

**NORMAN PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR SESSION MINUTES**

JULY 12, 2018

The Planning Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Council Chambers of the Norman Municipal Building, 201 West Gray Street, on the 12th day of July, 2018. Notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Norman Municipal Building and online at <http://www.normanok.gov/content/boards-commissions> at least twenty-four hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Chairman Neil Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

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Item No. 1, being:

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Bahan
Nouman Jan
Chris Lewis
Tom Knotts
Neil Robinson
Lark Zink
Erin Williford
Andy Sherrer

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dave Boeck

A quorum was present.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Susan Connors, Director, Planning &
Community Development
Jane Hudson, Principal Planner
Anais Starr, Historic Preservation Officer
Wayne Stenis, Planner II
Roné Tromble, Recording Secretary
David Riesland, Traffic Engineer
Ken Danner, Subdivision Development
Manager
Elisabeth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney
Bryce Holland, Multimedia Specialist

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Item No. 4, being:

O-1819-1 – COLLEGE AVENUE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD REQUESTS A HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY FOR PROPERTY GENERALLY LOCATED ON BOTH THE EAST AND WEST SIDES OF COLLEGE AVENUE BETWEEN SYMMES STREET ON THE NORTH AND BOYD STREET ON THE SOUTH.

ITEMS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

1. Location Map
2. Staff Report with Maps A, B and C

PRESENTATION BY STAFF:

1. Anais Starr reviewed the staff report, a copy of which is filed with the minutes. Staff analysis of the historic district designation criteria indicates that the requested expansion area of the 400 block of College Avenue to the Chautauqua Historic District is an appropriate historic district boundary. The Historic District Commission at their July 2, 2018 meeting heard this request and recommended unanimously the approval of the ordinance to expand the Chautauqua Historic District by designating the 400 block of College Avenue as an Historic District Overlay with determination that it meets at least one of the criteria required in the Zoning Ordinance Section 429.3.6(k) Criteria for Historic District Designation.

Staff has received one protest letter, amounting to 3.1%. This request has received 60% support within the subject tract.

PRESENTATION BY THE APPLICANT:

1. Scott Moses, 430 College Avenue – I'm used to lecturing for about 75 minutes; is that about right? I've lived in my 101 year old home for 19 years, and I'm here as a representative of all the property owners who live on College and many others who would like for our street to be added to the Chautauqua Historic District. This would be the first expansion of the district since it was formed in 1995. As Anais mentioned, the Historic District Commission met on July 2 and unanimously approved our request, after making a determination that the area meets at least one of the criteria. I'd like to thank Anais for her dedicated work as our Historic Preservation Officer and her help during this process. The block of College Avenue is majority single family homes, along with a few historic structures that were purpose-built as student housing when the street was first developed. It also has some ADUs added mainly in the middle of the 20th Century. It is zoned R-1 and has 43 parcels.

Just a brief history, the 400 block of College Avenue was platted in 1909 and 1915. If you think about the city map of Norman in 1915, Norman had fewer than 5,000 residents when these houses were built on the edge of what was then a compact small town. In my house, when I removed the fiberglass tub, we discovered the original medicine cabinet and the inside door of the medicine cabinet had a pharmacy – what to do in case of drug overdose and so forth. It had a 3-digit phone number. E.F. Stevens was the physician who lived in my house in the 1920s and 30s; his phone number was 308. So this was a very early time in Norman's history. Cars were not yet part of the lifestyle; and thus some of us have shared driveways, small one-car garages. We even have an example of a shared garage that spans the property line. This is Sanborn Insurance Company map prepared in 1918 that shows approximately just over 50% of the structures on the street were in place by 1918, even though it was platted September of 1915, so construction moved quickly. If we look and we compare what happened over the next seven years, there was a boom from 1918 to 25, and the street is basically complete by this point. There's a few parcels that will be developed later, but it's mostly here. We go back to the 1918 map – to the top is to the west; it's a bit confusing. The houses on College on the west side of the street were built before the houses on the east side of Chautauqua; Norman was expanding in that direction. The homes in the center part of that west side of College were built concurrently by the same builders – sorry, the west side of College and the east side of Chautauqua were the same two builders – M.A. Floyd and John H. Foss. To the immediate west of Chautauqua there wasn't much but grass and scrub. Park Drive does not yet exist on this map; it would be down here and that will be added later before 1925.

There are two houses on Chautauqua that I'll show you a picture of one – this is 519 and 515 – those are the first two houses built on that side of Chautauqua. These are three – at least two houses, maybe three, that were purpose-built as student housing when the street was first developed. This is 519 Chautauqua, and even though it's not in the proposed area, I'm showing it because I've got an example from the catalog of – they sold plans – this is a mortgage company in Oklahoma City and they sold plans and this, I'm pretty sure, is the exact house that's shown in their catalog that is today 519 Chautauqua. This is 515 Chautauqua, right next door, and, again, I believe that's the exact same house, and this is 430 College, which is a mirror image. They're very, very similar plan as 515 Chautauqua and built by the same developer. So that's sort of the history.

Today, of the 43 properties on the block, 78% are contributing structures. It is remarkable that I can stand before you today and say that we still have 78% contributing structures, when very little has been done over the past century to protect them. They remain in good excellent condition after 100 years of occupancy. The quality of home maintenance on College over the last quarter century has improved. We've seen families moving back into what was an unfashionable neighborhood with suspicious characters kind of wandering the sidewalks is what I heard. We've seen a rapid rise in property values. Our maps show that 78% are contributing, but as recently as 2004 we had 91% contributing structures. In that 14 year period, we have lost 4 contributing structures due to demolition and one due to alterations. Demolitions also result in the removal of mature trees, such as a massive and healthy probably century old Shumard oak that was taken down in February; it had a tall, straight high crown and everybody that walks down College knew that tree. It was sad to see it go. We're fortunate that we can protect the street that still has 78% contributing structures. It's an opportunity provided by providence that easily could have been lost in the previous decades.

All of the 21 property owners who are full-time residents on the street are in support of this request – 100%, and it's not easy to get a group of people to agree on anything these days. Why is that? We tend to live in these homes for many decades, meaning 40 years or more, depending on how young we were when we got there. It's not hard to sell a house on College and move somewhere else and probably buy something less expensive. We stay because we like it there. We enjoy living in a historic area designed for walking. We're a short walk from much of the best of Norman. We're a block from campus, within earshot of Owen Field when the touchdown is being scored, two blocks from Campus Corner, and near to downtown, Sprouts, Midway Market – everything that we enjoy. When you walk down the sidewalk on a hot day like today, that terrific tree canopy keeps you cool. As a result of its location near to OU and the age of the street, College Avenue is home to a very diverse collection of people. I think we are one of the most economically diverse streets in the City. We have a mixture of families and singles, students and retirees, a high net worth executive, and people that live paycheck to paycheck. Students are an integral part of the neighborhood; they've been part of the neighborhood since its earliest days and we like them; they keep us young. Both professors and their students live on College Avenue. Over the last several years, tear-downs in this part of Norman have accelerated. At least two homes on the street are likely to go up for sale in the near future. All of us would hope that they would be bought by a loving owner that will take care of them for the next 40 years, but more likely than not they will be torn down. Midwest Wrecking will arrive at 7:30 in the morning without notice and by 4:00 it will be a bare, empty lot. Century old wood that was used for the floors will be going to the dump. The trees will be scraped clean. We'll have nothing but a large scar on the street, and the new house that is built will be obviously new – a misfit – it will be shining in the glaring sun like it's undergoing interrogation under a spotlight. It will lack the patina of existing homes on the street. So we want to have confidence that the historic character of our neighborhood will be preserved. The protection afforded by a historic district will help to maintain the historic character of the street, the harmonious architecture and our fantastic tree canopy.

I'll also mention we do have a lot of people that own investment properties on the street. Several studies done across the country in many different areas have shown that property values in historic districts increase compared to similar properties that are not in historic districts and the

numbers vary depending on the situation, but it's been between 5 and 35% per decade. So, to wrap things up, we have 78% contributing structures. We're one of the remaining historic streets that constitute the heart of Norman. These streets give us a sense of place, remind us of our history and our heritage. Future generations will appreciate them even more than we do today. I think it's easier for us to imagine what life was like in 1918 than we can imagine what it would be like in 2118, but these houses, if we protect them, will still be there. They're solidly built. They handle the earthquakes okay, because the way they're built they move. And it's our hope that the Planning Commission will look favorably upon our request to join the Chautauqua Historic District. I'd like to thank you for your time and attention and be happy to answer questions.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

1. Kathy Fogle, owner of 402 College Avenue – That would be the corner of Symmes and College. I am not a public speaker, so this is very nerve-wracking for me, so please excuse the shaky voice. I am firmly opposed to the inclusion of my property in the historical district. As the past owner of 516 Chautauqua, it was included in the historic district against my will. I experienced negative results of the designation. I had to get a permit and approval from the Commission to add six feet to the back end of a deck on the back of my house. When the Historic Commission was first formed, I was told it would only cover the front façade of the properties; that was completely false – it covered the entire property. That was not how it was sold and from my information it's still ongoing on the whole property. The buyer of my property on Chautauqua Avenue, Glen Brown, had to sue the Historic District Commission for the right to alter the property and won at a huge financial expense. My property at the southwest corner of Symmes and College was converted before I purchased the property in 1988 to a triplex. It has newer energy-efficient windows and vinyl siding. It does not contribute toward the historic integrity guidelines. My property has already suffered the loss of multi-family zoning and now you want to force this inclusion into the historic district down my throat. I say enough. I'm tired of all this being forced upon me.

As a certified residential appraiser for the last 17 years, it is a lie that properties in the historic districts sell for more than properties outside the district. It's the proximity to the University of Oklahoma campus that drives market value, not the historic district designation. A multi-family property on the southeast corner of Symmes and College and the multi-family property on the northwest corner of College and Boyd have been carved out of the subject tract, and I demand that my property on the southwest corner of Symmes and College also be carved out and not subject to the stringent restrictions of the historic district guidelines. If you'll also notice on the staff person's drawing, they have one protest letter – that is wrong. I have put my protest letter in on Friday – last Friday the 6th. I have a picture of it. And it just makes me wonder how many other protest letters were omitted from that screen. Thank you.

2. Leah Kenton-McGaha, 475 College Avenue – I own and reside at 475 College Avenue, which is one of the two – maybe three – houses in the Tudor Revival style on College Avenue. My parents bought 475 College in 1981 and I now live in that house with my spouse and our own kids. My sisters and I grew up there. It's always been a single family home. It's a really, really great neighborhood. I can speak very fondly of seeing the changes through the neighborhood as it went from predominantly, as Mr. Scott described, shady character areas to family homes. Growing up climbing those trees. Growing up riding my bike. And now my own three year old can have those experiences. I was very much in support of the down-zoning from R-3 to R-1, because I really hoped that that would be enough to help preserve the historic character of the neighborhood. But then 477 College, which is the house immediately next to me, was sold and torn down, and a massive, two-story property that takes up the maximum amount of paved area that is allowed under the City Council guidelines now resides immediately next to me. It used to have a very large back yard. I now worry when it rains about flooding, even though they have slanted the driveway, it doesn't change the fact that that area that was previously gardens and back yard is now pavement. Immediately to the north of me, at 469 College, is another bungalow with a detached apartment and I am terrified about it being sold, because

the very first thing I can imagine happening is this enormous sycamore tree that is on the corner between our two properties will be torn out. I don't want to see more structures on College torn down, like they're being done on Elm. Half of the fun of going to places like Eureka Springs is seeing the beautiful old houses that are there. I love hearing the history of the houses and the homeowners from College Avenue. My neighbor across the street was telling me that the pine tree that is planted in my front yard is the twin of the pine tree that she planted when she was a newlywed and the house that I now reside in was owned by another family – they planted matching pine trees. I love that sort of information. I love being able to – when I was able to renovate my house, finding things like dolls from the 1920s tucked into the wall. That's the kind of character and interesting things and I love having that and it makes me sick to see beautiful old houses, like Katy Olmstead's, which is the house that had that oak, torn down that's now being replaced with a mega-structure. And I would really hope that, because residents are supporting this, that you would be including us in the historic district because I really want to ... [end of 3 minutes]

3. Mitch Baroff, 421 Park Drive – I'm going to make the 3 minutes this time. I'm just outside of the area. I'm just outside of the notification zone on the one-way part of Park Drive. Been involved in the downzoning, and I wish Park Drive was part of this application. I totally approve of the College area going into the historic district over at Chautauqua. It's just like what the young lady said. She said it perfectly. Basically, we're just trying to protect the character of our neighborhood and, thus, the prices and I hope you say yes. Thank you.

4. Lee Hall, 648 S. Lahoma Avenue – I'm the current President of the Chautauqua Historic District Neighborhood Association. Our neighborhood association was incorporated in 1995 and we have enjoyed continuity of being an active neighborhood association ever since. In 1988 and 2004 surveys and inventories that were done of our area, it included over 34 blocks that were identified as historically significant, but because of a variety of factors only 10 of those blocks were ultimately protected with a historic district overlay. Also, in the 1998 study by Tom Selland, he stated in his report that this type of overlay is a critical tool in historic preservation. In his study as well he also identified seven unique structures on this 400 block of College Avenue that were not only considered contributing structures, but were one step above that as architecturally significant. And, as Leah mentioned, we're pretty sure the first Tudor Revival home that was built in Norman is on this 400 block of College. The Chautauqua Historic District neighborhood association bylaws already allows for the expansion of our historic district. As President of our neighborhood association, I speak for my neighbors. I speak for the active members of our association by offering our full support for expanding our historic district. This is the first opportunity that we have had for this to take place since we were established in 1995. I'd also like to thank Anais Starr for her assistance. She is a fountain of knowledge when it comes to historic preservation in our town, and she has always been willing to offer her support and assistance in a variety of ways and we really appreciate all the work that she's put in on helping us prepare for this request for you tonight. Thank you.

5. Jayne Crumpley, 423 Elm Avenue – We're in the support and protest area for this request. I did submit a letter stating our support for their request to become a historic district. I will add that those of us who own old homes and historic homes on Elm are very envious that they're moving to get more protection for their homes. We thought when we got downzoned from R-3 to R-1 that that would protect a lot of these homes, but we're finding that is not true. So I hope that you all will approve this request for the expansion of the Chautauqua Historic District. Thank you.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION:

1. Mr. Lewis – I do have a question. I don't know if it will be answered by you or not. I noticed the lines – and this was brought up in one of the public comments. The lines are not completely uniform and straight. My question is who and how are the lines determined in

including or excluding certain properties? As, obviously, we've had one homeowner who obviously owns a property that would prefer not to be included.

Ms. Starr – The historic district designation section of the ordinance requires that a whole block be added to a historic district at a time and that block should be facing each other. So the way that historic districts are formed, they try to make it so that the properties are facing each other and you don't have a property facing across a non-historic district area. So in this case, the lots up here – these are all facing and this one is facing Boyd and then this is a parking lot. And then these up here are facing Symmes. So it is all the lots that are facing each other on College.

Mr. Lewis – Okay, so if you would, go to Map C. So help me understand on Lot 809 and 803, why would those not be included when 742 would be included there on the southwest corner?

Ms. Connors – On Brooks.

Mr. Robinson – They face Brooks.

Mr. Lewis – So 742 is facing Lahoma?

Ms. Starr – Yes. And, again, all of these face Brooks Street.

Mr. Lewis – Great. Thank you very much.

Andy Sherrer moved to recommend adoption of Ordinance No. O-1819-1 to the City Council. Erin Williford seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, a vote on the motion was taken with the following result:

YEAS	Sandy Bahan, Tom Knotts, Neil Robinson, Lark Zink, Erin Williford, Andy Sherrer
NAYES	Nouman Jan, Chris Lewis
MEMBERS ABSENT	Dave Boeck

Ms. Tromble announced that the motion, to recommend adoption of Ordinance No. O-1819-1 to the City Council, passed by a vote of 6-2.

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