

AYCOCK MUNICIPAL SERVICE DISTRICT

2016-2019 MSD Plan

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DRAFT

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The Historic Aycock Neighborhood Association

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BACKGROUND

The Aycock neighborhood is a Greensboro local historic district designated in 1984 by the Greensboro City Council. Overlapping with the Local Boundary is the Summit Avenue National Register Historic District designated in 1993. The area was established as a Municipal Service District (MSD) in 1990 under to support improvements to the neighborhood that would enhance the special historic character and qualities of the district. The MSD boundaries are identical to the local historic district boundaries. The MSD program is authorized through North Carolina enabling legislation Article 23 and was established so that efforts towards public improvements that met this goal of enhancing the historic character of the district could continue. In the Aycock District, property owners pay an additional \$.05 per \$100 of property tax value. The funds are managed by the City of Greensboro through a public process that outlines projects and priorities as determined through input from property owners and residents at advertised neighborhood meetings.

In 2003, the Aycock Neighborhood participated in a neighborhood wide Strategic Planning process that has provided long term guidance on how to focus efforts for change in the neighborhood and when eligible, how to best utilize MSD funds. *The Strategic Plan for the Aycock Neighborhood* was adopted by the Greensboro City Council on November 5, 2003 and outlined 10 Common Objectives that were detailed in Priority Actions.

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this planning document is to identify needs and guide MSD expenditures that promote and enhance the historic character of the district over the next three fiscal years: 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019. While some Goals and Priority Actions from the 2003 Strategic Plan remain unchanged, new needs have been identified and have been explored for MSD eligibility and neighborhood support.

PRESERVATION FRAMEWORK

Efforts to implement the goals of the MSD plan will utilize existing tools inherently designed to protect, promote and enhance the historic character of the district.

HISTORIC DISTRICT PROGRAM MANUAL AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

Changes to buildings, properties and the public right-of-way within the Aycock Local Historic District adhere to the *Historic District Program Manual and Design Guidelines (2003)*. The *Guidelines* document outlines the historic qualities of both the neighborhood and historic structures. As a Historic overlay district, a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for changes to ensure compatibility with the historic character of the district. This requirement for review provides an enforceable mechanism for preservation efforts. In this way, the *Guidelines* help to further the initiatives of the MSD program and the two can work hand in hand in implementing preservation goals. The *Guidelines* are divided into three sections: *The Neighborhood Setting, Changes to Building Exterior* and *New Construction*.

Neighborhood Setting guidelines help to protect the setting of architecturally significant buildings. Elements of the public right of way such as granite curbing and the historic tree canopy are essential to the historic quality of the district. The *Changes to the Building Exterior* section provides guidance on how to maintain original architectural features of historic structures and appropriate changes. The *Guidelines* also take into consideration *New Construction* such as additions and new development to ensure that these projects do no harm to the historic character of the district by guiding decisions on the height, set back, materials etc. of the design of the project. The Guidelines are used by City of Greensboro Historic District staff and by the City of Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

In some cases, projects and changes will require review and approval by the Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The Historic Preservation Commission is a 9-member City Commission with appointees who have a demonstrated professional background or interest in historic properties, architecture and history. The HPC reviews projects that are considered major works, like the removal of original materials, additions or projects that cannot be approved at the Staff Level. The HPC utilizes the *Historic District Program Manual and Design Guidelines* to make their decisions. HPC members and staff participate in annual training to assist in their role of implementing the *Guidelines*.

The HPC is a resource in guiding how change occurs in the district through the COA review process. The commission is also given the opportunity to review changes to zoning status and variances to zoning requirements. This means, for example, that a single family zoned property has an additional review layer when a proposal is made to change the zoning. The HPC also has the opportunity to comment on a project that may require an exemption, or variance, to zoning regulations when the project meets the intent of the *Guidelines*. For example, the proposed location of a new garage may not meet setback requirements. However, the HPC can recommend in favor of encroaching on the setback if it allows the placement to be more in keeping with the traditional location of historic garages.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The Aycock Neighborhood is also the *Summit Avenue National Register Historic District*. The district was designated in 1993 and required that an architectural inventory and in depth research on the architecture, history and development pattern of the neighborhood be conducted to create the nomination report. The *Period of Significance* for the district was established as 1895-1942. The *Areas of Significance* are Architecture and Community Planning and Development. Structures were identified as either “C” for Historically Contributing or “NC” for Not Contributing. This designation was given to both primary structures and accessory buildings. The National Register Report is useful in helping to identify how the Historic District Guidelines should be applied.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The neighborhood has initiated a number of documents with the goal of enhancing the historic qualities of the district and the overall neighborhood. ***The Aycock Traditional Neighborhood District Plan (2002)***

provides a long range vision for growth and development in the neighborhood. Through a public participation design effort the plan looked at new opportunities in the district that would support the historic nature of the neighborhood and create better connections to the downtown area. This conceptual effort was further refined into the working document that has guided the neighborhood for the last 13 years.

The Strategic Plan for the Aycock Neighborhood (2003), developed objectives, goals and action items to promote positive change in the neighborhood. *The Strategic Plan* offers a long-range strategy for the neighborhood and continues to be relevant particularly for activities that support the neighborhood outside of the MSD boundaries and for those efforts that are not MSD eligible.

One of the main action items from the Strategic Plan resulted in the ***Summit Avenue Corridor and Market Study (2006)***. This plan provides the framework for streetscape improvements to sections of the neighborhood: 1) Summit Avenue between the Murrow Boulevard intersection and Sullivan Street and 2) Yanceyville Street between Lindsey Street and Homeland Avenue. The plan outlines approaches that retain and compliment the historic character through the retention of the granite curbing and the use of period street fixtures, for example.

PROCESS

In preparing this document, public participation meetings were held in March and April, 2016. City staff partnered with the Neighborhood Association to reach all property owners within the district with notices by mail of the public meetings. City Staff worked closely with the Neighborhood Association Board to examine the information and feedback obtained through these meetings to develop the Goals and Objectives of the plan. The final document will be made available for public review and comment prior to a public hearing by the Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission and adoption by the Greensboro City Council.

The MSD plan is a living document that allows for annual review and revision. It provides a standard process for this effort while establishing a budget framework for projects that will be implemented during the coming fiscal year and identifies potential projects for funding in future years.

To support the goals of the MSD Plan, an evaluation of new and emerging needs should be considered as part of this ongoing effort. Understanding these needs will require a measured evaluation of the tools already in place, where gaps exist, and what work is needed to inform future decisions.

GOALS and ACTIONS for 2016-2019

The guiding principle of the MSD legislation is to promote and enhance the special historic character of the district. It is under this authority that each project must be evaluated if MSD tax dollars are sought for funding. In ensuring that this goal is met, the neighborhood should continue to utilize the *Historic District Program Manual and Design Guidelines* (which emphasize the preservation of original features), the guidance of the Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission, and existing reports to determine historic appropriateness for future projects and the budgeting of MSD funds to support them.

The district annually collects approximately \$28,000 in tax revenue for this program. The MSD designation has been in place for 25 years and during that time on-going commitments have been made for long term initiatives such as landscaping of public areas, gateway enhancements, identification signage and historic period lighting. Additional funding proposals should be evaluated to ensure that there is sufficient enhancement to the historic character of the neighborhood to justify funding.

Six goals have been established that follow in a similar framework to the adopted Strategic Plan. Each of the 6 Goals focus on neighborhood-wide benefits that support the overall historic quality of the district and promote the Historic Neighborhood to the greater Greensboro Community.

Enhance Neighborhood Gateways

Neighborhood Identity

Preserve Historic Architecture

Preserve the Historic Neighborhood Setting

Neighborhood Amenities

Safety and Security

ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

Continue to maintain gateways into the neighborhood for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Enhancing Gateway entry points into the district helps to signify that an individual has entered a special place within the City of Greensboro. The neighborhood should work to identify new gateway enhancement opportunities to include activities such as additional landscaping, signage, and public art. The neighborhood should work with neighborhood Partners like Guilford County Schools, the City of Greensboro, Action Greensboro and A&T University for opportunities at Aycock Middle School, the Farmers Market, War Memorial Stadium and connections to the Downtown Greenway.

Continue to support efforts to implement the Summit Avenue Corridor Plan, as one of the key gateways through the neighborhood and an effort that seeks to unite the neighborhood on either side of Summit. Provide funding support for the inclusion and installation of appropriate approaches consistent with the character of the Historic District that will enhance Summit Avenue as the main thoroughfare within the district. Efforts should focus on landscaping, period appropriate street fixtures, the retention, repair and installation of granite curbing and brick gutters and other instances where additional funding is needed to select the most appropriate approach under this project.

- Utilize MSD funds when necessary to enhance the streetscape design of Summit Avenue so that it is in keeping with the historic character of the district.
- Work with Action Greensboro to enhance and improve pedestrian infrastructure between the neighborhood and the downtown Greenway.
- Maintain/restore existing landscaping areas and install new areas at gateway points throughout the neighborhood.
- Maintain/Repair existing Gateway features. Develop a long-term maintenance plan for the Pedestrian Tunnel to manage graffiti removal, periodic cleaning and paint adherence issues.

NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Neighborhood entry signs at key Gateway entry points help to identify and brand the Historic Neighborhood and remind both residents and those who pass through that they are in a special place within the City. The City of Greensboro's Street Sign Topper program has served as an excellent way of identifying the area. The toppers, along with period street fixtures, help create a cohesive neighborhood identity. The neighborhood should continue to identify areas of opportunity for new signage and the continued maintenance of existing signage. Partnered with landscaping, these areas help to identify a special place and beautify the neighborhood.

As time has progressed, the need for a condensed naming convention has developed. The Neighborhood should establish a consistent naming convention for the Neighborhood and District so that the larger community can recognize the Historic Area. The neighborhood should implement

changes to existing identification markers and any new identification to reflect the desired Neighborhood Name.

- Implement a district wide effort to coordinate all identification to the same naming convention.
 - Re-letter existing signs at Yanceyville/Bessemer and Yanceyville/Summit.
 - Prepare new entryway signage at both entrances of the Leftwich Pedestrian Tunnel and to the Church Street side of the Max Thompson Pedestrian Bridge.
 - Replace/Install Neighborhood Logo plates on decorative trash receptacles
- Install small signs at MSD funded landscape areas identifying that it is provided through Neighborhood MSD funding. These areas are both sides of the Max Thompson Pedestrian Bridge, the Leftwich Pedestrian Tunnel, the Yanceyville Street Medians, Summit Ave. at the Murrow Boulevard ramp and the sign/wall at Yanceyville and Bessemer.

PRESERVE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Preserving the Historic Architecture of the neighborhood is critical to the success of the historic district. Through Local Historic District Designation, architectural guidelines are already in place for changes to existing structures and for the development of new structures. These changes go through a City review process that includes review and approval by the Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). In cases, where there is a request to change the land-use of a property, the HPC, Zoning Commission and City Council manage the review and approval process with participation opportunities by neighborhood residents and other stakeholders. The Board of Adjustment provides the opportunity to make adjustments to zoning regulations, with the support of the HPC, when the change is more in keeping with the historic character of the district.

The neighborhood is also a National Register Historic District. However, the boundaries for the Local and National districts differ slightly. Additionally, properties that were previously considered ineligible for listing due to age may now be worthy of inclusion as contributing structures. Consideration should be given to expanding the NR boundaries to meet the local boundaries and to capture areas previously not considered as eligible.

The Ordinance to Prevent Demolition by Neglect (OPDN) exists as a tool to help the City of Greensboro work with property owners to make repairs before the property falls under Minimum Housing Code violations. In some cases, the OPDN can work hand in hand with the Minimum Housing code to initiate positive changes. The OPDN requires that a preservation restoration plan be created and provides two options: the first allows for the property owner to make repairs and report to the Historic Preservation Commission; the second option authorizes the City of Greensboro to make repairs and place a lien against the value of the property. The OPDN is currently unfunded which excludes the the use of the second course of action by the City.

When a historic property in the neighborhood is threatened by demolition, the neighborhood should actively work with the City of Greensboro and non-profit groups like Preservation Greensboro, Inc., and the property owner to find a solution that will save the historic asset from deterioration or complete elimination. Focus should be centered on creating a program that would partner with the City of Greensboro to purchase a threatened property and resell the property for rehabilitation with preservation covenants and under the State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit programs.

Properties can become threatened through more than a lack of maintenance. In some case they can be threatened by failing public and private infrastructure. If it can be demonstrated that public infrastructure is contributing to the deterioration of historic structures, specific infrastructure improvements and repairs may be evaluated for MSD funding eligibility. This effort should work to identify systemic issues with deteriorating infrastructure and should not take precedence over the responsibility of individual property owners to maintain their property.

- Initiate a National Register District Expansion Survey to expand district boundaries.
- Create and implement when needed a Threatened Historic Properties Purchase Program modeled after the City's neighborhood redevelopment program.
- Provide Funding Support to allow for city initiated repairs to be made under the repair provision of the Ordinance to Prevent Demolition by Neglect (OPDN).
- Partner with the City of Greensboro to conduct an Engineering Study on the Drainage Infrastructure in the neighborhood.
- Continue education and outreach efforts that promote the value of the historic district and the historic district program requirements.

PRESERVE THE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SETTING

Part of the historic neighborhood setting are those characteristics of the district like the tree canopy and public right-of-way that create the streetscape and historic environment. *The Historic District Program Manual and Design Guidelines* outline under Neighborhood Setting how features that include sidewalks, granite curbing and brick gutters, an alleyway system, retaining walls and tree lined streets enhance the historic character of the district. The *Guidelines* also provide for the preservation of these features through appropriate maintenance and restoration guidance. If determined as MSD eligible, systematic repair efforts with MSD funds, along with a consistent implementation of recommendations in the Tree Inventory Report will ensure that the overall historic neighborhood setting is safeguarded. The neighborhood should work with partners, such as the Greensboro Transit Authority and the Greensboro Field Operations Department, for additions to the neighborhood setting like bus shelters, trash receptacles, lighting, etc. that are in a design and style that best suits the historic character of the district.

- Fund additional decorative trash receptacles, bus stops and other street furniture as needed.

- Continue to implement the Period Street Lighting Fixture Restoration efforts to include costs associated with the repair of fixtures outside of the fixture warranty.
- Provide funding for education and outreach efforts to assist in the preservation of the Tree Canopy and implementation of the Tree Inventory Report.
- Evaluate and develop a system for restoring the granite curbing and brick gutters throughout the neighborhood.
- Work with the City to determine sidewalk areas in need of repair. MSD funds should not be impacted.

NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

The Aycock neighborhood is fortunate to have several public amenities including the historic War Memorial Stadium, the Greensboro Farmer's Market, the Dunleith Community Garden, and Sternberger Park. Within the MSD boundary lays the Middle School and the Park. The neighborhood has partnered with the Middle School when opportunities have been available to enhance the School property when it has a direct link to improving the historic streetscape and entry points of the district.

Sternberger Park provides an opportunity to continue efforts to enhance the park as it presently exists while also providing the opportunity to re-create the park as a destination point both for residents of the Aycock community and the greater Greensboro community. Consideration of a park planning effort could prove to be beneficial in exploring future interpretations of the park and how changes can best be implemented while maintaining a link to the history of the neighborhood.

- Develop and install a landscape plan for Sternberger Park to fit the character of the neighborhood. Include specialty garden areas and incorporate an historic interpretation center to create a community destination park.
- Explore the concept of developing partnerships with private property owners to enhance vacant property. The vacant lot at Chestnut Street and Heritage Place at the Pedestrian Tunnel Entrance may be an opportunity to develop such a partnership.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The Neighborhood Association should continue to work with the City of Greensboro Police Department, Transportation Department and Planning Department to implement positive changes to the district that assist in the safety and security of the neighborhood as it relates to the preservation of the historic character of the district.

- Conduct a lighting needs assessment study
- Provide funding for the installation of decorative period light fixtures necessary to accomplish the lighting needs.

UNDESIGNATED ACTIVITIES

The Neighborhood sees the need to have available financial resources for unanticipated needs that may arise that assist in enhancing the historic character of the district. These projects may include planning efforts and physical improvements. Projects would be required to fall under one of the 6 Goals for the three year budget year and require a public neighborhood meeting for approval prior to funding.

- Evaluate the need for a Preservation Plan to inform future decisions.

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APPENDIX A: BUDGET PROJECTIONS

ENHANCE NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAYS

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	Proposed TOTAL
Summit Avenue Streetscape Enhancements	\$0	\$0	\$150,000	\$150,000
Improvements at Greenway	\$0	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Landscaping of new and existing gateway areas and annual maintenance	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$70,000
Maintain/Repair existing Gateway features	\$2000	\$2000	\$2000	\$6,000

NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Re-naming Signage: Yanceyville/Bessemer Yanceyville/ Summit Pedestrian Tunnel	\$4000	\$0	\$0	\$4000
Neighborhood logos on Trash Receptacles (8 units)	\$2750	\$0	\$0	\$2750
Signs to identify neighborhood Supported Landscaping	\$500	\$0	\$0	\$500

PRESERVE HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Expand NR boundaries	\$0	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000
Threatened Historic Properties Program	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$150,000
Implement OPDN	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$45,000
Drainage Study (if MSD eligible)	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000

PRESERVE HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD SETTING

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Install additional Street furniture	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
Repair of Period Streetlight Fixtures	\$15,000	\$0	\$0	\$15,000
Tree Canopy Education and Outreach	\$4000	\$0	\$0	\$4,000
Develop Granite Curbing/Brick Gutters Restoration effort	\$0	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000
Sidewalk Repair	-	-	-	(Non-MSD)

NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Sternberger Park Plan	\$0	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$40,000
Explore private/public partnerships for vacant property enhancements	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Lighting Needs Assessment	\$0	\$0	\$0	Conducted by City of Greensboro
Installation of additional period light fixtures as recommended by lighting plan	\$0	\$50,000	\$0	\$50,000

UNDESIGNATED ACTIVITIES

Project	FY 16-17	FY 17-18	FY18-19	TOTAL
Undesignated Funds	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$60,000

APPENDIX B: PROPOSED FY 16-17 BUDGET

GOAL	Proposed FY 16-17
Enhance Neighborhood Gateways	\$42,000
Neighborhood Identity	\$7250
Preserve Historic Architecture	\$85,000
Preserve Historic Neighborhood Setting	\$34,000
Neighborhood Amenities	\$0
Safety and Security	\$0
Undesignated Funds	\$20,000
TOTAL FUNDS PROPOSED:	\$188,250

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APPENDIX C: MAP

Aycock Historic District

