

BRIEFING PAPER
City of Spokane
Plan Commission Briefing
July 22, 2020

Subject

Cannon Streetcar Suburb Historic District Overlay Zone

Background

In 2015, the Cliff-Cannon Neighborhood Council (CCNC) started a conversation with the City's Historic Preservation Office (HPO) to create a means to better protect the historic character of the neighborhood. While parts of Cliff-Cannon have been listed as a National Register Historic District since 1979, that designation does not offer the protection against demolition and general character features that a listing on the Spokane Register would. The CCNC decided that they wanted to pursue a Spokane Register of Historic Places historic district overlay zone to both offer protection of historic resources through design review, while at the same time, provide incentives to property owners who significantly improve historic properties.

In order to create a large historic district, the SMC 17D.040 (Historic Preservation Ordinance) needed to be revised to allow for district creation through a vote of property owners within the proposed district. The ordinance revision passed City Council in February of 2018 and a new Historic Preservation chapter (SMC 17D.100) has been implemented. In fall of 2019, after receiving over 50% affirmative vote from property owners, the *Browne's Addition Historic District Overlay Zone* was recommended for passage by the Spokane Plan Commission and subsequently passed by the Spokane City Council.

The HPO received a grant in June of 2019 to fund the creation of three documents necessary for the formation of a local historic district – a nomination form, resource forms for each property within the district, and design standards and guidelines for the district. Those documents are being created by HPO staff. The documents are currently in draft form and are being reviewed by the Nominations Committee of the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission:

- Cannon Streetcar Suburb Local Historic District Spokane Register Nomination Form
- Cannon Streetcar Suburb Local Historic District Resource Forms
- Cannon Streetcar Suburb Local Historic District Design Standards and Guidelines

Once the documents are in a preliminary draft form, the HPO will push the documents out to property owners for comments on the drafts. Then, using those comments and working with internal stakeholders and agency reviewers, final documents will be posted on the project webpage prior to beginning the balloting process with property owners in the proposed overlay zone.

The HPO has led efforts to engage the neighborhood with the following outreach activities targeted to both property owners and residents of the district including the creation of a project website (9/19/2019); at least three public meetings with residents and property owners (2/5/2019, 1/7/2020, 2/4/2020); tabling at the Cliff-Cannon Neighborhood Block Party to seek feedback from residents (9/21/2020); conducting an online survey to solicit feedback on the areas residents identified as historically significant (32 responses); due to COVID-19 we recorded a video presentation about the proposed district with City Cable 5 to post on the project webpage and to send to residents (4/22/2020); due to COVID-19 we hosted a two-day socially-distanced pop-up information table throughout the proposed district to answer questions and solicit feedback from residents and property owners (6/26-27/2020); one first class mailing to all property owners within the district; and social media posts including Nextdoor and a Facebook live event ('Spokane Historic Landmarks' is the HPO Facebook page).

The neighborhood driven creation of the historic district will allow for:

- Regulation of changes to the street facing exteriors of existing properties when a building permit is sought through the Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) application process by the HPO and/or the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission (SHLC)
 - Most decisions can be made at the staff level based on the design standards and guidelines, but larger projects with more extensive changes would be heard at a public hearing by the SHLC
- Regulation of demolitions of “contributing” structures within the district through a CoA application
 - Requires a public hearing of the SHLC
- Design review of new construction within the district based on a framework created for compatibility in the district (included within the Design Standards and Guidelines document)

The district is not a tool to limit growth in this high density residential neighborhood, rather, it is a way that the neighborhood can participate in a public process geared toward appropriate changes as well as growth within the district. The Design Standards and Guidelines are extensive and meant to provide clear direction to both property owners and developers as they approach rehabilitation of historic resources or consider building something new in the neighborhood. By providing an avenue for public process and review of substantial changes to the neighborhood, the historic district designation gives citizens an opportunity to express their thoughts on proposals, but ultimately, decisions will be made by the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission based on standards.

This proposal is directly in line with the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan Chapter 8: Urban Design and Historic Preservation. Pertinent sections include:

DP 1.1: Landmark Structures, Buildings, and Sites

Recognize and preserve unique or outstanding landmark structures, buildings, and sites.

DP 1.2: New Development in Established Neighborhoods

Encourage new development that is of a type, scale, orientation, and design that maintains or improves the character, aesthetic quality, and livability of the neighborhood

DP 2.7: Historic District and Sub-Area Design Guidelines

Utilize design guidelines and criteria for sub-areas and historic districts that are based on local community participation and the particular character and development issues of each sub-area or historic district.

DP 3.10 Zoning Provisions and Building Regulations

Utilize zoning provisions, building regulations, and design standards that are appropriate for historic districts, sites, and structures.

DP 3.13 Historic Districts and Neighborhoods

Assist neighborhoods and other potential historic districts to identify, recognize, and highlight their social and economic origins and promote the preservation of their historic heritage, cultural resources, and built environment.

Action

The SHLC will review the final documents after the balloting is complete, and if property owners vote 50% + 1 in favor of forming the district they will recommend approval of the historic district overlay to City Council.

The Plan Commission also has a role as a recommending body to City Council since this is a land use action with the creation of the overlay zone. The HPO seeks a recommendation from the Plan Commission that the *Cannon Streetcar Suburb Historic District Overlay Zone* be recommended for passage to City Council **if** property owners vote 50% + 1 in favor of forming the district. (Draft ordinance attached.)

In fall of 2020, City Council could consider final adoption of the *Cannon Streetcar Suburb Historic District Overlay Zone* by ordinance.