MEMORANDUM

TO: Chapel Hill Historic District Commission

FROM: Britany Waddell, Planning Director
Anya Grahn-Federmack, Principal Planner
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SUBJECT: Historic District Boundaries

DATE: October 8, 2024

PURPOSE

During their February 2024 retreat, the Historic District Commission (HDC) pinpointed the need to reassess the boundaries of local historic districts. The goal is to maintain the integrity of these boundaries and ensure that areas without historic resources are not unnecessarily included.

BACKGROUND

Both National Register and locally designated historic districts serve as powerful preservation tools, individually or in tandem, to safeguard a community's historic resources. In Chapel Hill, there are two primary types of historic districts:

1. **National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Districts:** These districts are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's official registry of historic sites worthy of preservation. The National Register includes individual buildings, structures, sites, objects, and historic districts that hold historical, architectural, or archaeological significance.

   Listing in the National Register acknowledges the importance of these properties and districts, helping to identify key historic resources within a community. The boundaries of National Register districts are carefully delineated to encompass concentrated areas of historic properties.

   The National Register is overseen by the U.S. Department of the Interior, with the program administered in North Carolina by the State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

2. **Local Historic Districts:** Designated by local ordinances, these districts fall under the purview of a local historic district commission. Per the HPO, "Historic district designation may be either a type of overlay or special use zoning that applies to entire neighborhoods or other areas that include many historic properties. The zoning provides controls on the appearance of existing and proposed buildings."[1]

   These districts typically represent one or more architectural periods or styles typical of the municipality, county, state, or region, and contribute to the community's visual character. Local designation safeguards significant properties and the historic character of the district, ensuring that growth, development, and change align with the district's important architectural, historical, and environmental characteristics. This is managed through the Historic District Commission's

[1] https://www.hpo.nc.gov/local-preservation/about-historic-preservation-commissions/local-historic-property-designations-north-carolina#Whatisalocaldesignation-68

Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) reviews, finding that proposed changes are not incongruous with the special character of the districts.

A National Register district identifies; a local district protects.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN A NATIONAL REGISTER AND LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION

	National Register Sites/Districts	Local Historic Districts
Locations	• Chapel Hill Historic District (largely encompasses Franklin-Rosemary) • West Chapel Hill Historic District (largely encompasses Cameron-McCauley) • Gimghoul Historic District • Rocky Ridge Farm Historic District • Old Chapel Hill Cemetery • Individual sites such as the Beta Theta Pi Fraternity House (114 S. Columbia St.), Old Chapel Hill Town Hall, Old East and Playmakers Theatre at UNC, and the Carolina Inn	• Franklin-Rosemary • Cameron-McCauley • Gimghoul
Creation of a Historic District	• Identifies, documents, and evaluates specific properties for their historic integrity and the character within the district • Sets boundaries tightly based on location of historic properties with high levels of historic integrity • Administered by the State Historic Preservation Office (HPO) but maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior	• Designates historic areas based on the historic resources identified by National Register nominations • Zoning overlay district approved by the Town Council • Historic district overlay does not control uses of a property. Uses are controlled by underlying zoning.
Benefits of Designation	• Provides property owners opportunities for state and federal rehabilitation tax credits • Provides limited degree of protection from federally funded projects (Section 106 review)	• Prevents uncontrolled exterior changes that may compromise the historic integrity or historic character of the districts through the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process and Chapel Hill Historic Districts Design

		Principles & Standards[2]
Local Review Tools	• Land Use Management Ordinance (LUMO)	• LUMO • COA process • Design Standards
Chapel Hill Permitting Process	• Zoning Compliance Permit (ZCP)	• COA • Zoning Compliance Permit (ZCP)
Limitations on Demolitions	• Does not prohibit demolition	• Authorizes the HDC to delay demolition by 365 days, but does not prohibit demolition (See LUMO 3.6.2(d)(9)2[3])

More information about the local historic districts is available on the Town's webpage[4].

HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

The attached map shows the boundaries of the National Register and local historic districts. Explorable maps are available on HBOWEB, the HPO's GIS Web Service.[5]

NEXT STEPS

The Historic District Commission will discuss the boundaries of the local historic district and any proposed changes.

ATTACHMENTS

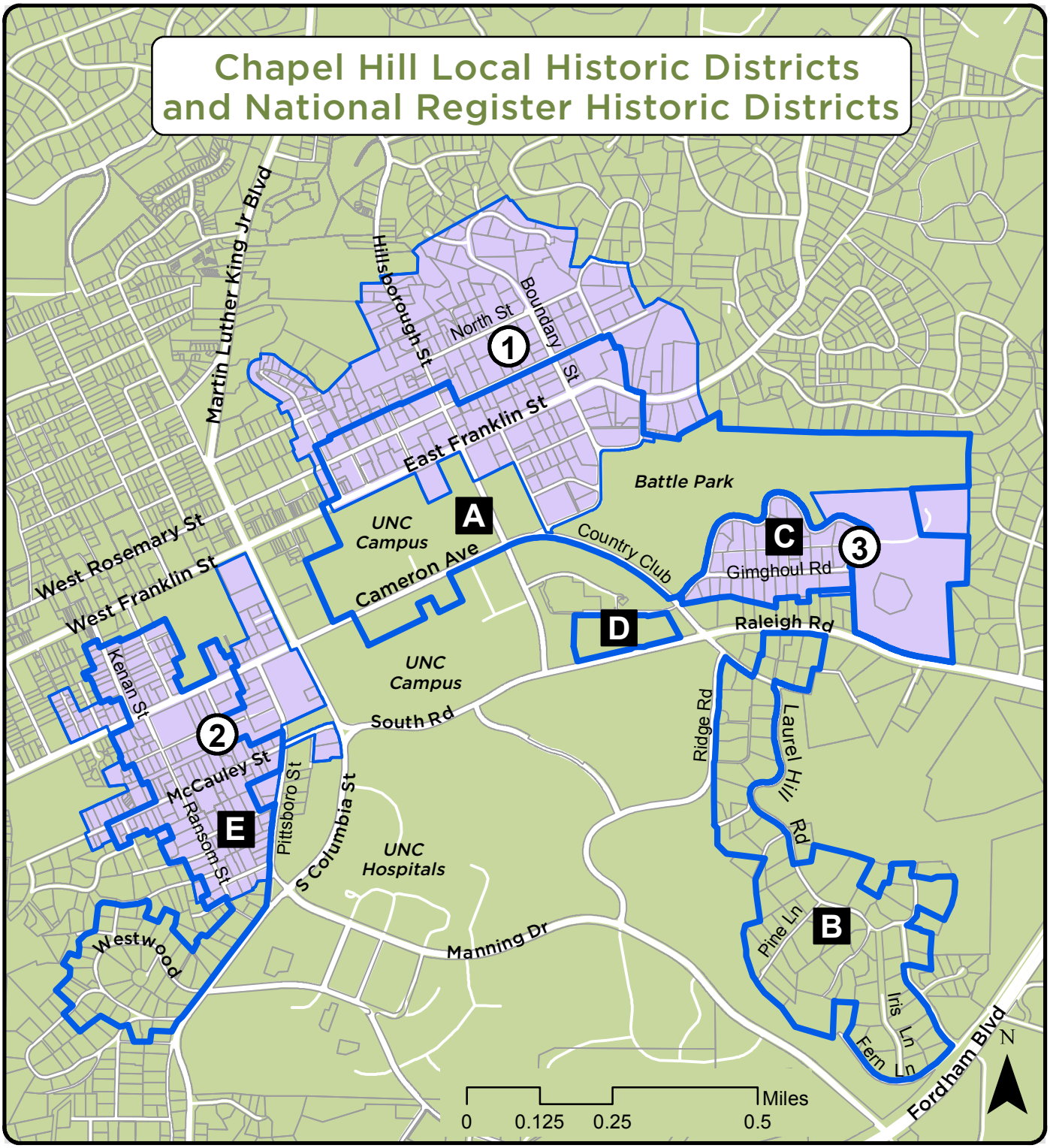
Exhibit 1 – Chapel Hill Local Historic Districts and National Register Historic Districts Map

[2] https://townhall.townofchapelhill.org/large_docs/historic_district/CH%20HD%20Design%20Principles%20and%20Standards.pdf

[3] https://library.municode.com/nc/chapel_hill/codes/code_of_ordinances/425892?nodeId=CO_APXALAUSMA_ART3ZODIUSDIST_3.6OVDI

[4] https://www.townofchapelhill.org/government/departments-services/planning/overlay-districts#hd

[5] https://nc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d2d04d8d7e03403f889419526e682529



Local Ordinance Historic Districts	Established	Ordinance
1. Franklin-Rosemary Historic District	1976-12-13	O-76-51
2. Cameron-McCauley Historic District	1990-06-11	90-06-11/O-4B
3. Gimghoul Historic District	1993-11-22	93-11-22/O-o.2

National Register Historic Districts	Date of Certification
A. Chapel Hill National Register District	1971-12-16
B. Rocky Ridge National Register District	1989-08-08
& District Area Expansion in 2008	2008-01-30
C. Gimghoul National Register District	1993-08-05
D. Old Chapel Hill Cementary	1994-05-03
E. West Chapel Hill National Register District	1998-12-31