

Eckington Historic Designation

3rd Town Hall

May 9, 2016

Historic Designation update

Randy gives a little background on what we have done with HD to date – voted to explore last fall, and then this is the third town hall meeting.

Concerns moving too fast, so will hold vote at June 6 meeting about whether to continue w/ exploring HD or not. Voted at last week's ECA meeting to allow absentee voting for this vote, will be available by google form or hard copy, will send out final details in the next week via website, google group, facebook, nextdoor, twitter.

Walt introduces speakers, gives overview of agenda.

Michael Lee Beidler, Principal, Trout Design Studio -

<http://bloomingdaleneighborhood.blogspot.com/2016/05/dc-architect-david-lee-beidlers.html>

- o Trout Design Studio is 18 years old, Mr. Beidler has worked in historic preservation architecture for 30 years. Does single-family, townhouse conversions, new buildings, Italian Embassy.
- o Within historic districts, you can do *most* things you would be able to do otherwise, just with another layer of review intended to maintain integrity of historic fabric of building, and protect context of house (street, immediate landscape, open spaces). Historic district is intended to protect historic character of neighborhood; HDs also hold property values the best. Example is Georgetown – the most restrictive to work with, and no cap to value of property there. We hate doing work in Georgetown because it's so hard to do, but you can sell your home for 3 times its original value because people like the historic nature, the scale, the character of the neighborhood.
- o We have 3 new buildings in historic districts. One in Mount Pleasant is considered a contributing building (in period of significance for the neighborhood), which means it's controlled a little more. This building is next to one that burned down in the 1920s; foundation was in place and we had photographs of old building. Zoning would not have allowed building, but were able to put it up in its old configuration because it matches its historic counterpart. On Q st, doing a new townhouse that is being redeveloped as condos – the home was lost but because it was there historically, we can put it back.

- There are some lots in historic districts that may never have had buildings – those are harder to put buildings on because that open space was part of the historic fabric.
- In historic district, you can add onto your house, add another level, change the windows, but there are ways to do that that fit within historic context.
- Another benefit is that HDs save historic buildings that you have now – it’s harder to demolish historic buildings. If a building is in bad shape and cannot be maintain, there are ways to raze buildings.
- We take townhouses and turn them into condos, so you don’t lose value in that sense.
- Everything in historic district is nuanced and subjective. The Historic Designation staff has guidelines, great resources online. But those are guidelines, not rules, regulations, or laws.
- HPRB is very reasonable board of intelligent people. When you go with reasonable and compelling argument for changes you want to make, they will consider everything very carefully. The staff is very good at guiding you through process. A good architect can guide you through process seamlessly – you want an architect who is familiar with working in historic districts.
- A lot of people run into trouble when they go through an application without talking to anyone, and then you go to HPRB and they say “no, here are the guidelines.” If you include the community members (you will likely have a historic community group) you will be successful in your applications. It’s a nuanced process but not a difficult one.

Kim Williams, D.C. Historic Preservation Office (HPO)

- Third meeting Kim has attended. In past, has talked about benefits and disadvantages of HD. Tonight, will talk more about regulatory process and how you get designated as historic district.
- First discusses preservation law and intention of law.
 - Meant to protect & enhance distinctive elements of city’s past. (See powerpoint on ECA website for more information).
 - Protects “fabric” of history, does not protect *use* of buildings.
- Historic Designation Process: Application Submission
 - Applicant conducts research, public outreach and documentation according to HPO submission requirements.
 - Applicant submits application to the DC Historic Preservation Office.
 - DC HPO reviews application for completeness
 - DC HPO sends filing notice in letter form and by US Postal service to
 - Property owners
 - Applicant
 - Affected ANC
 - The filing notice informs recipients that it will consider the application in accordance with the Historic Landmark & Historic District Protection Act at a future HPRB hearing. The letter will let recipient know that a notice of a public hearing on the application will be afforded at least 30 business days’ in advance. The letter will

advise recipients of their opportunity to testify under the board's rules of procedures.

- Would likely take 4-6 months before application would have hearing. Try to hear applications in order, and right now there is a backlog.
- HD Process: Noticing and HPO review
 - Once HPO determines hearing date for application, the HPO notices applicant, ANC, and property owners of hearing date at least 30 days in advance.
 - HPO sends notice in letter format via us Postal Services and includes an attachment on the implications of designation and the process for concurring with, or objecting to listing.
 - HPO receives all letters, emails, and other written correspondence regarding the designation case.
 - HPO reviews the nomination application, prepares its staff report addressing whether or not the proposed historic district meets the criteria for designation. One week before the scheduled hearing to HPRB, HPO sends its staff report and all correspondence from the ANC and community to HPRB members.
 - Staff report is also posted to website.
- Historic designation Process: HPRB meeting
 - At the scheduled hearing, HPR will begin the hearing with a presentation by the applicants on the merits of designation of the historic district. It will take testimony from the ANC and the community, including community groups and individuals.
 - Upon completion of the presentations and testimony, HPRB will evaluate the application according to the Designation Criteria and the National Register Criteria for Designation.
 - Based on integrity or community member sentiment, HPRB may recommend changes to the proposed application, in particular it may challenge proposed boundaries.
 - HPRB can reduce the boundaries or period of significance, but cannot expand them.
 - HPRB will then either vote on its motion at the end of the hearing (most common), or leave the record open for an additional 30 days and vote at the next month's hearing.
 - If HPRB votes in favor of designation, a notice will be put in the DC Register identifying that it is the intent of the HPO to forward the nomination to the National Register. Thirty business days after such notice, the historic district is listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and protected under DC preservation laws.
 - If protected, historic review becomes part of the permitting process. It is not a separate added-on process.
 - If HPRB votes against designation, the designation process ends.
- Designation Criteria (only have to meet 1, but most historic districts meet 3 or 4)
 - Events – property is the site of events that contribute significantly to DC or the nation

- History: Property associated with historical periods, social movements, groups, institutions, achievement, or patterns of growth that contributed significantly to the District of Columbia or the nation
- Individuals: Property is associated with the lives of persons significant to the history of DC or the nation
- Architecture and urbanism: Property embodies the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles, building types, construction methods
- Artistry: They possess high artistic or aesthetic values that contribute
- Creative masters; They have been identified as notable works of craftsmen, artists, sculptures, etc
- Archaeology: They have yielded or may be likely to yield information significant to an understanding of historic or prehistoric events, cultures, and standards of living, building, and design
- Main goal of historic designation: TO manage change, not to prevent change

Peter Sefton, Historian, QED Associates

- At past meeting, shared some research. Now, research is largely finished, and tonight will discuss what an Eckington Historic District might look like – but all open to discussion and revision.
- If ECA agrees to send nomination forward, will be filed (discusses process). Eckington stands an excellent chance to qualify for historic review.
- What QED found
 - Eckington has varied history, even before developed as Streetcar Suburb in 1880s.
 - Draws name from estate of Joseph Gales, newspaper editor with political influence, died in 1860. His widow made Eckington Manor into summer white house, but that was rejected. Eckington Manor was later women's college, then telephone operator dorm, and later was set on fire and was torn down.
 - During Civil War, there was a 1000 bed military hospital and camp Sprague, home to several thousand military personnel. Not sure quite where Camp Sprague was.
 - Along with streetcar and railroad activities, may be many architectural resources to discover.
 - Development influenced by topography – neighborhood is on steep hill; top of hill has been regraded to make developable – used to be steeper. Main branch of street car system ran along 4th street and later North Capitol st.
 - Eckington is like a quilt that started as individual squares that were interwoven starting in 1887 when George Truesdale bought the Gales' estate (just outside city boundary at Florida Ave), laid out first streetcar system. Was revolutionary suburb – had running water, paved streets, electricity. Extended city street grid into Eckington. In 1891, bought parcels of land, made into West Eckington. Boundaries were slightly different than now. Congress passed law that RRs had to get trains off city streets, lead to building of Union Station and Eckington Freight Yard – had up to

100 tracks. Gave Railroads power of Eminent Domain, Truesdale had to sell much of land that was east of MBT trail. Eckington got smaller.

- Keating's subdivision _near Mckinley athletic field & Emory school – and McLoughlan Subdivision, part of working dairy farm, subdivided in 1870s. Had population of white & African American residents, many of whom worked on dairy farm.
 - Communities there were wiped out for McKinley.
- Another subdivision came in – High View, started 1-2 years after Eckington; developed slowly due to terrain. Flattened terrain, extended Rhode Island Ave, and then filled in with rowhouses.
- Center Eckington – east of High View, north of Eckington Proper, built by Truesdale's partners. Extends across Rhode Island Ave.
- Northwest Eckington – extreme NW corner – developed most slowly, partners got into fight. People who won fight in court were mostly industrial warehouse developers. Finally, oddest parts – section between Lincoln, North Cap, Rhode Island – originally part of Bloomingdale & part called Moore & Barbour's addition – added in late.
- All areas in competition, but more complicated because developers are partners with Truesdale. Different visions for subdivisions helped weave them together. Truesdale didn't like stores & businesses, tried to force them out. So first stores were in Bloomingdale and in triangle at corner. People needed places to work and so warehouses opened up, subdivisions worked together. Patterns of interaction wove different squares into community by about 1910. Newspapers called whole areas as Eckington by around then.
- Explored buildings in neighborhoods – 4 periods of development
 - 1887 – 1891 – building large wooden houses for upper-middle class families on large lots. Queen Anne Style architecture – turret and big porches.
 - 1891 – first row houses, soon predominant.
 - 1901 – first apartment buildings
 - 1905 – big rowhouse developers, esp Harry Wardman – came to Eckington. Started at Unit block of T st, built conventional revival houses w/ turret roofs, and then built "daylight" rowhouses – 2 rooms deep instead of 3, wider and shallower, with front porch. Goes on into 1920s.
 - Railroads built, people building warehouses along tracks – tear down some houses, but also provide a buffer between homes and tracks. Example – Schlitz beer cold storage warehouse, National Geographic Building (1923).
 - 1920s – Eckington running out of land that you'd want to build homes on, start to see more small apartment buildings.
 - Depression halted building for about 5 years, and then more smaller buildings. WWII – stops construction. In interim, some more warehouses built. Good place for truck access to trains.
- Characteristics of Eckington

- Front porches – very important and common to rowhouses
- Skyline – building are fairly uniform heights, follows contour of land.
- Common setbacks – houses have a line along the street makes uniform frontage. Front façade would be very visible & impactful, changes to back of house may have less impact.
- Suggested Boundary: North Capital to Rhode Island Ave, to MBT trail, leaving out railyard/ Harry Thomas Way (nothing of historic significance), to Florida Ave. – basically boundary of Eckington
- Period of significance: Any archeological resources, and 1887-1949
- Looking for more information about 1945-1965.

Question & Answer

- If I live in a building, does the entire building if you want to opt out of HD?
 - Kim: No, the application is going to be for boundaries. If a building is included in those boundaries, not every person would necessarily vote – don't know how you will decide to move forward with application or not. Our office does not require a vote of property owners. Just want to see that it's the "will of the community."
 - Follow-up: Do you look for a percentage of the people?
 - Once we receive an application from community organization, we then notice all the property owners within the boundaries, give property owners the manner in which they can object to or concur with HD. If it turns out that we're getting nothing but objections and it's apparent that HD is not the will of the community, we would go back to applicant, say outreach was not done appropriately, or understanding of will of community, we do not believe application should go forward until you go back to community.
 - Follow-up: All it takes is 1 applicant?
 - Applicant can be ANC, neighborhood organization, government entity, or property owner (more for landlord nomination), citywide preservation organization.
 - Follow-up: If 1 percent is Eckington Civic Association members, and it has to be an association to submit application, if we have 10,000 property owners and 50 members in ECA, maybe best if ECA sets aside requirement for them to be determining factor, open up to entire community rather than ECA dictating.
 - Community cannot apply – must be an organization with "preservation" in bylaws. Applicant has to be organization. ECA is an organization representing community of ECA.
 - Randy: Will have June 6 vote on whether to continue to process of exploring looking at HD. We do not take this lightly, and we are slowing things down to get more feedback from community. Vote on June 6, will be ECA members for this vote, but to continue process, NOT to apply. If the

organization votes to continue the process, we will look as organization at what type of feedback we will try to get to gather larger community input. We were considering survey. Could do posting or mailings to absentee landlords, etc. Plan is to do some kind of survey, may look at other kinds of feedback – we are willing to look at feedback from community.

- Is the survey binding on ECA?
 - Do not have details – would be presented to membership and voted on. Eventually, ECA will have to take responsibility to be organization to submit application. Our commitment is to get feedback from community, whether it's simple majority or otherwise.
- Q – why would the ECA vote against moving forward? You've been doing it this long? Why wouldn't you do the survey first?
 - Some people did not want the ECA to move forward with a survey, so the ECA is first voting on whether or not to continue with the HD exploration process, and then will determine whether and how to do a survey.
- People sharing discussion, concerns about survey.
 - There's benefits and detriments to HD, my family has been here for years, want to be heard. Have questions about what process is how much it costs for changes.
- Kim: Would be happy to come out, give detailed presentation on how you go about getting replacement windows, etc. Don't think it's helpful to disseminate false info about it being economically unfeasible to be in historic district. Our office is working to make things affordable. Often preservation is less expensive.
 - Disagree. Some people ask for estimates, it was more expensive.
 - How many houses have original windows, etc.
- How many structures in Eckington are on Historic Registrar of Places? Why is it better to designate an entire neighborhood rather than designate specific buildings or blocks?
 - No buildings currently on historic registry. DO have 1 landmark nomination pending for US postal service building pending – not in boundaries. Certainly a couple of buildings (McKinley HS eligible), otherwise no designated landmarks.
 - Certainly the process can begin with individual landmark nominations. In a neighborhood of residential rowhouses, it's not a single rowhouse that would be eligible on own merits- it's the cohesive/collective set of them that would be eligible. There are some individual buildings (e.g., warehouse, schoolhouse buildings) that may be eligible, but you couldn't individually nominate most rowhouses as separate buildings. That's why many people want HD – on its own it can't qualify, but can with block. You can do a street or block – we would look at the application and proposed boundaries. There's no reason why those boundaries couldn't be reduced to much smaller boundaries. Recently Grant Circle HD – 16 buildings, Logan Circle started as HD with just buildings around circle, and grew to

be 14th st Corridor. Boundaries are being presented by consultants & experts for what qualifies – boundaries are determined by office by many factors.

- Feedback about Grant Circle- at last minute, a developer built structure that was not consistent w/ location, developers can get someone to slide in change at least minute. Historic Designation is not what it's cracked up to be.
- On average, how much longer does it take to make exterior alterations in HD than in neighborhoods that are not HD
 - Application process – project must be reviewed by Historic Preservation Office, meets once per month, try to get things submitted on consent calendar. Would add at most a month to process. There's a timing issue – deadline for filing for hearing (a month before), that's the only delay that's caused if you make application correctly. If you're in an HD and submit incompatible changes and don't discuss with staff, it will take longer. But if you work with staff, can go smoothly.
 - 95% of projects that come to office for review are approved over the counter. You come down and go to all the windows for a permit, and 95% are approved at that window. The other 5% go on the consent calendar, and the more contentious ones are major development projects. For smaller changes (window, roof), if you follow process, you will get approval at the time you apply for a permit.
 - Historic Preservation Office has enormous offering of suppliers, recommendations for materials, etc – don't have to throw darts, they will help you find resources that meet your budget and the criteria for window replacement. Lots of options for anything you have to do.
- If you're in HD, what impact would that have to changes in public space (sidewalks, lampposts, etc) –
 - public space reviews applications, so no difference.
- What are implications for low-lying areas for visible alterations? What date is used for buildings that have undergone extensive renovations? Why does HD include industrial sites, what would treatment be?
 - If addition (e.g., rooftop) is visible from public right-of-way may not be approved. If minimally visible, may be approved. If you're standing on street on top of house and cannot see rooftop, can be approved. Does not matter if you can look down on at from higher vantage point.
 - What about buildings that have already undergone renovations? Everything is grandfathered in. You are not required to take changes back to an original period of construction. Non-historic doors, etc, can remain in place.
 - Q – what if you have vinyl windows, want to replace them, have to put in historic ones?
 - Yes – new windows would have to meet window standards.
 - If a building has undergone big renovations, is it still a contributing structure?
 - There's a period of significance, end date of period of significance, any building within that period and retains integrity is contributing building. If

sustainability people in office of planning in trying to come up w/ ways to make buildings more sustainable. Thinks Eckington has great opportunity for solar panels that are in HDs. If it's in flat part of roof, no problem. If need to be angled, would be ok if not visible. Point of perspective is from front of house/building of question. If it's not visible or minimally visible, will probably be ok.

- If pitched roof – new solar shingles that may work, but putting up major panels that change character of roof would not be doable.
 - Beidler disagreed- if solar panels didn't change character of roof – would be supportable position.
- Additions on top of buildings. Is it definitely possible in HD to add story on top of building?
 - Can do addition to house, but is dependent on what addition is and what house looks like. Hard to say generally yes or no, but is very common to do additions on historic buildings, need to be set back so that it does not rise well above front roof line and is not visible from public right of way. There's many opportunities for rooftop additions, but must be sensitive & compatible.
 - If on end of street – can see front and side of house, that would mean no addition since it can be seen from street, right?
 - Depends on what addition is. If substantial and out of character, no. If minor addition, could be ok. If a pop-up, no. If back deck, needs repair, would need to go through HPRB but would generally be approved.
 - Skylight – would likely be able to replace it. It's considered "secondary historic fabric" – considered differently from the front façade.
- ECA process: How many people are in ECA? What percentage would need to agree? Is it representative?
 - 83 members as of tonight. What percentage of membership needs to agree for this to go forward? If it goes past vote – June 6 would need to be majority vote. We are then talking about some kind of survey or other options. Would bring back to membership, will look at ways to gather input from broader neighborhood.
 - Mike: you are not helpless in this process. If the application is made, if you don't want this, all you have to do is respond with email or letter to HPRB. You have the power to express your voice and it's heard. The board won't designate historic district against your wills. It's not the HPRB staff that's pressing this on the community. Also gives neighbors to give input on process for renovations also. You have all the power and the board and staff listen to what people tell them.
 - Kim: True, but we do not want to see application fail. We don't want to proceed with application if we know it's not the will of the community. You as a community should figure out what you want to do, maybe reduce boundaries, talk about it and figure out what would work for community. Some people here do support HD.
 - What role does the ANC play?
 - HPRB gives ANC "great weight" so if ANC votes to not support HD application, that carries great weight.

- Poor residents often replace windows w/out going to DCRA, if someone replaced windows w/out permit, would you make them rip them out?
 - If it's an HD and they replaced windows w/ anything without permit, DCRA will put stop work order. If someone does replace windows, that "rides with the property" – ultimately goal is to get correct windows back.
- Handicap railings & ramps – would those be allowed in front of house
 - Can't answer question without seeing application. Every condition is different. If there's an alternative solution that would work better for historic character, would encourage that, but won't prevent handicap person from accessing house.
- Replacing roof – have to use slate shingles?
 - Allow replacements that replicate the look of slate
- Will permits that are issued now or during review period, grandfathered in retroactive application to permit?
 - If you receive permit to do work before HD goes into effect, you have right to do permitted work, even after HD.
- Is it true that any home that is over 100 years old cannot be demolished?
 - Any building that is considered "contributing" cannot be demolished. If it no longer retains integrity, can be demolished. Some old buildings that no longer have integrity in HD boundaries. Would be determined before HD process.

Sharing Viewpoints

- Vasa: Think I said enough, nothing to add. For me, Eckington is the residents, not just the building. I think it's important to work together to find a solution. I did a lot of research on HD, appreciate that you're trying to preserve stuff. I'm trying to make this a democratic system. But each individual owner has a right to know what will happen with house. I feel like it's being pushed without people being aware of what they can or cannot do. I have a lot of plans for my house. Neighbors next to me are 70 years old, we both have 13 front windows, received quote, was \$35k to install quality windows. Would prefer to have neighbor next to me with plastic windows then not be able to afford windows.
- Sunny: left
- Shelly Vineyard: Thank you for taking time for long meeting, appreciate the time you've put into answering questions. I have concerns about process and substance around HDs. On the substance, I believe the needs of community 100 years ago are different from needs of today and are different from needs 50 years from now. Adding barriers to making changes is short-sighted. On process, many people shared – and appreciate that ECA has slowed down process and got more community engagement, still don't feel like it's enough yet. Today's panelists are making good cases for, but haven't gotten compelling case against. As community member, need to have both sides.
- Kurt Miller – left

- o Michael – Thank panelists and community, has been enlightening. Many specific questions that individuals have about nuts and bolts, cost. Dimension to this – what is the essence of our neighborhood & community. Cultural history is important. Why preserve buildings. What I think the more compelling reason to make personal sacrifice for the civic notion of why do this, is that there's a history here, both long-term residents going back to covenants, is a story that needs to be told. Buildings are one way to tell that story. Bloomingdale is looking into this, Cultural Tourism DC has put out signs about people who have been fabric of community. That's a dimension that hasn't come up tonight. It's not just "my house" – it's the contextualization of what the community means. I hope that whatever the outcome, there's an opportunity tell that story.
- o Murphy – let
- o Aaron Johnson – got quotes from contractor since we wouldn't be allowed to do vinyl. Difference for 21 windows - \$10,500, solid wood was \$35000 – enormous cost difference. Procedurally, when I found out about this on NextDoor – have to pay money to vote, don't do same day voter registration. Asked neighbors if they know about this, went across street who knew about this because he received anti-placard hat went out. Was flier at first meeting, but many people don't know anything about this.
- o Robert Norris – we're all advocates for whatever we want to advocate for. I've been living here a long time, native Washingtonian. Didn't just show up 7 years ago and buy a house. Here to advocate to people who can't use a computer, look like me. Feel like I'm SOL if I didn't come tonight. There's a certain detriment that affects people who have been here 60, 70, 80 years, doesn't affect some of us who are pro-HD, you haven't been here long enough to understand connection to community. Who knows what community will be like what's important. If we're all for liberty and openness...this has a negative impact on people who look like me. There's a financial implication. You're encouraged by how much your property values are going to go up – not just DC, every urban area. These people have a job to do, they're going to advocate for what they're supposed to. We as a community cannot be judged by 20 or 30 folks who are on a civic association and are going to move this forward. It doesn't make sense it's un-American. That's how this whole thing is shaking out, but it's unfortunately. You be kind to the people you meet on the way up, they're the same people you're going to meet on the way down. We have to think more than just monetarily – that's preservation. I'm going to advocate for those people who can't come out won't come out or scared to be included in the process. So I'll have to pay my dues.
- o Brian Butler – Architect too, worked here last 7-8 years in DC. Heard about this a few weeks ago through talks on NExtDoor. Wanted to give opposite side. The board here does great work but gives rose-tinted glasses. From my experience going through board and with this process, there's no sugar coating it. It is a longer process, it is in some cases substantially more restrictive and more expensive for what you can do to your house. I really like my neighbors, some of them 50-60 years, some of them are on fixed incomes, I'm concerned about what this will do to them long-term. Those of us here in the room need to think about those who aren't here, who can't afford to spend \$30k on windows shouldn't stop them from getting new windows. Don't know which way I would vote, but I feel like board has

been very pro, but that's not what you're representing to community. Present facts, and let them decide which way to vote.

Questions – how would that affect money paid to QED?

We hired them to do a product, we paid for it, they've done it. What we do with the product will be up to us. If the vote on June 6 goes against, do we still have access to QED for oral history?

Oral history is not part of QED project – never formal requirement.