

Columbia HPC – Preservation Plan Grant Project Public Input Meeting

September 10, 2024 – 5:30 PM

In attendance:

18 guests – including neighborhood association representatives, CoMo Preservation non-profit organization members, and other interested parties

Consultant – David Taylor

City Staff – Rusty Palmer (Staff Liaison to the HPC) and Shawna Johnson (City Manager's Office)

HPC Members – Stephen Bybee (Chair), Melissa Hage (Vice-Chair), Meg Ross (Secretary)

Preservation 101

Historic Preservation started in the US by women in the 1850's, Anne Cunningham founded the Ladies' Preservation Society of the Union in an effort to stop the demolition of Mount Vernon

National Preservation Act of 1966 (LBJ's Great Society)

- National Register of Historic Places
- Certified Local Governments
 - Eligible for federal grant funding
 - From offshore natural resource exploration leases

Preservation Plans 101

Preservation plans should tell us what to preserve and how to preserve it.

Components –

- Historic Context – General background of local history
- Existing Conditions – Visual character, informs design guidelines
- Current & Future Preservation Needs Assessment – Surveying priorities, NRHP eligibility, etc.
- Funding Sources – Income tax credits (federal & state) [SHPO workshop to learn more]
- Legal Basis for Preservation Locally – Establishing ordinance, state statutes, etc.
- Issues & Priorities – Driven by public input, focuses efforts

Design guidelines were noted by those in attendance as a priority for infill development.

Questions

Will plan focus on existing structures, or seek to identify lost elements?

- Plan is a snapshot focusing on current conditions while identifying historical context.

How long will the preservation plan process take?

- The grant schedule will permit 6-7 months, but must be completed in compliance with the grant agreement.

How do you plan to engage neighborhood associations?

- Many have already been directly notified.
- Shawna Johnson with the City Manager's Office is working to notify all current NA representatives.
- Mr. Taylor has scheduled a number of in-person visits with NA representatives for neighborhood tours and other data collection.

Can other organizations, such as CoMo Preservation also host their own meetings to collect input?

- Mr. Palmer indicated that this would be beneficial, but that any input would need to be compiled and shared with the HPC.

Is there a potential for conflicts between the preservation plan recommendations and the central neighborhood zoning overlay study?

- Mr. Palmer noted that he has doubts that the two plans will mesh perfectly, although the HPC has provided input to the consultant. Any conflicts would be ironed out during the City adoption process.

What is the budget allocation for the consultant completing the overlay study, and will there be additional public meetings to review the study?

- Mr. Palmer was unaware of the budget allocated for the study, but later confirmed it to be roughly \$100,000.
- He also noted that Tim Teddy, the Director of Community Development, had indicated there would be additional meetings with the consultant once the first round of public comments are addressed and a revised proposal is presented.

Will the recommendations, such as the proposed design guidelines, be codified in the unified development code?

- Mr. Palmer noted that components of the preservation plan will potentially be adopted as an amendment to the comprehensive plan, Columbia Imagined, by City Council. The preservation plan is a policy document, meaning it informs staff decision making in an advisory sense.

Is the preservation plan city-wide, or will it be neighborhood-based?

- The plan will be for the community as a whole, but components within the plan will focus on the distinct historic neighborhoods and properties. The primary function of the preservation plan will be to identify intact historic districts and properties for recognition by the City & Historic Preservation Commission as a local historic district and/or landmark. The plan will also provide recommended next steps for the preservation commission and prioritize those areas most in danger of encroachment and deterioration.

How is an overlay district different from an historic district designation?

- In Columbia's development code historic districts (HP-O Districts) are, in fact, zoning overlay districts. They were established within the zoning portion of the code, and are intended to offer an opportunity for regulation of certain historically significant features of the properties lying within the district boundaries.
- Our existing urban conservation overlay districts (UC-O Districts) are also housed within the zoning code, but would typically be utilized to conserve aspects of the neighborhood that do not have an historical significance.
- Design guidelines are helpful tools for either type of overlay district.

How will the preservation plan help regulate infill development in our historic neighborhoods?

- Infill development in historic districts can create a false history if it matches the nearby historic structures too well. Preservation groups advocate for honoring the historic components without copying them directly. The preservation plan will help identify both the historic districts and the varied components that are unique to each district. Creation of an historic overlay then would provide the avenue for regulation of those components, and provide the design guidelines that will inform the character of the infill. Architectural review could become a component of the building permitting process for properties in our historic districts as well.

How do you plan to reach marginalized neighborhoods and populations?

- The City is always striving to reach more and more constituents for input on projects that impact our citizens. The City Manager's Office has made this a priority and their database of community leaders continues to grow. We still rely on members of the public to spread the word and we hope to create lasting partnerships to help us keep these lines of communication open. Given the city is physically divided into distinct neighborhoods, we started by contacting all known neighborhood representatives and we are in the process of reaching out to other community-based organizations for feedback on the preservation plan. We need representatives to facilitate discussions within their own organizations and report back to us.

Are you planning to physically visit neighborhoods, and/or interested in tours?

- Mr. Taylor indicated that he had already scheduled meetings and tours with a couple neighborhood representatives, but that he was open to more while he was in town.

Once the plan is complete, what are the next steps?

- Mr. Palmer explained that once the plan is completed by Mr. Taylor, it will be submitted to the HPC for review before it is submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to meet the final milestone of the grant. Once the SHPO Grants Manager approves the project he will release the final payment to the City to reimburse the Federal share of project costs (60% Federal, 40% Local funding). At that point, the HPC would potentially present the preservation plan to the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council for consideration. If adopted by Council, the plan would be incorporated as an amendment to the City's comprehensive plan, Columbia Imagined, where it would inform decision-making in regards to matters involving zoning and development in those historic neighborhoods identified by the plan.

What is the intent of the plan?

- Mr. Palmer reiterated that the plan is intended to provide a decision-making framework for the City when historic properties or neighborhoods are at stake. The plan should identify pockets of historically intact neighborhoods and priority areas for preservation efforts or for further research. Mr. Taylor also noted that he will include a guide for monetary resources for homeowners of historic properties.

How will the plan help with publicizing the use of local historic district and landmark designation for neighborhood protection?

- Mr. Taylor noted that the plan will help to identify and map the fabric of the city, but the legwork for mobilization will be up to the City and/or the neighborhoods to devise a signage or wayfinding plan. The WB Pomeroy Foundation gives out grants for signage of historic districts.

What other education and outreach efforts is the HPC planning for not only the preservation plan, but also more generally? A list of vocabulary words may be helpful for layperson interested but unfamiliar with preservation jargon.

- Mr. Palmer noted that a vocabulary list is a good idea, citing the continued need for public education about preservation and how it is regulated in Columbia. The Most Notable Properties program often struggles to convince property owners that the award does not come with strings attached. Staff also indicated that an FAQ section was already in the works for the BeHeard platform, where a lot of the terms will be explained as well.

What are some examples of previous plans that people can review?

- Mr. Palmer listed off a number of other Missouri cities that have quality preservation plans, including Liberty, Cape Girardeau, Independence, Excelsior Springs, and Warrenton was noted as the most-recent.

What resources can the public provide to the consultant?

- Mr. Taylor lamented that we don't know, as researchers, what we don't know. He and the HPC will be reliant on the public to come forward to provide leads for historical data. We will rely on the public for information, particularly about our marginalized populations where historical information may not be as well-documented.

What is the difference between preservation and conservation? Restoration and rehabilitation?

- In regards to historic preservation, Mr. Palmer noted that preservation was the continued maintenance of a resource, while conservation is the act of maintaining a healthy state for the property or neighborhood with the understanding that it is being modified over time. A conservation overlay protects neighborhood character in the face of redevelopment of the neighborhood. A preservation overlay regulates elements that cannot be lost or changed. Restoration is the act of bringing something back to its original state. Rehabilitation, at its basic level, is stabilization. Historic properties, due to funding or because of their dilapidated state, often require rehabilitation to their foundation or to their roof before they can be restored to their original appearance, or status.

Can preservation plan regulations be used to bolster code enforcement?

- Mr. Palmer indicated that preservation regulations can, in fact, be devised in such a way that they would provide teeth for weed ordinances or rental conservation laws, etc... All such regulations are managed with complaint-driven enforcement. So, the squeaky wheel gets the grease, but also, having an historic district or landmark designation in place immediately places those properties under a bit of a microscope.