

Larchmont–Edgewater Civic League

Meeting: Fall 2005, September 8, 2005, 7:30-9:00pm

Attendance (approximate): 100+

Location: Larchmont United Methodist Church

Civic League website: <http://www.larchmontedgewater.org/>

Synopsis of Meeting:

- Announcements from Dave O'Dell:
 - Sept 12, 5-7:30pm in front of the New Leaf and Rowena's strip mall on 22nd Street. Fund Raiser for Hurricane Katrina. 627-6028 for more info.
 - Agenda: Historic Overlay District
- Historic Overlay District
 - Format for questions will be taken one at a time at the microphone at the end of the presentation by the City.
 - The Vote will be at the next meeting, Thursday, Sept 22. One vote per household. Must be paid civic league member.
 - Mike O'Hearn (committee chairman) speaks to group.
 - Process started due to concern over the neighborhood events such as one house being torn down and replaced with three. Homes that are not the appropriate look or feel of Larchmont. 2 years in working with the City. 1850 homes documented. In January a four-hour town hall meeting was held to discuss the draft plan.
 - Change to overlay vs. historic district due to two main issues: demolition and repairs. Historic District requires you to put your house on the market for 12 months or prove extreme structural damage. Historic District requires Certificate of Appropriateness for repairs/replacement to roofs, gutters, paint, etc. Both of these issues were too restrictive and have been removed. Due to the removal of these issues, the plan is now a Historic Overlay District and not a Historic District. For a Historic Overlay District, a Certificate of Appropriateness is only required when a building permit is required.
 - Information has been put on the website, newsletter, discussed at multiple meetings, and feedback has been incorporated. Business cards for the City personnel involved in the development were handed out at the town hall meeting for further questions. No questions were received.
 - We are all here for the same reason because we love Larchmont. We have different views. We need to stay united. Another issue affecting the neighborhood will come up that we will need to ban together such as ODU expansion or pollution. We will need the leaders on the pro and con side of the Historic Overlay District to come together. We should not let this issue, what you view, divide the neighborhood.
 - Norfolk Planning Dept, Ann Guthrie.
 - Chapter 11 of Zoning covers the Historic Overlay District. Discusses process for approval of the Historic Overlay District. A report is

developed by the Planning Dept on the Historic Overlay District which is presented to the Planning Commission. The report takes approximately 3 months to develop. The planning commission will hold a public hearing and then provide its recommendation. If approved, City Council will then hold a public hearing and vote on the issue. Getting on the City Council's agenda could take 4-6 weeks.

- Jean Webster (drafted design guidelines).
 - Copies were passed out and briefly reviewed with the group. The guidelines are also posted on the civic league website.
 - 3 categories to the plan: new construction and additions; renovations; and siting and landscaping.
 - Synthetic materials are allowed for siding and roofs.
 - Window replacement is also allowed.
 - For Certificate of Appropriateness, each is evaluated on a case-by-case basis due to the current house type, structure, plan, and surrounding homes.
- The Historic Overlay District plan will be posted on the civic league website. A draft plan was handed out at the January town hall meeting. Only one area has changed since the January meeting. This is a Certificate of Appropriateness is only required when a building permit is required and not for repairs/replacement.
- Questions/Comments from the floor:
 1. Comment. It is hard to deal with the Planning Group. Why do we want more constraints?
 2. If there is a "No" vote on Sept 22 is the issue dead? Answer: The issue may be brought up again to the civic league. The same process would apply.
 3. What is the voting process? Answer: Simple majority vote. Must be present to vote. Not part of the civic league by-laws to vote any other way. Could be changed, but due to voting process would not take effect until after the next meeting.
 4. Comment. Maury open house the same night as the vote.
 5. Was consideration give to a pro-active advisory group instead of an overlay? Answer: The City of Norfolk Design Center on Granby St is available to assist residents with design and architectural changes to their homes. The Review committee is also made up of architects to provide recommendations. The Norfolk pattern book which has drawing and photos of typical Norfolk styles is available on line.
 6. Comment. Thanks to the group for the hard work. Modest steps are needed to keep up with changes. Without, over time it will lead an undesirable end. Preserve the fundamental character of the neighborhood.
 7. What benefit is there to the existing neighborhood? Answer: The vote of 58 to 3 to look into the historic district was due to old homes being torn down and new style homes going in. We want to keep the value and the character of the homes and the neighborhood that you bought into. New house owners would probably have conformed to these guidelines but they were not available at that time. Again, each project is on a case-by-case basis. The overlay is not oppressive.

8. The neighborhood has changed. There is nothing historic about many houses in the area. Concerned about cost of remodeling. Answer: The process for review is simple and is at no charge. The overlay allows for vinyl siding and asphalt shingles. The Certificate of Appropriateness is done quickly. More time is spent waiting for a contractor to show up. Encourage everyone to talk to others who live in the historic districts (which is more restrictive) to see how it is working for them.
9. Very interested in historic homes and self-renovations. Concerned that a weekend project will turn into many months. Broad guidelines give approvers more leeway. What are the other reasons for the overlay? Answer: The overlay district will not qualify the neighborhood for tax incentives or low interest loans. Prices of homes are typically higher and better due to historic district status. Another point: The City of Norfolk has a tax abatement program for improvements. The city's website outlines the requirements. Must apply before renovation.
10. The overlay would still allow for demolishing one house and replacing with 3. What does it cover? Answer: The scale of the home with respect to the lot size and other surrounding homes is reviewed. Set backs on corner lots are also reviewed. Design with rock is not appropriate.
11. By the overlay, fences are not allowed in the front. What if I want? Is there an appeal process? Answer: Current zoning guidelines are applicable today which dictate the height and type of fence that can be installed in certain areas of a yard. A building permit is also required for a new fence. The plan would be reviewed as part of the permit process. Again, for the overlay we would look at surrounding houses. Case by case basis. After ruling, you can appeal.
12. Comment: The Norfolk pattern book is available at the Larchmont library. Computers are also available for use at the library to access the City of Norfolk and Larchmont-Edgewater civic league websites.
13. Hurricane Isabel has changed the neighborhood. People are required to go up to meet insurance requirements that are not like other houses on the block. Trees also have to be removed for similar reasons. Answer: The City is moving toward more flood prevention. Would not deny based on this.
14. Open house at Maury the night of the vote. Absentee ballots? Answer: It is very difficult to schedule around so many schedules. The meeting dates for the civic leagues were set in July and there were no known conflicts. Parents are splitting between the two events since there is one vote per household. The by laws do not allow for absentee ballots. Opening up many other questions and concerns on how do we prove the votes are valid, etc. Historically only absentee ballots are used for elected officials such as the President of the US. Delegates are required to be there in person to vote for legislation.
15. Comment. Design guidelines on the website are up to date. The draft overlay plan will be posted on the website.
16. Poor to have put vote on the same day as the open house. Answer: In order to accommodate this, the civic league board members will come early. Voting can begin at 6pm. One vote per household. Must be current dues paying member.
- Other Issues: The December meeting will include a presentation by ODU on the status of their long-range plans including football. Also, officers will be elected.

Please let Dave O'Dell know if you would like to run for any office in order to allow for proper time allotments.

- Meeting adjourned.
- Notes by Vickie Jones.