

Date	Agenda No.	Subject
05/03/05	7(b)	Main Street Historic District Designation and the Creation of Certain Financial Incentives

Initiated By:	Richard Acres, Kal Murib, and Dick Valore
Action Proposed:	Approve Ordinance on First Reading; Set Public Hearing Date For May 17, 2005
Presented By:	Andrea Mimnaugh, Historic Preservation Planner

INTRODUCTION

Downtown property owners Kal Murib, Rick Acres and Dick Valore have proposed a historic landmark district for a portion of Downtown Littleton primarily along Main Street. The boundary includes 19 properties (see attached Main Street Historic Landmark District map). The applicants have included written consent from all 19 property owners. At the time the application was considered by the Historical Preservation Board, there were two additional properties included in the proposal. The owner of these properties has requested to withdraw them from inclusion in the district and may request inclusion at a later date (see letter from Matthews and Associates, attached).

In conjunction with this application, the City Council initially agreed to an incentives package to encourage the success of the district. The package includes a proposed \$25,000 per year fund for projects relating to the maintenance and enhancement of the district, a proposed reduction in required parking ratios, and proposed fee waivers. Property owners that have consented to the district have done so contingent upon approval of the incentives package, as currently proposed.

The area proposed to be designated a historic landmark district includes properties zoned C-A and B-2 and is located in the Central Area Neighborhood of the Comprehensive Plan.

HISTORY AND FACTS

Survey of historic resources in Downtown Littleton and listing on the National Register:

A historic survey of the downtown was completed in 1997 by Front Range Research Associates, Inc. for the Littleton townsite of 1890. This survey documented 285 resources within the townsite, generally bounded by Church Ave. on the south, Belleview Ave. on the north, the Rio Grande railroad tracks on the east and Santa Fe Dr. on the west. The information produced by this survey provides the background for the historic significance of individual buildings and documents the historic context of the downtown. This survey identified the 2300 – 2500 blocks of W. Main Street (excluding the south side of the 2300 block) as meriting National Register status. This area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on April 8, 1998.

While a listing on the National Register of Historic Places provides recognition of a historic district, the listing provides little protection of historic resources within the district. Local designation by the City of Littleton ensures that historic resources within the district are maintained for future generations.

Proposed local historic landmark district:

The proposed Main Street Historic Landmark District is an application for a local district. Properties within the

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district would be subject to the regulations in the Littleton City Code for properties within historic districts, which include:

- Review of exterior modifications to buildings by the City for compatibility with the building and the district
- Proper maintenance of the building to ensure the perpetuation of the resource

In addition, a local historic district would enable contributing properties (properties that have been identified as contributing to the historical significance of the district) to be eligible for a 20 percent state tax credit on qualified rehabilitation projects and state historic fund grants. All of the buildings in the proposed district are considered contributing.

The area included in the proposed Main Street Historic Landmark District constitutes about 7 percent of the properties originally surveyed in 1997. Five of these buildings are designated as local historic landmarks. The other properties are identified as significant historic resources to the community.

The proposed Main Street Historic Landmark District represents the many of the buildings on the primary commercial street of the original townsite.

A summary statement of significance for the proposed historic landmark district is included in the application, Attachment C.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan:

The proposed historic landmark district meets the following goals of the City of Littleton Comprehensive Plan, Revised February, 2000:

Community-wide Goals

Goal 1: Preserve Littleton’s unique identity by protecting historic structures and emphasizing Littleton’s distinct social, and economic heritage with consideration given to:

- a. View preservation*
- b. Landscape preservation*
- c. Topography*
- d. Human Qualities*
- e. Encouragement of variety in housing stock and types of people*

By recognizing these properties along Main Street, the historic core of the community, this designation will help protect and honor Littleton’s distinct social and economic heritage.

Goal 2: Develop Littleton’s economic independence and reemphasize downtown as Littleton’s economic and social center.

The historic landmark district designation is an important tool for the continued development of the downtown

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as the center of the community both socially and economically.

Goal 5: Preserve existing neighborhood values while encouraging any new development to make the most efficient use of land, resulting in the highest possible standard of living and the best use of natural resources.

The historic landmark district designation will help to maintain existing neighborhood values and encourage new development to respect and complement the characteristics of the downtown that are important to the community: human scale, walkable street environment, a mix of building types and uses, and physical links to the people and events that shaped Littleton.

Goal 7: Promote and maintain an attractive and healthful living environment for present and future Littleton residents.

The historic landmark district designation will institute a review process for all new development that will help to ensure that new development, restoration and rehabilitation will balance the pressures for large-scale economic development with the desires of the community to maintain the small-town feel of downtown.

Central Area Neighborhood Goals

Goal 4: Encourage the retention of the historic and “small town” character of Main Street.

The historic landmark district designation honors the characteristics of the downtown that lend to the small town character of Main Street by looking at the downtown as an integrated whole that contributes to the character and viability of Main Street.

Goal 6: Encourage and accommodate the private rehabilitation of older residential and commercial structures.

The historic landmark district designation will enable contributing buildings in the district to be eligible for state preservation tax credits and state historic preservation grant funds for rehabilitation.

Goal 9: Portions of the Central Area, known as the Littleton Main Street Historic District, and individual structures (i.e. Richard Little House) have been designated locally significant historic areas/structures. Preservation of these areas and structures is essential to maintain Littleton’s unique character.

The historic landmark district designation implements part of this goal for the Central Area Neighborhood. The proposed boundary, which includes many properties along Main Street and several additional properties, would put a historic landmark district in place that would preserve 19 properties. (Note: the Richard Little House is not a designated City Landmark nor is it included in the proposed historic district.)

In addition to the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the historic landmark district complements the recently enacted Transit Impact Overlay Zone (TIZ). This zone district was approved in 2000 specifically to address concerns about demolition and redevelopment in the downtown and areas within one-half mile of transit stations. Although enacted in response to the new light rail service, the ordinance crafted for the TIZ recognized the importance of preserving the “small town” historic character of Littleton, and the special architectural and/or historic significance of the area within ½ mile of the downtown Littleton light rail station.

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The historic landmark district designation will assist in meeting the intent of the TIZ overlay zone district by providing design guidance for the review and approval of renovation and additions in the district.

PROPOSED INCENTIVES PACKAGE

Property owners who consented to joining the Main Street Historic Landmark District have done so with the stipulation that it is put in place in conjunction with the proposed Main Street Historic Landmark District Incentives Package. The incentives were proposed by a committee of property owners, Historical Preservation Board members and City staff during the summer of 2004 to help offset any additional costs and/or inconveniences of district formation. The proposed incentives consist of parking requirement reductions, fee waivers and a City-funded grant program to provide assistance to preservation projects and other costs related to district formation (see attached description of incentives). These incentives were referred as a package to downtown property owners for comment and were well received.

Council gave its initial support of the proposed incentives package at their February 15, 2005 study session and indicated that the City would consider a minimum of \$25,000 per year for the grant program. At the Historical Preservation Board’s April 18, 2005 meeting, the Board recommended unanimous approval of the Main Street Historic District provided that the incentives package is also approved (see attached resolution).

The attached ordinance on the designation of the historic district would also establish the above incentives. On second reading of the ordinance, the Council may also consider a resolution to allocate funds from the General Fund for the first \$25,000 for grants to be made in 2005.

REFERRAL AGENCY COMMENTS

The application for the historic landmark district designation was referred to the Development Review Committee (DRC), and no concerns were expressed. Business/Industry Affairs also reviewed the proposed district and indicated support for it as proposed (see attached letter).

The incentives package was referred to the Development Review Committee (DRC), and no concerns were expressed. The Finance Department has also reviewed the grant program and indicated there would be no problem with the financial mechanics of budgeting and expending funds for the purposes indicated. The parking reduction incentives were referred to the Planning Commission. At t regular meeting on April 25, 2005, the Planning Commission forwarded a favorable recommendation to the proposed changes to the Zoning Code (6 in favor, 1 opposed). A copy of the minutes will be included in the packet for second reading.

FINANCIAL DETAILS

The cost to the City for the proposed incentives program is as follows:

Parking requirement reduction

No cost.

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Building permit and use tax fee waivers

This incentive would cost the City an estimated average of \$900 in annual lost revenue (based on historical averages, assume four buildings would pull a permit for a façade work in any given year, with an average estimated cost of \$15,000.)

Main Street Historic District Grant Program

The grant program would require an allocation of \$25,000 per year from the General Fund, with 2005 being the first year for funding. This program would replace the tax refund program for properties within the Main Street Historical District.

LEGAL OPINION

The City Attorney has reviewed the proposed ordinance and approved it as to form.

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION BOARD ACTION

The Historical Preservation Board held a public hearing on April 18, 2005 and unanimously voted to approve the requested historic landmark district designation and forward a favorable recommendation to City Council. A copy of the minutes of the meeting is attached along with the resolution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval of the attached ordinance on first reading and that a public hearing be held on May 17, 2005.

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move that the ordinance designating the Main Street Historic Landmark District be approved on first reading; that a public hearing be set for May 17, 2005; and that the ordinance be ordered published in full.

Moved by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Yes _____ No _____ Absent _____

Attachments:

1. Proposed Ordinance

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2. Proposed Historic District Map
3. Proposed Main Street Historical Landmark District Incentives Program
4. Application for Historic Landmark District Designation and Attachments
5. Historic Preservation Board Resolution No. HPB-05-01
6. Historic Preservation Board Meeting Minutes, April 18, 2005
7. Letter from Matthews and Associates, dated April 19, 2005
8. Letter from Business/Industry Affairs, dated April 15, 2005

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