CITY OF NORTHVILLE AND CITY OF PLYMOUTH
Historic District Commission
Joint Training Session
February 26, 2014 – 7:00 PM
City of Plymouth – City Commission Chambers
201 S. Main Street, Plymouth, MI 48170

1. TRAINING SESSION

Ellen Thackery from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network (MHPN) began the meeting at 7:00 p.m. She introduced herself and the two speakers for the evening's training: Kristine Kidorff, Historic Consultant, and Mike Kirk, AIA, Historic Architect. Ms. Thackery explained that this evening's training session will be a mix of basic and advanced training topics.

The Historic District Commission (HDC) members from the City of Northville and the City of Plymouth introduced themselves.

2. MEMBERS PRESENT

Northville Commissioners:	Present:	Chris Johnson – Chair Joe Hoffmann – Vice Chair John Argenta Mark Vernacchia Tom Gudritz David Field
	Absent:	Jennifer Luikart
Plymouth Commissioners:	Present:	Joe Philips – Chair Colleen Polin – Vice Chair Stella Green Glen Kremer Jeremy Borys
	Absent:	Stanley Cole Jessica Thomey
	Also present:	Mike Wright, Plymouth City Commission Liaison Sally Elmiger, Planning Consultant

3. TRAINING SESSION

Kristine Kidorff's presentation outlined the "basic" topics of a historic district commission. She also provided a handout outlining the points in her presentation. The following are notes from her presentation:

- The role of the HDC members, the extent of their authority, and activities are enabled through Public Act 169.
- The Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation are the basis of all HDC decisions.
- It is important to understand why a property is historic, and what is important about the resource/property.
- An HDC issues a "Certificate of Appropriateness" if the work meets the Secretary of Interior Standards (and any local Design Standards adopted by the community), and is appropriate for the district. This should be 90% of the HDC decisions.
- When considering changes to a historic resource, always consider a building as a whole, and retain as much of the original fabric as possible. Any alteration should be compatible with the original building fabric.
- Archaeology resources include the State Archaeologist (housed in SHPO's office); Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Wayne State all have archaeology programs that may assist a community if artifacts are unearthed.
- Regarding building additions:
    1. Additions should use the urban design characteristics of the original building to inform the new addition's design. The design should be balanced so as to use these characteristics, but not imitate the original structure too closely. Don't want to confuse the historic record (which building came first).
    2. Elements of a building's "urban design characteristics" include:
        a. Materials
        b. Scale
        c. Features
        d. Size
        e. Proportion (building height to width)
        f. Height of building and height of eaves
    3. It's important that the massing, size, where its placed on the lot, roof shapes, height, floor levels, materials are similar to those buildings around it. However, the new building does not have to have the same "style" as others around it.
    4. Secretary of Interior Guidelines to Standards is helpful in understanding the Standards. Available on-line or from the Government Printing Office.
- If an application is denied, the HDC's discussion with the applicant should include how the application can be changed so that it meets the standards. Be careful with postponing applications; the HDC could run up against the required 60-day time limit for a decision.
- An HDC issues a Notice to Proceed if the work does not meet the Secretary of Interior Standards (or local Design Standards), and is not appropriate for the district. This should be only a small portion of the HDC's decisions. The Notice to Proceed must meet one of four criteria, and correct the problem. The four criteria are:
    1. Resource is a safety hazard
    2. Resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program
    3. Retaining the resource will cause undue financial hardship
    4. Retaining the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community.
- Use the sample motions provided in Ms. Kidorff's handout.

Mike Kirk spoke on using materials, and replacement materials, in historic structures or structures within a district. The following are notes from his presentation:

- Try and maintain original materials/features.
- If must replace features/materials, use the same material as the original (original wood replaced with new wood).
- Only replace (vs. repair) materials if:

1. Can't find the material that was used. However, he doesn't have any problem finding materials used in historic structures.
2. Can't find a skilled craftsman to make the repair. However, the MHPN has a Directory of skilled craftsman.
3. Inherent flaws in the original material (i.e. the original material can't perform the design/structural function as intended)
4. Building code requires that the material is changed

- Improper reasons for replacing materials are:
  1. Presence of lead-based paint. Better to just remove the paint vs. paint and painted surfaces.
  2. Presence of asbestos/vermiculite. These materials are not a problem when used on the outside of a building.
  3. Cost.
     a. It is almost always cheaper to repair historic materials than to replace them. For example, epoxy material (one manufacturer called Abatron) is a compound that can be used to restore soft wood that has been damaged by moisture.
     b. States that restoring features is more cost effective if done by an experience craftsman than if buying new. Example: restoring historic windows and adding new wood storms is more cost effective and provides comparable energy savings as new windows. Also, historic buildings don't have square window openings. Installing new windows in old openings often requires lots of trim that compromises the historic integrity of the building.
- Ask the Detroit HDC for their list of historic window craftsman. Trained professionals in repairing historic windows.
- Concerns about using new materials on a historic building:
  1. New materials may be un-tested
  2. Chemical composition:
     a. Vapor permeability. Historic buildings must be able to "breathe." Materials that don't create peeling paint, mold, and other problems.
     b. Differing thermal expansion/contraction rates between old and new materials
     c. Ultra-violet degradation of new materials
     d. Applied textures don't accurately emulate historic materials
- Historic materials used out of context:
  1. No historic documentation
  2. Using 'salvaged" materials
  3. Repairing previous "inappropriate" work
- Appropriate substitutes:
  1. Epoxy for filling existing wood on structure that has become soft due to moisture
  2. Cast aluminum in place of cast iron
  3. GFRC for stone, terra cotta or wood
  4. Cast concrete for stone or terra cotta
  5. Fiberglass
- Other appropriate replacement materials:
  1. Hardie Board
  2. Azek trim
  3. Trex decking (for decking only)
- EFIS is not a good replacement material. Lots of examples of it failing. Using this is like relying on paint to protect a building. Using it as detailing on top of a building is problematic. Doesn't have the same life as more substantial, traditional building materials. Doesn't emulate the same level of detail as historic materials.
- Shingles. Examples of appropriate replacement materials
  1. Asphalt tab or architectural shingles

2. Rubber shingles to emulate slate shingles.

- If repair of a non-historic material is needed:
  1. A small area could be considered "regular maintenance" and not regulated by HDC. For example, if a few boards of aluminum siding needs repair.
  2. Large areas (a full wall of aluminum siding needs replacing with more aluminum siding), this is not considered "regular maintenance," and should come before the HDC. The HDC should ask the applicant to determine what material is behind the non-historic material first.
- If 50% of the original material (historic material) is gone, then may consider replacement with a new, like material.
- Failing paint is not a condition that requires material replacement.
- Preservation Briefs #8, #10, #14, #16, and #47 all provide additional information on materials.
- Lighting
  1. Suggests requiring "daylight" color temperature light sources. Most light fixtures will be categorized by color temperature. "Daylight" is 3500 degrees Calvin.
  2. Suggests creating a checklist. Use this checklist to evaluate the lighting of the buildings surrounding the subject site as a way of determining if the proposed lighting is appropriate.
- Regarding non-historic or non-contributing buildings in a district (or buildings that were built less than 50 years ago):
  1. Regardless of when a building was built, it should celebrate the era in which it was designed.
  2. When evaluating changes to a non-contributing building, look at how the changes will impact the neighboring structures and the district as a whole rather than just the structure itself.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sally Elmiger
Recording Secretary