

**Historic District Commission
MINUTES**

**January 10, 2013
City of Hagerstown, Maryland**

Michael Gehr, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:38 p.m. on Thursday, January 10, 2013, in the Fourth Floor Conference Room, City Hall. A roster of the members of the commission and the technical slots they fill are on file and available upon request. Also present were commission members S. Dozier, V. Hrabal, P. Reed, S. Silas, and M. Wertman. S. Bockmiller, Development Planner/Zoning Administrator; K. Maher, Planning Director; and D. Calhoun, Secretary, were present on behalf of the Planning and Code Administration Division.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: December 13, 2012, and December 27, 2012.

MOTION: (Hrabal/Wertman) Mr. Chairman, I move that we accept the minutes as presented for December 13 and December 27, 2013.
DISCUSSION: None.
ACTION: APPROVED (Unanimous)

CONSENT AGENDA

None.

DESIGN REVIEW

116 West Franklin Street - Juwuane Sandridge - Sign Grant, Case No. HDC 2012-50.

Ashley Keefer was present on behalf of the applicant, Juwuane Sandridge.

Staff Report: This building is outside of the Downtown Local Historic District, but within the City Center Mixed-Use zoning district. The applicant is seeking a sign grant for a 2 x 8-foot wall sign to be mounted in the sign board area above the storefront and for vinyl door lettering. Staff recommended approval provided the lettering on the sign has smooth edges and that the sign will be placed in the bare-brick area above the storefront.

Applicant/Commission Discussion: Ms. Keefer indicated that the lettering will have smooth edges and the sign will cover the bare, unpainted area above the storefront.

MOTION: (Hrabal/Dozier) Mr. Chairman, I have inspected the project plans and the property in question and if constructed in accordance with these plans, the project is compatible with the character of the district for the reasons that

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the height, setback, materials, are within code. The material is wood and appropriate for the area and everything else about it is generally in harmony with the Design Guidelines for the Downtown Historic District. Therefore, I move that the HDC grant a sign grant for Case No. G 2012-01.

DISCUSSION:

None.

ACTION:

APPROVED (Unanimous)

WORKSHOP:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

Update of Re-Evaluation of Levels of Significance in the Downtown Historic District.

Dr. Reed made a presentation on how she developed the new resource assessments. For the record, she stated that Paula Reed & Associates did the work under contract for the City and pointed out that it was an independent project. (See meeting file for a copy of the PowerPoint presentation made by Dr. Reed.)

The purpose of the new assessments is to help the HDC deal with any demolition applications in the Downtown Local Historic District and to update the original rankings that were done in the early 1980s.

An "A" designation is a resource already listed on the National Register or it is a resource that could be listed individually. "A" resources in Dr. Reed's survey include "early survivors" from the 18th century when Hagerstown was an agricultural market town. Buildings elevated to "A" resources include governmental buildings such as City Hall and the Washington County Court House; fire halls; fraternal organizations because they are generally monumental buildings. City Market on West Church Street was included because it is a great time piece from the 1940s, and it houses the City Market which has been in continuous operation since 1751. Generally, "A" resources are highly intact examples of architectural styles.

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B-rated buildings retain a substantial amount of integrity, including location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, although the structures may have been altered either during the period of significance or more recently. "B" resources, despite alterations, are recognizable as historically compatible with the district and make a positive contribution to the district.

There are four C-rated resources, all of which are on West Washington Street. These buildings are historic but underwent major character-changing facade alterations in the 1970s. These buildings currently do not retain any integrity of the original design, materials, workmanship, feeling or association, but they do retain the basic shape of the original architecture. Some examples of "C" resources include The Brickyard Grille and the County Office Building (a/k/a Montgomery Wards).

"D" resources do not apply in the Downtown Local Historic District. The Downtown Local Historic District is a general historic district that covers many periods of significance. Dr. Reed recommended that the commission determine an ending date for the district's period of significance. A possible date is 1955.

Noncontributing and open space only make up 25% of the Downtown district. Dr. Reed commented that there are not many downtowns that can claim 75% of its historic fabric intact. Hagerstown's architectural landscape is unique and can claim 200 years worth of architectural significant buildings.

One recommendation was to encourage the City to become a member of Maryland Main Street. This program offers assistance to members in developing their downtowns, including help with marketing underutilized spaces for new development. Hagerstown has many underutilized buildings that are ready for revitalization. Becoming a member of Main Street again would be a good start. Ms. Maher noted that Maryland Main Street designations have certain criteria. The City recently hired a Downtown Manager, but funds need to be committed by the City; downtown merchants and other stakeholders would need to organize into a board.

Ms. Hrabal asked what could be done about the requirements for elevators in buildings undergoing renovations. Ms. Maher noted that the ADA requirements are based on a change of use and/or the amount of investment. Mr. Gehr pointed out that the state of Maryland requires developers to pay 20% of renovations toward ADA upgrades.

At this point Dr. Reed explained the rationales for the building designations. Mr. Gehr noted that the report recommends changing many B resources to A resources.

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North Potomac Street:

Going south on North Potomac Street, in the 100 block, the stone house on the east side is an "A" resource. It is currently being used for residential purposes.

South Potomac Street:

- In the unit block, east side, the former Snow White Grill and Bridge of Life Center sites might be opportunities for demolition.
- Maryland Theatre Box Office has been upgraded from a "C" to a "B" resource.
- In the 100 block, the building next to Odd Fellows contains existing vinyl siding that could easily be removed. Dr. Reed stated that it is possible that the original facade is located under the siding.
- The Frederick, Seibert & Associates building at 128 South Potomac Street is from the 18th century and was upgraded to an "A" resource.

East Franklin Street:

- The service station on the north side of the Unit block of East Franklin Street is still being used for its original purpose. Dr. Reed added that the only obvious change is the garage door on the front. Mr. Gehr was not necessarily in favor of elevating it to an "A" resource and Ms. Maher noted that there may not be a lot of support for the garage becoming an "A" resource.

West Washington Street:

(Ms. Wertman left the meeting.)

- The Nicodemus House is now an "A" resource.

(Ms. Dozier left the meeting; no quorum)

Because there was no quorum, action will be taken at the next meeting.

MAHDC Training Session - Reschedule.

This will be discussed at the next meeting.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Mr. Bockmiller pointed out that the Shaools will be in front of the Board of Zoning Appeals for an administrative appeal on January 16 regarding installation of replacement windows and alterations to the bay window at 57 West Franklin Street without a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HDC.
- The City has been informed that it will be receiving the state's highest historic award for excellence in media and publication. The award is based on the City's Civil War interpretive markers, books, tours, brochure, and videos.

ADJOURN: It was moved and seconded that the meeting adjourn (6:05 p.m.).

2/14/2013
Date

DC Calhoun
Debra C. Calhoun - Secretary