

13 September 2005
BOMA Agenda Item #22
Ordinance 2005-71 Historic Preservation Overlay in Hincheyville

Hincheyville is an area that is a virtually intact, unified district of National Register properties, with dozens of individual homes that are historically and architecturally significant. Hincheyville is also the first subdivision in Franklin. These are facts that have been admitted to by both sides of this issue at the Planning Commission and Historic Zoning Commission meetings held during this process. These are the legal considerations.

There is nothing in the ordinance, or in state enabling legislation, that requires a petition or survey for inclusion, or that a majority of the property owners in a proposed district support inclusion. While helpful in some circumstances, they are not required. These are the policy considerations, and the responsibility of this board.

The original 15 blocks of Franklin are in the fourth ward. Most of our older neighborhoods are contained in the Central Franklin Area including Hincheyville, primarily in the fourth ward. All of these neighborhoods and districts are significant, and contribute to the character of our community – a character we have been charged with protecting and preserving. The Franklin Tomorrow Visioning process and the Central Franklin Area Plan both consider this challenge a priority. Many stakeholders from across the city participated in the writing of these long-range plans and everyone agreed that focus on preserving “what brought us all to the dance” was of paramount importance. This is an issue of personal significance in Hincheyville, but of much greater influence than what has been expressed here tonight.

The Central Franklin Area Plan’s purpose “emphasizes the interrelated nature of Central Franklin’s diverse neighborhoods and its historic commercial core as a key to its long-term success and vitality.” On page 22 of this document, the first action under the Neighborhood Preservation and Protection section is “the City will expand and strengthen the Historic Preservation Overlay District to ensure that core historic neighborhoods are adequately protected from development pressure.” The third action in this same section is “neither commercial zoning nor additional OR District zoning should be allowed to invade the HR District of Hincheyville.”

Placing a Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay on Hincheyville will not reduce the rights of individual property owners. What it says is that your property is a significant contributor to the “long-term success and vitality” of our entire community, and we collectively recognize its importance. We who have chosen to live in historic neighborhoods, and invest in renovation projects, must ask questions of ourselves that residents in newer, conventional neighborhoods don’t have to ask – questions like: “How will the changes I make effect the character of Franklin? Will my project contribute to or detract from the historic value and nature of my community? Is my house important to the greater community, and to those who visit our town, and how much do I care about that?”

Everyone who lives in Franklin, and all of Williamson County, has an affinity for our historic downtown. They brag about it, show it off, and appreciate what has been done to preserve it, and they should. It is idyllic and picturesque – but more importantly, and beyond our individual consideration, it is the very heart of our community. Thus I believe it becomes the responsibility of this board to support the challenge as expressed in the planning efforts that our residents helped author – “ensure that core historic neighborhoods are adequately protected from development pressure.” Adding a protective layer of oversight to the approval process for change in Hincheyville will ultimately benefit our entire community – it has done so in downtown and I have no reason to believe it won’t in other neighborhoods of historic significance.

I realize most of this work has been done by private individuals without the benefit of public assistance, and you deserve to be complemented for your efforts. I thank you. We have created our own momentum, and the value this effort provides to all of Franklin is beyond measure. It deserves to be recognized and protected, for our sake and for those that come after us. Preservation of our historic neighborhoods requires – perhaps even demands – that we act for the greater good of our community. We must look beyond ourselves – and in looking at the greater good, it is clear to me that modest measures, such as this proposal before us tonight, are necessary to preserve the heart of our community. I support this ordinance.