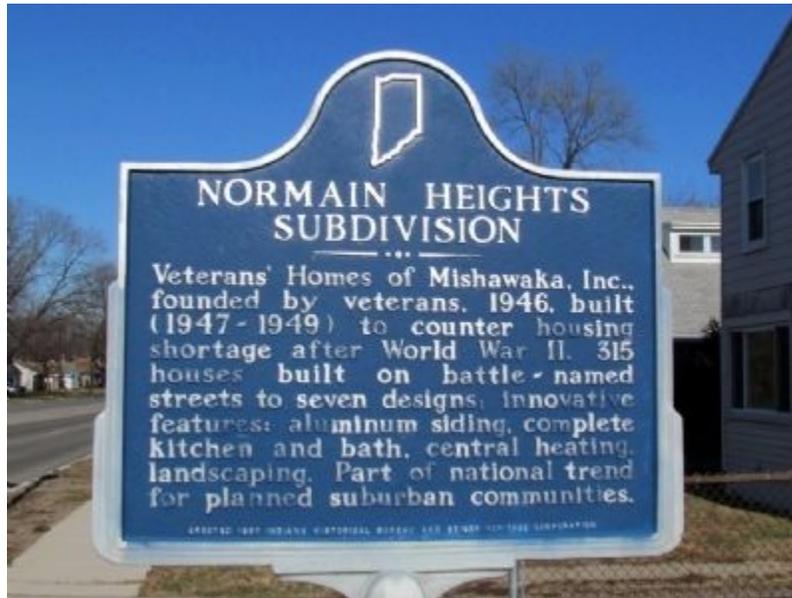


Normain Heights – Northway Park Conservation District Guidelines

[Draft Document – Final Revision and Design in Progress]



MISHAWAKA
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a Conservation District is to present flexible approaches to appropriate design in the Norman Height Conservation District (NHCD). A Conservation District is not the same as a Historic District but will protect our houses from being moved or demolished. In a Conservation District, only new construction (should the need arise), demolition and moving of buildings are reviewed by the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission. They do not regulate modifications or additions to existing home structures, although voluntary suggestions are available. Mishawaka building codes will be followed.

The goal is to harmonize new buildings and renovation with the historic fabric that remains. The guidelines are not meant to restrict creativity, but to set up a framework within which sympathetic design will occur. Within such a framework, there can be many different design solutions which may be appropriate. The intent of these design guidelines is to maintain the integrity of our mid-century neighborhood, as originally constructed; to protect property values for home owners; and to keep single family homes where they have been built traditionally; to regulate the building of new homes, assist with renovation and moving of existing homes. The following guidelines regulate new construction, should such a circumstance arise. They do not regulate modifications or additions to existing home structures, although we do suggest voluntary use of them as guiding principles.

The Normain Heights Neighborhood is zoned Residential which permits only single family style homes. Ideally a new building in the NHCD should fit seamlessly into the fabric of our neighborhood. The continuity of the streetscape, as seen from the road, should be consistent with the contributing buildings already on the street, maintaining existing scale, density, and atmosphere. In the pages that follow, these design guidelines present a simple outline of ways to analyze the scale and placement of a building on a lot, as well as include small details of design that make a new building look more traditional. Some of these are as modest as window arrangement or the use of exterior appointments. The NHCD wants to ensure the quality and compatibility of infill by explaining the details that add value in this historic neighborhood.

The Normain Heights Neighborhood Association has been active for many years, seeking to promote a safe and harmonious living environment for its residents, to protect this special place from incompatible development, and to preserve our valuable mid-century homes from destruction. The NHCD was implemented to help preserve our unique residential housing and to provide stability in a neighborhood where non-owner occupied homes are increasing. The distinctive makeup of our neighborhood should ensure that people are likely to purchase homes here and to work together for the enhancement of the neighborhood over time. With support from the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC), we have established these design guidelines for any future changes in our NHCD, to preserve the historic character of this neighborhood. In Normain Heights, we value our history and the diverse families who live here and have pride in our neighborhood, all of which encourage us in this endeavor.

Building a History Together: Normain Heights

[Adapted from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination]

The subdivision acquired its name from a combination of its “northern” location along “main” street. The addition of “heights” was a common naming practice across the country for new housing developments.

The Normain Heights subdivision was born of a partnership between veterans, community organizations, government, and businesses. A housing shortage spread across the United States following World War II due to the decreased construction before and during the war and on the return of millions of veterans looking to start a family. As veterans flocked to the job-rich industries in Mishawaka and nearby South Bend, Mishawaka city government responded by appointing J.A. Riggs as Housing Coordinator in January of 1946 and the Chamber of Commerce formed a housing committee. It would be the veterans themselves, however, that would find an unprecedented solution to their housing needs.

The Plan

The American Legion Post 161 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 360 both setup committees to overcome the housing challenge. These veterans organizations also enlisted the help of the United Rubber Workers of America Local 65, which was the labor union at the largest employer in the area, the United States Rubber Company. Together, they formed a non-profit organization called Mishawaka Vets’ Homes, Inc., which aimed at finding a collective use for the federally-backed home loans that veterans were guaranteed through the GI Bill. According to the Veterans Administration, between 1944 and 1952, the federal government backed over two million home loans for World War Two Veterans. Normally at the time, veterans would seek loans individually and housing subdivision projects were privately developed. Instead, Mishawaka Vets’ Homes decided to develop a subdivision by veterans for veterans.

Preliminary plans from development engineer Robert L. Pine sketched a new housing subdivision that would include local businesses, churches, a park, and a school. The design included 315 houses for low to middle-income families that sat along six curved avenues, all named after World War II battles: Ardennes, Palau, Saint Lo, Bastogne, Leyte, and Guam. These avenues sat between Main Street, which was extended from the South, and the new Normandy Drive to the east. All of the pieces began to fall in place. Private investment companies funded the project loan totaling

\$2,499,000, setting in motion the plans to purchase an eighty-acre farm plot from the Felton family and start construction. Within a month of gaining non-profit status in August 1946, nearly one hundred veterans placed the required \$300 down payment on a home.

Every effort was made to cut costs and lessen the burden of buying a new home for each veteran. Organizers even invited community members to enter the property and harvest firewood for their own needs in hopes of clearing the land for free. The streets, curbs, sidewalks, sewer, and water lines were all in place and factored into the price of each home by the groundbreaking for the first house in November 1947. Within a year, over seventy houses were completed; landscaping and all. September 1949 marked the completion of all 315 houses, with nearly three quarters of them occupied. But what did the houses look like?

The Houses

The leadership of Mishawaka Vets' Homes wanted to provide the new homeowners in Normain Heights with a home that they could take pride in and would last. They made certain that these homes would not be prefabricated and would offer veterans the opportunity to customize their new homes. To do so, Architect Karl Schwartz created seven different designs that helped avoid the "cookie-cutter" look of most other post-war housing developments. The designs included four one-story variations, a one-and-a-half story, a split level, and a two-story house (See Design Guidelines for more details). Some were built to a mirror-image of the design or aligned differently on the lot to distinguish them from others. Among the designs, the one-story house with three bedrooms and a basement was the most popular.

SUBDIVISION STYLE AND DESIGN

Traditional Post War Tract House Forms

The area included in the Normain Heights Conservation District displays housing forms and styles that were primarily constructed in the mid to late 1940's. These forms reflect the Tract Home style of development. Tract housing is a type of residential development in which many identical or nearly identical homes are built adjacent to one another. These "Cape Cod" style dwellings had a simple rectangular plan with a single gabled roof and a centered front door under a low eave. The high demand for housing for returning veterans prompted housing communities such as Normain Heights to spring up all across the country.

Most of the contributing homes in the Normain Heights neighborhood are either single family ranch, foursquare, tri-level or one and one half story designs, which have not been significantly altered since being built, which underscores that these high-quality homes remain durable examples of their kind. There are a number of unique style characteristics of these homes. Many of the single family ranch homes were one story, had a low horizontal form, had a concrete slab foundation or crawl space, had a low pitched hip roof made predominately asphalt shingle, steel casement or aluminum slider windows. Many had large single pane picture windows or window walls, and some included a carport. The foursquare and one and a half story houses were simple and lacked decorative detailing. They had a low or intermediate roof pitches, Gable roofs with attached dormers, relatively small windows with a wood or steel frame, and these typically did not have attached garages or carports.

[ADD SEVEN FLOOR PLANS AND DESIGNS]

Traditional House Forms

Single Family Ranch

Insert floor plan and picture

Foursquare

Insert floor plan and picture

One and One half story

Insert floor plans and pictures

TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

Historic District: A full Historic District regulates all exterior changes to a property, site or setting.

Conservation District: A Conservation District is a less regulated version of a historic district. In a conservation district only new construction of a principal new building, demolition and moving buildings are reviewed by the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission.

ARCHITECTURAL INTENT

PRIMARY BUILDINGS

Definition: A primary building is the single family dwelling occupying a single lot.

GUIDELINES

The following *guidelines* relate to the construction of any new primary building. Mid-century forms and designs are considered appropriate. Contributing buildings in the NHCD should be studied for their characteristic design elements, either directly or in the Norman Heights Neighborhood Inventory. Significant features define compatibility, such as roofing, entryways, how a house is set on its foundation, chimneys, gables, overhanging eaves, and porches. When analyzing the design of contributing buildings, consider original materials and designs, rather than later modifications to the buildings.

Mass

Definition: The three dimensional outline of a building.

Depending on floor plan and building height, buildings in the NHCD may reflect one of the seven types of mid-century house form found within the neighborhood.

Recommended

The total mass and site coverage of a new building should be consistent with adjacent contributing buildings. The massing of the various parts of a new building should be characteristic of adjacent contributing buildings.

Consider the mass of all building parts (i.e., house, attached garage, integrated porch, and breezeway).

[Insert Image]

FOUNDATION/ FIRST FLOOR ELEVATION

Definition: The supporting base upon which a building sits and the finished elevation of the first floor living space.

Recommended

New construction first floor elevation and foundation height should be consistent with contiguous contributing buildings. New construction first floor elevation and foundation height should fit into the natural (not man-made) gradient of the land.

[Insert Image]

MATERIALS

Definition: The visual, structural, and performance characteristics of the materials visible on a building exterior.

Recommended

Building materials, whether natural or man-made, should be visually compatible with surrounding contributing buildings. When hardboard or concrete board siding is used to simulate wood clap board siding, it should reflect the general directional and dimensional characteristics found historically in the neighborhood. No products imitating the “grain” of wood should be used. Limestone/sandstone, brick, clapboard, wood, and cement board are appropriate materials.

[Insert Image]

OPENINGS/FENESTRATION

Definition: The design, arrangement, and proportioning of windows, doors, and openings.

Recommended

Paying attention to the proportion of openings in a wall visible from the street can help blend new construction into the streetscape.

[Insert Image]

Other Architectural Details

Definition: These items extend the mid-century house mass into the landscape.

PATIOS AND PORCHES

Definition: Flat constructed areas, adjacent to the house, which extend the living space into the exterior environment.

Recommended

Building materials include laid brick, concrete, stone, and wood.

ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

Definition: Any structure secondary to the principal building on the lot and greater than **[?] square feet** in size is subject to the following guidelines.

Recommended

If the new structure is a garage, every effort should be made to ensure a detached layout to an existing house. This is the most compatible solution. New structures should be proportionately smaller, both in height and size of footprint, than the primary building on the lot. New structures accessory to primary buildings should be visually compatible in shape and materials with existing MHCD patterns.

PARKING & STORAGE ACCESS

Definition: Locations of driveways and access to storage of all vehicles, including but not limited to cars, RVs, boats, ATVs, etc.

Recommended

Driveways should be built with direct access to parking or storage structures and pass along the side or rear of the primary building. Oversized parking pads in view of the street are discouraged.

FENCES

Fences are not regulated in NHCD, but an inappropriate fence can deface the streetscape. Wooden, metal, and vinyl privacy fences (including stockades, basket, weave, and chain link) are relatively modern styles of fencing and should be hidden in rear yards, if possible.

CONTEXT FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

CONTEXT FOR NEW CONSTRUCTION

SUBJECT TO REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Standards and guidelines serve as aids in designing new construction which reacts sensitively to the existing context. The most important first step in designing new construction in any conservation district, therefore, is to determine just what the context is. Contributing properties are important to the density and continuity of the NHCD. Every site possesses a unique context, which comprises the contributing buildings immediately adjacent, the nearby area (often the surrounding block), a unique sub-area within the district, and the district as a whole. Generally, new construction will occur on sites which fall into the following categories. For each one described below, there is an indication of the context to which new construction must be primarily related.

SITE CATEGORIES

Primary Site. A site upon which there is already an existing historic primary structure. New construction usually involves the construction of an accessory building such as a garage. *Context:* New construction must use the existing historic building as the most important, perhaps only, context. It should not overwhelm in scale or proportion and should not exceed the height of the primary building.

Isolated Lot. This is usually a single vacant lot (sometimes two very small lots combined) which exists in a highly developed area with very few if any other vacant lots in view.

Context. The existing contributing buildings immediately adjacent and in the same block and the facing block provide a very strong context to which any new construction must primarily relate.

Large Site. This is usually a combination of several vacant lots, often the result of previous demolition or natural disaster.

Context. Its surrounding context has been weakened by its very existence. However, context is still of primary concern. In such a case, a somewhat larger area than the immediate environment must also be looked to for context, especially if other vacant land exists in the immediate area.

SETBACK

Definition: The distance a building is set back from a street or property line. In MHCD, the longest sides of houses are most commonly placed parallel to the street and relatively in line with adjacent houses. New residential buildings should also be parallel to the street with setback to fit with adjacent contributing buildings.

Recommended

A new building's setback should conform to the setback pattern established by the existing block context. On corner sites, the setbacks from both streets must conform to the context. Structures that are much closer or further from the street than the vast majority of houses in a given block should not be used to determine appropriate setback.

ORIENTATION

Definition: The direction a building faces. In NHCD, houses are usually oriented with their longest side and main entrance facing and parallel to the street.

Recommended

New buildings should be oriented toward the street in a way that is characteristic of surrounding contributing buildings.

BUILDING ENTRY

Definition: The actual and visually perceived approach and entrance to a building.

Recommended

New buildings should reflect a similar sense of entry to that which is expressed by surrounding contributing buildings. Frequently, mid-century entrances are located perpendicular to the façade at the end of a jutting addition or a porch.

SPACING

Definition: The distance between contiguous buildings along a block face.

Recommended

New construction that reflects and reinforces the spacing found in its block. New construction should maintain the perceived regularity or lack of regularity of spacing on the block.

BUILDING HEIGHT

Definition: The actual height of buildings and their various components as measured from the ground's existing grade at the foundation, relative to the grade of the street that the building faces.

In NHCD, the topography of the lots is flat; therefore, new construction must blend and flow with the existing topography.

NOTE: In areas governed by this plan, building heights should be determined using the Land Use Development Code.

Recommended

Generally, the height of a new building should fall within a range set by the highest and lowest contiguous contributing buildings if the block has uniform heights. Uncharacteristically high or low buildings should not be considered when determining the appropriate range.

BUILDING OUTLINE

Definition: The silhouette of a building as seen from the street.

Recommended

The basic outline of a new building, including general roof shape, should reflect building outlines typical of NHCD. The outline of new construction should reflect the directional orientations characteristic of the existing contributing buildings in its context.

MISHAWAKA LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE

https://www.municode.com/library/in/mishawaka/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADECO

MISHAWAKA – HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Created in 1990, the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission is a group of citizens appointed by the mayor with the goal of educating city residents about the methods and merits of preservation, and safeguards the City's historic and cultural heritage by working to preserve sites of significance.

The main goals of the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission are to:

1. Work with Neighborhoods to create Historic Districts and Preservation Guidelines.
2. Help homeowners protect and preserve their properties.
3. Provide FREE professional advice to city residents.
4. Create public enthusiasm for the protection of the unique character of the community's past, present and for the future.

STANDARDS FOR MOVING BUILDINGS AND DEMOLITION

Subject to Review and Approval

Demolition: The complete or substantial removal of any structure within the Normain Heights Conservation District.

A **Certificate of Appropriateness** must be issued by the MHPC before a demolition permit is issued by other agencies of the city and before work is begun on the demolition of any building within the NHCD. This section explains the type of work considered to be demolition, as well as the criteria to be used when reviewing applications for a Certificate of Appropriateness that include demolition. Review and approval is required for demolition of primary buildings within the boundaries of the NHCD or demolition of contributing accessory structures.

Guidelines: The following guidelines relate to the above actions and they are enforceable by the MHPC. These are the same guidelines as those for historic districts.

Criteria: When considering a proposal for demolition, the MHPC shall consider the following criteria for demolition as guidelines for determining appropriate actions. The MHPC shall approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for demolition in this chapter only if it finds one or more of the following:

1. The building poses an immediate and substantial threat to public safety as interpreted from the state of deterioration, disrepair, and structural stability of the structure. The condition of the building resulting from neglect shall not be considered grounds for demolition.
2. The historic or architectural significance of the structure is such that, upon further consideration by the Commission, it does not contribute to the historic character of the district.
3. The demolition is necessary to allow development which, in the Commission's opinion is of greater significance to the preservation of the district than is the retention of the building, or portion thereof, for which demolition is sought.
4. The building or property cannot be put to any reasonable economically beneficial use without approval of demolition.
5. In the case that the building is accidentally damaged by storm, fire, or flood, it may be rebuilt to its former configuration and materials without regard to these guidelines if work is commenced within 6 months.

With the exception of Criterion #5, all replacement of demolished properties should follow new construction guidelines. The MHPC may ask interested individuals or organizations for assistance in seeking an alternative to demolition.

Subject to Review and Approval

The moving of any building in the NHCD should only be done as a last resort to save the building. It may also be considered when to maintain the NHCD historical context. The following guidelines are meant to assist in determining the appropriateness of moving any building within, into, or out of the NHCD.

Guidelines: The following guidelines are enforceable by the MHPC and are less comprehensive and less restrictive than for an historic district.

Criteria: Recommendations (for movement)

1. The building to be moved should be compatible with the contributing architecture surrounding its new site relative to style, scale and era.
2. Small noncontributing storage buildings (under 80 square feet) in backyards may be moved without review.
3. Contributing accessory structures (over 80 square feet) require review according to guidelines for compatible new construction.

PROCESS FOR CONSTRUCTION APPROVAL

Step #1: Present construction design to the Normain Heights sub-committee for review. This committee is composed of members designated by the neighborhood association and advises the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission.

Step#2: The final decision is made at a public hearing before the Mishawaka Historic Preservation Commission.

Procedures for the Revisions of the NHCD Design Guidelines:

NHCD guidelines will be reviewed every 5 years. In this event:

1. Changes to the guidelines, if desired, may be initiated by any homeowner or from within the NHCD Neighborhood Sub-Committee.
2. Actual revisions to the guidelines are finalized by the NHCD Sub-Committee.
3. The neighborhood committee informs the MHPC of the proposed changes to the guidelines.

4. All property owners in the NHCD are notified of the proposed changes in the guidelines. They are given copies of the proposed changes and notice of the time and place of the public hearing on the proposals.
5. The NHCD Neighborhood Sub-Committee provides a system whereby all property owners have the opportunity to cast a vote on the proposals.
6. If 60% of the property owners who cast a vote approve the changes, the new guidelines are sent to the MHPC for ratification.

It may become necessary to revise sections of the guidelines because of state enabling legislation. In this event:

1. The NHCD Neighborhood Sub-Committee will draft the appropriate change.
2. The change will be advertised through the NHCD's traditional information methods: emails and newsletters.
3. After advertisement, the change will go to the MHPC meeting for a public hearing and approval.