



## **Broadway Historic District Study Committee** **Public Hearing Comments - November 14, 2007**

The Broadway Study Committee held a public hearing regarding the report on the proposal to designate two new historic districts on Wednesday, November 14, 2007. The hearing was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Co-Chair Ken Koral in the City Council Chambers of City Hall, Second Floor, 100 N. Fifth Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

### **Members Present**

Sabra Briere, Carrie Chobanian, Ken Koral, Tom Stulberg and Michael Bruner (arr. 7:37)

### **Members Absent**

Devon Akmon and Robert White

### **Staff Present**

Kristine Kidorf, Coordinator and Brenda Acquaviva, Administrative Service Specialist V

### **Introduction**

Kristine Kidorf gave the introductory presentation on the background of the Committee. The Committee was established by a resolution of City Council in October of 2006. The city authorized the study of the area around Broadway to determine if a local historic district should be created. In March of 2007, City Council appointed seven members to the Committee, comprised of residents in the study area, interested preservationists and two Historic District Commission members.

Ms. Kidorf introduced the members of the Committee who were present for the public hearing and displayed the map of the proposed areas. The areas encompass both sides of Broadway from Swift to Broadview Lane and included Moore, Jones and Cedar Bend. Since March, the Committee has been meeting every few weeks and have reviewed the data and historical data generated from the northern area survey and the Lower Town Historic District Study Committee. A tour of the area was also conducted.

Based on this work, the Committee is recommending that two historic districts be created. The first encompasses the historic residences on Traver, Moore, Broadway, Jones and Cedar Bend. The second contains two commercial buildings, (including the oldest and most important commercial building in the area at 1001 Broadway). As a part of these districts, they've identified contributing and non-contributing resources and have created and adopted two preliminary Study Committee reports.

Ms. Kidorf spoke about the importance and benefits of historic districts and why they should be created. Among others, the need to preserve historic neighborhoods for future generations and managed change which helps to manage new construction to be sure the two are compatible. The goal is not to make the neighborhood a 'museum' or to prevent all change, but to ensure that changes are made to preserve the historic fabric.

Other benefits (wording taken from local and state law) include fostering strength of beauty and the local economy, the education, pleasure and welfare of all citizens and the owners of contributing resources can apply for a twenty-five percent income tax credit equal to the cost of rehabilitation expenses.

The first potential historic district proposed is from 1001-1013 Broadway. Ms. Kidorf presented a Power Point presentation of these buildings. The first was the Anson Brown building located at 1001 Broadway. This structure was built by Anson Brown in 1832. It is the oldest commercial building still in existence in Ann Arbor. It symbolizes what remains of the town that Anson Brown envisioned and partially built in the 1830's. To the right of this structure is the Anson Wright building and was constructed in 1899 and originally a four-story building. It housed Dr. Kellogg's offices (a clairvoyant physician).

The second proposed district is comprised of the residential area which includes Broadway, Jones, Cedar Bend, Moore and Traver streets and includes some of the most important historic residences in the area. The dates of these structures range from 1832 to 1940. This is from the time the first residence was built until World War 2 and the post-war housing boom which created changes in the district. *(Ms. Kidorf displayed photos and expounded on various structures within the proposed district and their architectural and historic backgrounds).*

Ms. Kidorf explained what the significance of a historic district means to residents. Among those is that work to the exterior property must be reviewed by the Historic District Commission. Many items can be approved by staff. (She provided a hand out of those approvals). It is important to note that the entire exterior (including the back) of the home would be under review. She explained the review process and suggested that residents call city staff for a consultation. She presented a flow process of how projects are approved. All decisions are based on the Secretary of Interiors Standards which are federal standards that all districts within the state of Michigan must adhere to. These are also the rules that are used by the State Historic Preservation office and the National Parks Service use when reviewing historic tax credit application. She encouraged the public to visit the National Parks Service website and learn about the standards (as well as this information that was handed out). She also noted the information available on the city website.

Based on the comments at this public hearing, the Committee will then decide what will be in the final report and what to recommend to City Council. The final report with the recommendations will go to City Council no later than January of 2008. When Council is ready to present this, they will hold an additional public hearing and vote to accept or reject these Ordinances.

### **Attendees**

Fourteen individuals attended the public hearing; Comments followed the introduction of the district process and status of the preliminary report made by the Chair.

### **Public Commentary on the proposed 1001-1013 Broadway – Commercial Properties District**

1. **Mr. Jim Koli – Owner of 1015 Broadway** – Taken a poll of all owners of 1001 to 1013 Broadway and we are unanimous that this not be made into a historic district. They are still not convinced that it should be established. Their stated opposition for the report that will go to City Council.

2. **Ms. Ellen Ramsberg – Resides at 1503 Cambridge Road** – Thinks the Anson Brown building should be a historic district and hope the owner will take advantage of the tax credits and other advantages that come along with the district.
3. **Ms. Carol Mull – Resides at 1111 Fair Oaks Parkway** – She stated that although she doesn't live within this proposed district, her work brings her concern with this as she is conducting research on the history of the Underground Railroad and she was appointed by the Governor to the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission. She has been very active in Washtenaw County to recognize significant sites. This is a significant building in the Underground Railroad as the building across the street which was identical to it is no longer standing. That was the building where the 'Signal of Liberty' was published by Reverend Guy Beckley who lived up the road on Pontiac Trail. His house has been nominated by the Committee to the National Parks Service 'Network to Freedom' listing. This is a national listing of places that have been authenticated as Underground Railroad sites across the country.

The Reverend Beckley published (with Theodor Foster) the 'Signal of Liberty,' an anti-slavery newspaper from 1841-1848 in the site across the street that is no longer there. The African-American Cultural and Historical museum of Washtenaw County conducts tours and one of the sites where they stop is at the location. They point to the Anson Brown building to display what the original building looked like. These tours are still active. Not only is the Beckley house nominated, but so are the tours. The A2 Convention and Visitors Bureau wrote a letter of support and that they believed that the economic impact of these tours in 2003 was \$75,000.00 and they expect the subsequent revenues to nearly double in the subsequent years. We need the owners' permission to nominate the site and hoped that we could nominate the Anson Brown building (an honorary statement). *(Mr. Koli stated that he had given permission to accept the nomination and erect a plaque on the building).*

4. **Ms. Laura Strowe – Resides at 1327 Broadway** – She understand Mr. Koli's problems with his property and is sorry that he has not been able to work with the Committee to get an understanding as that she feels that the building (the Anson Brown building) should be protected in some way – if not by being included in a Historic District, then by some other means, as Mr. Koli might not own this building 'forever,' and it should be protected in some way.
5. **Joseph & Francis Duffy - Resides at 1426 Broadway** – Mr. Duffy stated that his is a student of history with an undergraduate degree in the subject. While he doesn't claim to do important research, he knows what he likes when he sees it. The Anson Brown building is gorgeous, as is the two-story building next to it. I echo the last speaker's sentiment. I don't know what it is to be a small businessman - perhaps it's a burden to have a historic property, but if somehow these properties could be protected in the future it would be a positive attribute.
6. **Ms. Susan Wineberg – Resides at 712 East Ann Street** – Former member of the previous study committee and familiar with the information presented. Regarding the Anson Brown building, this is the most recognized historic building in A2. I feel the Committee would have been remiss in not recommending this. It is important due to who it is associated with as well as its architectural features. It is the representative of Lower Town and is the first thing you see when you come over the Broadway Bridge. It needs to be protected for future generations.

7. **Louisa Pieper – Resides at 408 Awixa Road** – Protecting this building is long overdue. How can you not protect the oldest documented building in town, not to mention the oldest surviving neighborhood in town? This proposed district deserves to be adopted and soon. *(She thanked the Committee for its hard work).*

***Seeing and hearing no other speakers on this subject, the Co-Chair closed the public hearing at 7:32 p.m.***

### **Public Commentary on the proposed Broadway Historic District**

1. **Laura Strowe – Resides at 1327 Broadway** – Voiced support for the Broadway Historic District. I am a ‘convert’ to historic district ordinances. In 1996, when the Lower Town Ordinance was proposed for this neighborhood, I resisted it. Like some others, I’m concerned with the ‘government’ telling you what to do and am concerned with burdensome and inefficient bureaucracy. – However, I am now a ‘believer’. Setting up this district will be our only protection against rapacious developers and uncaring landlords. One of the peculiarities of Broadway is that it is zoned duplex, although, until a recent onslaught, most of the houses were single family. Years ago, we tried to get the zoning changed to reflect the reality, but were unsuccessful.

In the last few years, three new property owners (who are not residents) have converted single-family homes into hideous oversized duplexes, including the tearing down of a historic building. Without the historic district to stop it, more will be sacrificed to greed. Broadway is particularly at risk – already Maiden Lane and Wall Street have lost their historic houses and ambience. With the Broadway Village, aka Lower Town redevelopment, the U of M development on Maiden Lane and the dormitory construction on northwest Broadway, the flavor of Broadway will be significantly altered and the precedent set for extraordinary height and density. We need a tool to protect Broadway. Historic District designation should not be subject to a popularity contest, but seen as a necessary protection against rampant development and careless home ownership.

2. **Ms. Ethel Potts - Resides at 1014 Elder Blvd.** – Although I do not live in this proposed district, I feel I know it quite well. There are many benefits of a historic district. Ann Arbor is a distinctive place. We had two firms of consultants – Calthorpe and Winter Race. They showed appreciation for our historic districts, recommending setbacks and suitable scale so as not to overwhelm the neighboring districts that abut the downtown.

Our historic buildings and neighborhoods make Ann Arbor attractive. People benefit from the tax credits available. You can feel assured that your neighbors and the homes they own will also remain in good condition. The Old West Side historic district is an example of this. The Historic Preservation Alliance has done some research on the economic benefits. One program has tracked eighteen communities. One of these has created over 23,000 new jobs in rehabilitation and investment spending. Every dollar spent on rehabilitation yields over \$40.00 in economic reinvestment. Broadway and Lower Town is our oldest part of town. Sadly, it is slowly being eroded by monster additions or rental properties. Once gone, A2 will be like ‘anywhere’ America.

3. **Carol Maul - Representing the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission and the African-American Cultural and Historical Museum.** – She stated that although she does not know a lot about Ann Arbor, she does know the history of the Underground Railroad and their value. She stated that many of these homes along the tour, including the schoolhouse on Traver Road that were safe houses during that time. We are still conducting research involving several houses on Broadway, and we hope to see those preserved and added to the tours.
4. **Donna Pointer – Owner of 1660 and 1666 Broadway** – Assumes they are both included in the proposed district (they are the same parcel with separate addresses). She stated that she fully support this, she doesn't want to see these homes disappear, as they've already lost the Traver House at the base of the street. It's too easy to just demolish a building. My house is an individual historic designated home, the 'Frank and Ophelia House' house, which was known as the Green house when I purchased it. There used to be an orchard they owned at the top of the hill. She stated that her area is not zoned multi-family, but single-family and that historic districts add considerable value to their homes and are a worthwhile pursuit.
5. **Ms. Margaret Bignall – Resides at 1448 Broadway.** - In favor of the district and hope it will be successful and approved by City Council. I have lived there for 27 years and there has been talk of making Broadway a historical district; in the meantime, we've seen the other streets around us disappear, bought up by developers and the U of M. The only street that has any houses left is Broadway. In regard to the zoning, ours is the R2 designation, so the houses around us are being built up in huge 'barns' behind them, and many of the lots are large and can carry these multi-residences and is changing the character of the neighborhood.
6. **Jim Koli – Owner of 1015 Broadway** – Stated it was good to see that the property owners who want to support this are here – there doesn't appear to be anyone opposed to it. I think it is very important that the property owners there are the ones who are supporting it and want to be a part of it. I hope this is will be successful at City Council.
7. **Joe Duffy – Resides at 1426 Broadway** – Stated that he was born and raised in Detroit – Lived in fine old homes in Detroit and this is what drew me to Broadway. I have selfish motivation – I want to live in a historic district and I support this.
8. **Ms. Susan Wineberg – Owner of 712 E. Ann** – Stated she not only lives in a historic home, but has a rental home in a historic district as well, and does take advantage of the tax credits for both properties. Hopes that City Council will pass this since most of the homeowners want it.
9. **Alice Ralph – Resides at 1607 East Stadium Blvd.** – Wanted to make comments on the hard work that the current and former Committees have put in on the proposed district. Feels that this is not only for protection but a chance for communities to enhance their neighborhoods but to utilize funds from outside the community. She hopes that City Council will approve the districts.

10. **Ellen Ramsburgh – Resides at 1503 Cambridge** - Agrees with Mr. Koli that it is wonderful when owners are in favor of historic districts; but owners change, and buildings are the evidence of our history and we hope that these will live on beyond us, but that's not certain. These houses represent and teach and educate us about our history and historic districts are the only tool we have for protecting that.
11. **David Blanchard – Resides at 1230 Broadway** – Stated that he is In favor of this and wished that City Council had considered it sooner. It is great when the people in the neighborhood support it; it is for all the people investing in this community. Historic districts are not just for homeowners; it's for the people who drive through, the people who live in the area, visit the parks in the area and the people who have invested in the broader Ann Arbor community. Broadway and Lower Town is unique and interesting and attracts people. Just as we're allowing certain developments to go forward and infill, City Council also needs to take the necessary measure to protect the character of historic neighborhoods.

***Seeing and hearing no other speakers on this subject, the Co-Chair closed the public hearing at 8:02 p.m.***

Co-Chair T. Stulberg took over the meeting as K. Koral stated he had to leave early.

#### **General Discussion – Question and Answers**

A member of the public discussed her home and its history. She stated that the property used to have a covered front porch and wants to reconstruct this and wanted to know if this was something that would be possible if she were in a historic district.

K. Kidorf – Stated that as long as she had photographic evidence of this and reconstructing according to that, yes, it would be permitted and it would be an eligible expense for the tax credits as well.

The speaker stated that she did not have photographic evidence, but that one side of the home has another area that used to be just a porch, and could she replicate that for the front? (K. Kidorf stated that staff could examine that and help to determine what she could do).

Hearing and seeing no other speakers, Co-Chair T. Stulberg adjourned the meeting without objection at **8:06 p.m.**

***Minutes prepared by B. Acquaviva, Administrative Support Specialist V***