

James W. Stone, vice chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m., on Wednesday, October 14, 2015, in the Conference Room, Fourth Floor, City Hall. Also present were commission members M. Brubaker, R. Campbell, D. Miller, and R. Thomas. The following staff members were present: K. Maher, Planning Director; A. Rohrbaugh, Planner; and D. Calhoun, Secretary.

### **Comprehensive Plan Update: Urban Design and Historic Preservation Element.**

Staff Report: (Staff report is in the meeting file.) The Urban Design and Historic Preservation element of *visionHagerstown 2035* establishes urban design and historic preservation policies for the City of Hagerstown. It discusses form and design of urban development and how urban design can be implemented across the city to create a uniform and attractive appearance. This element also discusses the importance of historic resources within the city and its tie-in to economic development, revitalization, and tourism efforts.

This element for *visionHagerstown 2035* has generally remained the same as the 2008 Comprehensive Plan, but with updated data. An expanded list of potential landmarks for the city has been included, and this element also discusses with more emphasis how the City can capitalize on historic tourism.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) reviewed this element at its October 8 meeting. Comments and recommendations from that discussion include: possibly extending the Downtown Historic District two blocks east on Franklin Street since several of the properties on the Potential Landmarks list are in that area; devising a strategy for generations of “demolition by neglect”; adding several potential landmarks to Table 8-1, including the Moller Organ Works building, the Coca-Cola building (near Wheaton Park), North Avenue School (a/k/a Memorial Recreation); 686 Pennsylvania Avenue, and the Jamison Door building. Another related comment included extending passenger/commuter rail lines via the former CSX and B & O line to Weverton.

Commission Discussion: Mr. Miller asked that staff highlight the changes made to the 2008 text. Mr. Rohrbaugh explained that would be too difficult but promised that highlighted copies would be provided after the commission’s initial review. Concerning the Transportation Element that was discussed at the last meeting, Mr. Miller also noted on page 5-6, table 5-1 regarding the widening of Eastern Boulevard to four lanes, there is no mention of the stretch from Security Road to Antietam Drive. Mr. Rohrbaugh explained that portion is identified as a current project that is either underway or soon to be underway. Mr. Miller suggested that the Eastern Boulevard widening project be divided into two parts: from Jefferson Boulevard to Security Road; and from Security Road to Antietam Drive.

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- No. 3 under “Issues Addressed by this Element” – wording should be changed to “The historic district review process is perceived by some as a challenge to investment in historic districts.” Commission members acknowledged that progress has been made with regard to making historic preservation regulations less of a hindrance; however, more can be done. (Mr. Brubaker arrived.) There was discussion about the possibility of modern development downtown. Modern buildings could be permitted as long as the design complied with the Downtown Design Guidelines. Also, there are areas outside of the Downtown Local Historic where modern buildings could be built, such as east of Cramer’s Alley. With regard to reusing historic buildings, Ms. Maher added that many times the more challenging issue is with the building codes. The Historic District Commission (HDC) only has purview over the exterior features of buildings. Mr. Brubaker informed the commission that there is an alternate building code, however, local architects have chosen not to use it. Commission members felt it would be beneficial to better publicize this alternate building code (add to the website, hold a seminar, and/or do a mailing). Staff will investigate with the state to find out what the differences are in the two codes and to promote use of the Maryland Rehab Code to developers and architects.

Page 8-4:

- Concerning the HDC’s recommendation to expand the Downtown Local Historic District two blocks east on East Franklin Street to Mulberry Street, staff noted that this section of East Franklin Street is a gateway into the city. Most buildings are residential in nature and several beautification efforts are already underway. Ms. Maher pointed out that many of the buildings have been altered from their historic look. Local historic district designation would provide a sense of continuity for properties, however, designation would not affect exterior color choices. Most commission members present were not in favor of expanding the district, but felt the matter should be brought up again with a full complement of commission members.

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- The chart has not changed since the 1988 plan. The only item in table 8-1 is that the Alms House was added to the City Landmarks list. As mentioned, the HDC recommended adding five more buildings to the Potential Landmarks List. It was noted that the only control by placing a property on the Potential Landmarks list is review of demolition permits by the HDC for consideration of Landmark status. Concerning the HDC’s list, Mr. Stone did not think it was a good idea to add former industrial buildings to the list just because they are old. Mr. Thomas stated that he did not have an issue with adding the

former Brandt Cabinet Works building to the list because of the unique product made at that plant. Mr. Stone and other members were in favor of adding the R. W. Johnson Center (former North Street School) building only to the Potential Landmarks list. As a general point it was noted that building "P8" (Cynosure) on the Potential Landmarks list is in the wrong location. It should be moved to the corner of Potomac and McKee Avenues. Staff was asked to find out the significance of the building at 1201 Hamilton Boulevard.

Concerning the HDC's recommendation about extending a rail line, the commission felt this comment should be added to the Transportation Element. It is difficult to find funding for those types of projects.

**Adjourn.**

It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (5:25 p.m.).

10/28/2015

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Approved



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Debra C. Calhoun - Secretary