



Changes Ahead for Preservation?

Littleton has a new city council, a new mayor, and a new city manager, so changes are inevitable. Unfortunately, some of the first changes may be to the historic preservation code.

At a January 24 study session, four councilmembers, Bruce Beckman, Debbie Brinkman, Peggy Cole, and Jerry Valdes, agreed that future historic districts, individual designation of landmarks, and even placement of properties on the List of Merit should be 100 percent consensual.

This would effect major changes to Littleton's current historic preservation code, which has been on the books since 2001. The current code allows the city to non-consensually designate an exceptionally significant historic property as a landmark if it were threatened to be destroyed. This has never been used in Littleton.

The current historic preservation code also allows a majority of property-owners to request council designation as a district, which was the case when the Louthan Street Historic District was formed in 2002.

The Main Street Historic District was formed in 2005 as an opt-in district, which meant no property was included without the owner's consent. This was done as a compromise, after two years of discussion.

At the study session, Glen Van Nimwegen, the new director of community development, suggested that since the downtown historic district was "booming" and a majority of buildings had been designated, adding the rest of the buildings to the district would make it more cohesive.

That would protect the considerable investment of the property owners who had allowed their buildings to be designated, he said. But it would also mean some buildings

would have restrictions placed on them without the owners' consent.

The council majority would have none of that, citing private property rights. Then they decided that all future districts, including neighborhoods, and all future designations should be 100 percent consensual, as well.

Councilmembers Jim Taylor and Bruce Stahlman argued that this would probably prohibit the Arapahoe Hills neighborhood from ever becoming a historic district, or it would be gerrymandered and have holes.

The Arapaho Hills neighborhood has been trying to *(cont. on page 2)*
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obtain some type of historic designation since 2007, when their neighborhood



Historic Littleton Inc. is dedicated to preserving the historical and architectural heritage of the greater Littleton area through advocacy and education.

List of Merit Program Up for Change

was put on the List of Merit.

City Manager Michael Penny asked the council if they wanted residential historic districts, saying, “The reason you have a historic district is that it’s a geographic area that’s locked in. There’s a unique character to that neighborhood, such as having it all built in the same era. You put additional restrictions on it to be sure that this is retained over time.

“If you move into opt-in for a residential development you have probably lost the intent and integrity of what a historic district is,” he said.

Forming a historic district prevents non-compatible architecture from being built and changing the look of the designated area.

Valdes said, “I think historic districts are important, but I think property rights are even more important.”

Van Nimwegen suggested that in zoning, property rights are more than one right—they are a bundle of rights.

In a district, “You give up some of your property rights for the overall good of the community,” he said. “Does an adjoining property owner have the right to tear their building down and put up a glass block structure that destroys the context that’s been created?”

Andrea Mimnaugh, the historic preservation planner for Littleton, said only one other community in Colorado had an opt-in district. A non-consensual designation section is common in most local preservation ordinances.

Cole said, “I’m not comfortable with anything that isn’t opt-in.”

Councilmembers suggested that properties should not even be recognized as having merit and put on an official list if the property-owner did not agree to that beforehand.

Cole said, “If we don’t want non-consensual landmarks it seems we shouldn’t have a non-consensual list of merit.”

Mayor Brinkman said she had a “huge problem with involuntary” (listing) on the List of Merit “for whatever criteria some group has determined.”

Currently the code says the Historic Preservation Board should do whatever it can to recognize and encourage the protection of structures of historic merit. The board may approve a list of such structures and then mail notice of inclusion on the list to the property owner.

The city council will continue discussing changes to the historic preservation code at a study session on March 13.

Changes to the code require first and second readings and a public hearing.

Vaughn Gardinier 1926—2012

HLI regrets the passing of former Littleton mayor Vaughn Gardinier, one of the community builders of Littleton and “best friend” to hundreds of people.

Gardinier was a force behind so many projects, including the conversion of Littleton’s old town hall building into the Town Hall Arts Center. He and his wife Mary have been members of Historic Littleton for many years.

The Historic Littleton Inc. newsletter is published for members of HLI as part of their membership contribution. Email comments to: rebeccakast@earthlink.net.

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It's Time to Renew Your Historic Littleton, Inc. Membership for 2012!

Since October, 2000, Historic Littleton, Inc. has been active in fostering a positive spirit towards historic preservation in Littleton. Historic Littleton members receive a quarterly newsletter, are invited to participate in special tours and events, and are directly involved in promoting historic preservation in the greater Littleton area.

In our present economy, with a focus on sustainability, preservation has become more important than ever. As architect Carl Elefante said, "The greenest building is one that is already built."

We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events and thank you for your support!

Sincerely, The Board of Directors of Historic Littleton, Inc.

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Members of Historic Littleton, Inc. need to renew their memberships for 2012. Please send your \$30 membership fee to:

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