

# A Conservation District for MJ Neighborhood?

## BACKGROUND

- Portions of MJ neighborhood placed on National and Virginia Historic Places registers
- National Register boundaries closely follow “Locust Grove Investment Co.” plats of 1892
- 125 properties encompassed, including 154 “contributing” structures and 39 “non-contrib”
  - “contributing”=basically pre-1955 and reflecting historic/architectural character
- City Council passed local CD ordinance-2009

## Key features of the new ordinance:

- Approval required for demolitions of contributing structures
  - BAR > Planning Comm. > City Council
- Approval for all new construction
- Approval for additions that, effectively, can be seen from street (head on or corner)
- CD is similar to, but less stringent than, an Architectural Design Control (ADC) District

## *More factoids...*

- “Modern” construction/additions (ex: Ford house on Farish) permitted if compatible
- PUD also requires demolition review even though all other underlying zoning is changed
- City will require 50%+ property owner support before OK'ing CD for MJ area
- Maplewood Cemetery, plus other adjoining non-Historic District areas, could be included
- CD for MJ could be the city's first

## *The “Pro” Arguments:*

- Maintain current scale and fabric-no McMan's
- Maintain diversity of style
- Protect/maintain Maplewood Cemetery
- Prevent demolition without review
- Avoid over-sized new construction/additions
- With 1/3 of MJ housing rentals, protect from insensitive “by right” redevelopment
- BAR review as a help in improving design
- CD is a protection from future commercial development pressures post-hospital

## *The “Con” Arguments:*

- CD is unnecessary – no immediate threat
- Potentially costly to homeowners, possibly requiring architect's or legal (appeal), input
- Depending on BAR and Planning Comm composition, architectural diversity not sure
- ADC neighborhoods not always happy with demanding, protracted process. True here?
- Standards of approval arbitrary (mass, roofs, windows, doors)
- Could be perceived as turning back on “affordable housing”

## *Conclusions on Conservation District*

- There are clear pros and cons
- On balance, the MJNA Board believes a conservation district will protect and enhance our neighborhood
- But without a clear majority in favor, the city will not approve