door; this would be done correctly and with attention to detail.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Field, to accept the application as complete. **Motion carried unanimously.**

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Argenta, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 5.18 paint and color, for the color Benjamin Moore Driftwood 2107-

40 as submitted and for the areas of the rear façade as submitted on the application and as outlined this evening. **Motion carried unanimously.**

CASE #3

**PAT MCLAUGHLIN
373 LINDEN**

**CHANGE TO ORIGINAL
PAINT, DOOR, RAILING**

The property owner Pat McLaughlin was present to speak on behalf of this application. He had most recently come before the Historic District Commission in April 2014 to request changes to a new home design approved by the HDC in May 2013. Tonight's application was for three additional changes:

1. Modify exterior color Hardiplank Sandstone Beige to Timber Bark, a somewhat darker color.
2. Elimination of front porch railings, in order to simplify the appearance of the house.
3. Change the originally approved 7-foot high front door with 12-inch transom to an 8-foot high door with no transom.

In response to a comment in the consultant's letter dated August 11, 2014, stating that the house plan still showed the proposed porch railing and transom, Mr. McLaughlin presented correct drawings to the Commission.

Commissioner Luikhart said that the elimination of the front porch railings was appropriate to the structure. Commissioner Argenta noted that the railing was required if the height of the porch was over 30 inches to the ground. Mr. McLaughlin affirmed that the distance to the ground was not over 30 inches.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Luikhart to accept the application as complete. **Motion carried unanimously.**

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman opened the meeting for public comment. Hearing none, he returned the item to the Commission.

Motion Argenta, support by Vernacchia, to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness, referencing the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 3.22 details and 5.18 paint and color, for the color Hardiplank Timber Bark as submitted this evening. **Motion carried unanimously.**

CASE #5

**NORTHVILLE DDA
DOWNTOWN**

WAYFINDING SIGNAGE PROGRAM

As noted above, the agenda was amended to hear Case #5 before Case #4.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman introduced DDA Director Lori Ward, who gave some background on this application, which was for a wayfinding signage system proposed in and around the City of Northville. A prototype sign had been installed at Main and Center streets.

The Wayfinding Committee, made up of Historic District Commissioner John Argenta, Planning Commissioner Carol Maise, Arts Commissioner Joan Potter Thomas, Resident Alan Somershoe, DPW Director Jim Gallogly, and DDA member Greg Presley, along with DDA staff, had worked for six months with Buzz Bizzell of Bizzell Design, Davidson, North Carolina, to design a wayfinding plan for downtown Northville. Mr. Bizzell was in town for three days so that this presentation could be made to

a variety of groups, including City Council on Monday night, the DDA on Tuesday morning, the Planning Commission Tuesday night, and now the Historic District Commission tonight. All the necessary approvals were contingent upon each other.

Ms. Ward introduced Mr. Bizzell, who thanked the Commission for this opportunity to present the Wayfinding Project to them. He gave some history of his firm including historic communities with which Bizzell Design had worked. Then, utilizing the report in the Commissioners' packets entitled "Wayfinding Signage Design Study/August 8 2014", along with changes shown on the overhead projector, Mr. Bizzell explained that one goal was to create a pattern/style on the wayfinding signage that worked with the City's unique architecture and that was memorable. Bizzell Design had started by identifying elements of the City important to visitors and residents, by utilizing photographs of Northville taken by people all over the world and posted on social media. Interestingly, the number one photo site – out of thousands – that repeated in these images was the bandshell; the clock was #2.

Regarding sign color, Mr. Bizzell explained that colors were chosen utilizing special software that extracted a color palette from photos of all downtown buildings, so that the colors would match perfectly what was already downtown. The goal of the signs was to direct people using permission instead of interruption.

The design of the bandshell was subtly referenced in the wayfinding signage by the utilization of oversize swirls, trapezoid/butterfly shapes and slightly rounded tops.

DDA Director Ward noted that the prototype at Center and Main was smaller than the dimensions shown in the Commissioners' packets; the smaller dimensions were necessary in order to utilize existing light posts in downtown (a cost saving measure) while still meeting sign height requirements. The new proposed size for signs placed on light posts was 3.5 feet x 5 feet. Text would need to be adapted and perhaps cut in order to fit in the smaller signs.

The backs of the new signs would be simply painted, perhaps including a subtle pattern, providing no visual clutter. MDOT, and the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) would not allow decoration on the backs of the signs, because to do so tended to take a driver's eye away from where that driver should be looking.

Mr. Bizzell explained that large-scale wayfinding signs, including gateway signs, would have magnetized message panels that could be changed "in an instant." Others would help easily locate civic and cultural destinations, such as City Hall, the Post Office, the Football Stadium, Theaters, etc. Other sign types included:

- Pedestrian downtown directional signs.
- Main road directional signs.
- Single position directional signs, including parking signs and single destination signs.

Discussion was had regarding the types of businesses that might use the wayfinding signs. Certain legacy businesses that were location driven might be able to utilize signs that named them generically, i.e., "Winery," or "Cider Mill." The Racetrack was also discussed as a possible legacy business or cultural destination. Districts could also be identified: i.e., "Theaters."

DDA Director Ward discussed various conversations she had had regarding this wayfinding project, especially as it related to giving other organizations options to partner with the final product. The Northville School District, for instance, might want to adopt a variant of the signs

for their own directional needs. The Parks and Recreation Department might also want to do something similar, creating a consistent identity through parks areas and with municipal signs.

Mr. Bizzell pointed out the proposed locations of the signs on maps provided in the packets; these locations were not set in stone. Additionally a large wayfinding sign might be placed at 8 Mile Road and Griswold Street.

Other important elements discussed by DDA Director Ward and Mr. Bizzell included:

- The signs simplified and decluttered road and streetways while improving the overall streetscape, and would be a pleasure to read.
- As new signs were placed, others would be eliminated. For example, currently there were 129 parking signs downtown. Approximately 100 of these would be eliminated.
- The signs would utilize new technology and be highly reflective at night.
- The signs would be made of material that could handle salt in winter. They would be constructed of aluminum. The signs were designed so as “not to be maintained” and last for 10 years. However, the highly reflective materials required by MDOT were only guaranteed for 7 years. Panels could be changed out at 10 years or so, but poles would remain and would not need to be replaced.
- The inclusion of a removable mural, shown in concept as “Race Day in Northville,” utilizing Northville historic themes and colors. This mural would be one fourth the cost of a traditional mural, and would offer significant advantages, especially that it would be easy to remove or change, as it would be digitally printed on thin flexible material that would adhere to an exterior wall but could easily be pulled off. A mural, or murals, such as this would create a memorable impression for visitors and would also provide a photo park – a place for people to have their pictures taken and then post on social media, thus providing free advertising and marketing for the City.

Commissioner Field wondered if the mural would withstand Michigan winters. Mr. Bizzell acknowledged that they had never placed a mural in a cold climate.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman clarified that the Commission was being asked to approve the design and color of the proposed wayfinding signs identified in the as Series A, B, and Parking in the report “Wayfinding Signage Design Study/August 8 2014”. Series B signs were now proposed at 3.5 feet x 5 feet in order to be placed on existing light poles.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman indicated he was ready to entertain a motion.

Motion Vernacchia, support by Luikhart, to accept the application as complete. Motion carried unanimously.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman opened the meeting for public comment.

Resident Robert M. Sochacki, 223 Linden Street, Northville, said that he served on the Library Board. They were concerned about plans to place library-themed banners downtown. How would the proposed signs impact this? Would this result in too many decorative elements downtown? DDA Director said there were enough light posts for the wayfinding signs while still providing plenty of availability for promotional banners and seasonal decorations. Commissioner Luikhart added that the new wayfinding signs would actually clean up visual clutter downtown.

Dan Ferrara, Northville Gallery, 123 E Main Street, said that he was a member of the Central Business Association. He spoke in favor of the proposed wayfinding signs, and about the need to support the

downtown businesses. He expressed concern regarding having directional signs focus on individual businesses, especially the racetrack whose future was uncertain, and which did not add value to the downtown area.

Seeing that there was no further comment, ~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman brought the item back to the Commission.

MOTION Argenta, support by Field to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the design concepts and color palette for the wayfinding signage system as presented tonight, for signs identified as A, B, and Parking, referencing the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standards 9 and 10, and Northville Historic District Design Standards 4.21 materials, 4.24 signs, and 5.18 paint and color. **Motion carried unanimously.**

CASE #4

**NORTHVILLE DDA/DOWNTOWN WALK THRU
418 RANDOLPH**

**INTERIOR INTERPRETIVE
EXHIBIT**

Using overhead images, and referring to her August 20, 2014 memo with attachments to the HDC, DDA Director Ward led the discussion of this agenda item, which was for informational purposes only; since this item dealt with interior space no action was being requested. Images, among others, included before and after shots of the Comerica Community Connection, which was completed in the fall of 2013 as a pedestrian connection between municipal parking and Main Street merchants. The Connection was located between the Marquis Public Parking Lot and East Main Street, and connected visitors and residents with shops, public services, and community facilities throughout the downtown district.

After an RFP was issued for design development, fabrication and installation of an interpretative exhibit in the Connection. Experience Design of Boston, MA was awarded a contract at the December 2, 2013 City Council meeting.

DDA staff and the project Steering Committee had been working with Experience Design for the past six months on the development of an interpretive installation for the Connection. Content and technical application was being finalized and after final approval of layout of the exhibit, specifications would be developed and submitted for bid.

The design concept that had been developed was a 22” tall, 36’ long ribbon at eye height that included a collection of historic photographs depicting the rich history of Main Street. The panel was made of phenolic resin, a lightweight graffiti-proof material that would be mounted on the west wall of the Connection. Several photographs would be highlighted with a projecting lenticular panel that appeared to give movement to the historic photograph below. The exhibit was broken into three twelve-foot panels that would be installed end-to-end to give the appearance of a single ribbon of images.

The project was designed to improve the experience of visitors, to engage Connection users, to increase community identity, to support and enhance the community’s sense of place, and to create a unified exhibit showcasing the downtown district.

Future phases of the project might include an overhead banner system, a QR code linking viewers to text describing in more detail the exhibit, and preparation of a print brochure that provided information on the selected images. The system could be utilized as a template for future interpretive panels around the downtown.

Commissioner Luikhart urged the DDA to work with the Historic Society archivist while developing the graphic. The Historic Society had unearthed many new things in the past few months.

Further discussion was held regarding security in the Connection, and the need to encourage people to pause and look while they passed through.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman thanked DDA Director Ward for her leadership and great work on this project.

8. DISCUSSION

It was the consensus of the Commission to postpone discussion to a future meeting on the last two discussion items:

- Grants for Historic District Survey
- Structural Engineer

LETTER REGARDING 417 DUBUAR

Consultant Elmiger described communication she had had with Robert M. Sochacki, who had written a letter to the HDC chair and members, dated 8 August 2014, regarding “Enforcement of Historic District Processes and Guidelines,” which expressed concern that the owners of the property at 417 Dubuar continued to make significant material changes to the exterior of the property without review or input by the HDC or obtaining required permits.

Ms. Elmiger said the two issues of concern were the installation of a generator and a fence. The homeowners had received approval for the fence, but no mention had been made of a generator in the HDC application packet. Building Inspector Penn was aware that the generator had been installed without the appropriate permit or HDC approval. He had spoken with the property owner and the owner was in the process of obtaining the appropriate permits. The property owner had also submitted an application to the HDC and would appear at the September meeting. *Ms. Elmiger said that Per per* state law, anything that affected the exterior of a property in the Historic District needed HDC approval.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman recognized Robert M. Sochacki, 223 Linden Street, Northville.

Mr. Sochacki said that he understood the fence was reviewed at the April HDC meeting. His concern was that the fence was keeping him from maintaining the rear of his property. When giving approvals, did the HDC take into consideration the impact approvals would have on the neighboring properties? He mentioned past occurrences at this address that also had an effect on neighboring properties including the installation of a sprinkler system that washed out the neighbor’s landscaping. He also noted that the 417 Dubuar homeowners had been before the HDC “begging forgiveness” after the fact before, when they installed floodlights in the rear yard.

Commissioner Luikhart requested that Building Inspector Penn be present when this item was discussed.

GRANTS FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

As noted above, it was the consensus of the Commission to postpone discussion to a future meeting on these two items.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman invited general comments from the Commission.

Reading from a prepared statement, Commissioner Luikhart said that effective tonight, she would no longer be serving on the HDC. ~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman expressed regret that Commissioner Luikhart was resigning.

Consultant Elmiger noted that the HDC Design Guidelines contained a chapter on process. This chapter was created in 1998 and was out of date. She suggested that the chapter either be removed or the information on process be added to the website. ~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman suggested this be placed on September's agenda.

Consultant Elmiger further noted that applicants often did not follow the HDC application through to page 3, where their signature was required. Wording was being added to page 1 and page 2 of the application that their signature was needed on page 3.

Consultant Elmiger advised that the owners of 548 Dunlap were putting on a new roof. Black asphalt shingles were being replaced with black asphalt shingles. Since this was exact material and color, Ms. Elmiger considered this a maintenance item that did not need HDC approval, and had so advised the property owner.

~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman thanked the Commissioners for their good work this evening.

ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further discussion, ~~Acting~~ Vice Chair Hoffman adjourned the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl McGuire
Recording Secretary

Approved as amended 09/17/2014