

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