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Naples Historical Society

DATE: February 16, 2017
TO: Naples Historic District Residents and Property Owners
FROM: Elaine Reed, President & CEO *Elaine Reed*
SUBJECT: Naples Historic District Initiative Update

If you ever felt like the Naples Historic District is not what it used to be, take a stroll or drive around it (a District map is on the back of this Memo). Check out the houses and the alleys, and imagine life back in the day.

Notice the houses that have been majestically restored...and those that have seen little restoration work. We cannot change what's happened in the past, but we hope you'll see that we still have time to create something of value for this community. We can do this with your understanding of this project, one that does not infringe on private property rights.

Including this correspondence, by now you have received five mailings from Naples Historical Society, all of which have been loaded with important information on the Naples Historic District Initiative. If you didn't receive or missed any of these, please let us know.

Naples Historical Society is proud to report that the 2016 District Resident/Owner Survey showed overwhelming support for our efforts...thank you! We have received also an impressive flood of positive feedback from our newspaper editorials, our e-blasts and newsletters, from phone calls, and through the most revered one-on-one personal visit. The good energy from the community is immensely helpful to us.

This package was created as a result of several requests for more depth of information, and we shall oblige. **Enclosed is a Status Report and several attachments**, perhaps more than you want, but enough to whet your appetite. We stand ready to meet with any District resident, property owner or designee, in person or by phone, to share greater insights: **239-261-8164**.

Thank you, again, for all of your support. It takes a community to preserve one!

P.S. Be sure to read the NOTES section on side two of the Evaluative Comparisons fact sheet; this explains why this will be the last time Naples will have a chance to preserve. That's why we are so fiercely pursuing this project.

Attachments: Preservation Approaches, Goal & Guiding Principles, Draft Design Guidelines for Discussion, Evaluative Comparisons with Notes



Naples Historic District Initiative Status Report

Background

Over the course of the last year, we have positioned this project, or initiative, as a public policy issue because, "...a house is just a house, but when a collection of them comprise a landmark neighborhood, it is a public policy issue." Reed, Elaine. "Applaud Restoration," *Naples Daily News*, January 23, 2017.

Naples Historical Society has met with the City Manager and his staff several times as well as with all seven City Council members. The City Manager, three of his staff, and five of seven Council Members attended the Naples Historic District Symposium (January, 2017) to get better acquainted with the Society's proposal. (Council members who didn't attend the Symposium were given a DVD of the entire three-hour panel discussion.)

So where are we now? We are working with the City Manager and his staff to address three areas that need additional discussion. An elaborated explanation of each follows.

- (1) Come to a unified understanding of the components of preservation,
- (2) Consider what would be needed to enact legislation for those who wish, voluntarily, to preserve historic structures using their own resources, and
- (3) Discuss how historic preservation could be managed at the City.

Because the Society's Initiative attempts to address all contributing residential structures in the Naples Historic District, we are working to outline design standards for new construction in the vernacular. This is for those who cannot rehabilitate an historic house, for whatever reason, or who choose not to do so. THIS SOCIETY'S PROPOSED INITIATIVE IS NOT MANDATORY...IT'S ALL VOLUNTARY. New construction is discussed below.

Initiative Components

Note that nothing is black and white...interpretations abound. After voraciously reading mountains of material, placing and taking numerous phone calls with the State of Florida,

holding meetings with experts in the local building industry, as well as with preservation professionals from other Florida communities over the last few years, we feel the Society has an astute understanding of what is needed, but differences of opinion are bound to arise. We need to find concurrence and that takes time and patience and your continued support.

(1) Nuts & Bolts.

- ✓ In December, 2016, Florida's State Historic Preservation Office approved Naples Historical Society's updated list of contributing structures in the Naples Historic District. Now, this list must receive formal approval from the National Register of Historic Places, which is scheduled for May 11, 2017.

Please remember that the District boundary was originally created and acknowledged by the National Register in 1987, but many historic houses were NOT on that list (and we don't know why). Our work over the the last two years rendered a desperately needed update to the 1987 list of structures within that same boundary. *See Boundary fact sheet.*

This said, after final national approval, we believe the City of Naples will acknowledge this updated list when modifications to historic houses in the District undergo floodplain review. The City can only use a list that has received this level of approval.

- ✓ What would the design standards be for those who voluntarily choose to participate in a preservation program for historic houses in the District? The Secretary of the Interior relies on 10 Standards, which are really design guidelines. The local community is expected to interpret those guidelines as is reasonable for Naples.

We have already created a draft document for design guidelines discussion; please see the attached. Our intention is to keep it simple. Interested residents, property owners or designees are welcome to share their opinions. Please call me for further discussion.

Strict guidelines are required when Federal monies are used in the rehabilitation of historic houses; since we're not looking for grant funding, we are not obligated to impose a strict standard. This is one reason why we do not want to have, nor need to have, a mandate for preservation in Naples.

See the attached Preservation Approaches document for more information on the extent to which a homeowner or buyer can modify an historic structure and keep it historic. As we have said from the beginning, we

cannot expect historic houses to remain unchanged; that is not what preservation is.

We must offer these gradations or options to historic homeowners or buyers because if we wait for someone to preserve with little or no modification, we'll lose our opportunity to do something of value now.

- ✓ What would the design standards be for those who choose to build new in the vernacular? What defines 'vernacular'? This supports the Society's proposal to achieve broad visual integrity, something that many other communities do in the USA. Interested residents or property owners or designees are welcome to share their opinions on design guidelines for new construction in the vernacular. Please call me for further discussion.

(2) Legislation.

- ✓ **FACTS:** The City of Naples is not a Certified Local Government (CLG), whereas Collier County is a Certified Local Government (CLG).
- ✓ Does the City of Naples need to be a Certified Local Government (CLG) in order to render judgment on historic properties? Yes, it appears so. Note that a CLG status gives the municipality access to federal monies for a host of grant programs.

We are not looking for grant monies for historic preservation because using Federal dollars in historic preservation invokes a stricter design standard of preservation—we cannot afford to do that nor are we required to do so.

- ✓ Will the City of Naples become a CLG? That will be determined by Council as recommended by the City Manager with feedback from the community, and Naples Historical Society.

The City's Design Review Board (DRB) has extensive professional credibility, and could review/approve restoration or rehabilitation projects for historic houses in the District, but since the City of Naples is not a recognized Certified Local Government, they cannot render such judgments as of today.

If the City were to become a CLG, that is a separate process and may not be absolutely necessary right now. The Society believes it's worth tapping into the County's system in the meantime. Local decisions, at the City level, would be ideal.

- ✓ Since Collier County is a CLG, will an inter-local agreement with Collier County be acceptable? The City is reviewing the County ordinance right now to check on the 'voluntary' nature of it, see how to incorporate a 180 demo notification requirement (which is required in the City of Naples today), and examine the ordinance's design components. All of this is needed to verify if an inter-local agreement is a reasonable option for consideration.
- ✓ If the City was to work with Collier County's Historical & Archeological Preservation Board (HAPB), which is the State of Florida-recognized entity authorized to render judgment on the modification of historic properties, we believe this is a reasonable step in the direction to make local preservation decisions.
- ✓ If the City of Naples were to become a CLG, does the City need an ordinance (or overlay) to reflect voluntary participation in an historic preservation program? Yes. The State process requires an ordinance (or overlay) because of the National Register recognition.

If someone wants to alter an historic house beyond what will keep it historic or raze a house, she/he may do so. That house, however, will be removed from the National Register. The denigration of the Naples Historic District will happen if we don't encourage a gradient of modification options, achievable with education, and implement an easy, local, user-friendly process.

- ✓ The Society recommends the City should not replicate an ordinance from another community; we should have the moral courage to create a simple guide for our unique community, one that respects property rights and one that will not weaken the Community Rating System level of 5 recently obtained by the City of Naples just last year (2016).

(3) City Staffing.

- ✓ A key goal in our proposal includes an educational component, and we believe this should be carried out not only through the City's printed materials and website information, but with a dedicated full-time staff member, employed by the City, ideally with a preservation background and an understanding of the Naples real estate market.

A participant on the Society's District Symposium panel said, "No one moves to New Naples; they move to Old Naples." This comment echoed the need to understand the market reality in which we live.

- ✓ Preservation activities throughout the country almost always require a full-time preservation professional to help educate the community and work with significant parties. Those parties include residents in and out of the District, AIA and its architects, NABOR, engineers, contractors, Naples Historical Society, other City departments, State of Florida Historic Preservation Office and National Flood Insurance Program, etc. The size of the District should not be the driving factor in deciding whether or not to hire; the decision to hire should be based on acknowledging the opportunity to solve a major, and to-date, elusive community challenge.
- ✓ We do not recommend a mere shifting of existing staff responsibilities. The responsibilities for this staff member would not be solely to respond to architects who come to the City with plans to restore an historic house (that's reactive and too late), but to be proactively engaged with various stakeholders in the community as noted above.
- ✓ Naples Historical Society stepped up to the Naples Historic District challenge because of a moral obligation to do something; calls for help or direction from the community never cease. We chose to research the issue differently and more thoroughly than ever before and establish a policy position, which is what we are doing now. We've led this project to date; now, we need the City to incorporate historic preservation in its budget.
- ✓ Some would say there is a remarkable lack of knowing how to go about preserving in Naples. This is not because someone is withholding information, it's because there is no one with the dedicated responsibility to proactively education and get the word out about preservation, its various approaches, design options, and the process. A staff hire would be proactive and would fill in the educational void.
- ✓ Preservation is best balanced when there is a combination of interpretations from FEMA/National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and interpretations from an historic preservation perspective. We need the support of the community with this position.

(Continued)

Property Rights

This is worth repeating: It is vital to understand that the Society's proposal does not infringe on property rights; we've said that from Day 1. There is no law or legislation, at the State or Federal level, that mandates participation in a preservation program/ordinance. Communities that do mandate participation in a preservation program (Georgetown, Alexandria, Savannah, etc.) reflect the will of the people who want mandates; that is certainly not the case with Naples and we are not proposing that.

What's Next?

A City Council Workshop is tentatively re-scheduled for March 20th. We will send a note to you, via postcard, once we have a confirmation. Your support of this project at a Council Workshop and/or a Council Meeting would be enormously appreciated.

Once this project is implemented properly, we see opportunities to further educate residents and the community at large. For example, we have created a partnership with NABOR, Naples Area Board of REALTORS; they will include the term, *Naples Historic District*, in the multiple listing system (MLS) drop-down menu—a wonderful way to remind the county's 6,000 realtors that we have a District.

We have a few other really great ideas to bring to life, but that can only happen if this project takes off well. Your continued support is needed. Comments or questions are always welcomed.

Thank you...It Takes a Community to Preserve One!

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