

### **3.0 NEIGHBORHOOD SITE AND SETTING**

Elm Heights is Bloomington's largest historic district and one of its most historic, architecturally diverse and significant neighborhoods. Building setbacks, trees and landscaping, fencing and walls, alleys, parking areas and walkways, garages and accessory buildings all comprise elements of a neighborhood setting. How these elements relate to each other and to a primary building creates the individual site setting. How the individual sites and settings relate to each other along the streetscape creates an integrated neighborhood. Unguided alterations to, or outright losses of, any one of these characteristics may damage the fragile overall cohesiveness of an historic neighborhood. Constructed on a traditional grid pattern, the connections of streets and alleyways in Elm Heights provide both direct and indirect links throughout the neighborhood. Streets provide the formality of public access links, while the alleys link to back yards and places of more private access. Many of these alleys remain gravel, a valued neighborhood feature that lends a sense of history and a less-urban feel to the neighborhood. Alleys encourage safe strolling for pedestrians who wish to explore the less well known corners of the neighborhood.

Unique to Elm Heights are limestone sculptures, urns, steps, and benches, all monuments to our region's limestone history. Many limestone artifacts are unique to their sites, and we feel strongly that they should remain in their original historic settings. Likewise, walls and fences were designed and constructed as integral elements to the buildings they surround. Existing stone walls, both WPA built and dry laid, are treasured neighborhood features. Preserving and maintaining them ensures retention of another character-defining element of Elm Heights.

Our neighborhood is also known for its mature, established landscaping and tree canopy. Although its trees, plantings, and landscaping vary, they create an overall neighborhood ambiance. Steps and walkways invite visitors in from the sidewalks, and the availability of off-street parking and side or rear garages allows houses to remain the primary focus of the neighborhood. Locally designated in 1979, some of the few original street lamps in the city still grace Hawthorne Drive.

#### **Preservation Goals for the Neighborhood Setting**

To retain, preserve, maintain, and respect distinctive, character-defining features of the neighborhood or building sites such as tree plots, mature trees, and landscaping; fences and walls; limestone objects and elements; walkways and steps; lighting and alleyways; and building setbacks.

To avoid changes in paving, lighting, fencing, and pedestrian or vehicular traffic flow that disrupt the relationship between buildings and their environment.

### 3.1 Trees and Landscaping

#### Preservation Goals for Tree and Landscaping

To maintain the mature canopy that is associated with the historic Elm Heights Neighborhood by appropriate care and planting of appropriate trees and gradual removal of invasive trees.

#### Guidelines for Trees and Landscaping

*A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded items. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.*

**I. Removal of a mature tree that is visible from the public right-of-way.**

A mature tree is:

- a) a shade tree that is twelve inches in diameter or larger,
  - b) an ornamental tree that is four inches in diameter or fifteen feet high, and
  - c) an evergreen tree that is eight inches in diameter or fifteen feet high.
- Dead trees do not require a COA for removal. Consult with the City staff person to the Historic Preservation Commission regarding diseased, dying, or infested trees.
  - Invasive trees as defined in the City of Bloomington Tree Care Manual do not require a COA; see 7.5.
  - When re-planting, refer to the City of Bloomington's Tree Care Manual for recommendations.

#### Things to Consider As You Plan

Periodic pruning of mature trees by a certified arborist can help ensure the tree's health and the safety of pedestrians or site features below it. However, the complete removal of mature, healthy trees should be considered only for compelling reasons as the loss of such trees diminishes the neighborhood and site setting. Assistance with all aspects of tree care, including the selection of appropriate tree species for planting, can be found in the City of Bloomington Tree Care Manual. Within the list of undesirable trees (7.5), it is important to note this may only be for tree plot application and does not refer to what may be acceptable in private yards. However, those listed as invasive should never be planted.

Mature plantings require sensitive treatment particularly while on-site construction is taking place. The roots of established trees should be protected from soil compaction and ground disturbance with temporary fencing during construction. When new trees are planted, careful consideration with regard to placement will avoid potential threat to historic structures as the tree matures. Refer to the City's Tree Care manual for guidance;

[insert website](#). Choose locations that will not damage buildings through moisture retention, root invasion, and limb movement.

Often small landscape elements like edging can introduce incompatible colors and materials into a historic environment. The building's architecture and historic features, as well as those of the neighborhood, should be considered when determining the design and materials. Brightly colored materials, plastic, tires, logs, or railroad ties introduce historically inappropriate materials into the neighborhood that gradually erode its integrity of setting.

### **3.2 Trellises, Pergolas, Gazebos, and Similar Small Structures**

#### **Preservation Goals for Trellises, Pergolas, Gazebos, and Similar Small Structures**

To maintain and construct secondary yard structures that are compatible with historic materials and templates.

#### **Guidelines for Trellises, Pergolas, Gazebos, and Similar Small Structures**

*A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded item. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.*

##### **I. Construction or removal of trellises, pergolas, and similar structures that are visible from the public right-of-way.**

Construct trellises, pergolas, gazebos, and similar small structures of historically appropriate materials such as wood or metal, and design them in keeping with the architecture of the house.

#### **Things to Consider As You Plan**

It is preferable to identify, preserve, and maintain existing trellises, pergolas, and similar structures that may have historic value. Some may be integral to the original design or style of the house. Refer to the maintenance and project planning section for the *Exterior Building Materials* for guidance on appropriate methods and resources.

### **3.3 Walls and Fences**

Due to rolling topography, this neighborhood has many retaining walls along alleys and streets. Most of them are of split face limestone but sandstone and other masonry are also represented. Traditional fencing includes wrought iron, picket and woven wire.

## **Preservation Goals for Walls and Fences**

To insure that new construction be compatible with historic walls and fences in materials, form and scale.

To maintain, repair and restore existing historic walls and fences that are significant to the neighborhood.

## **Guidelines for Walls and Fences**

**A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded, numbered items. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.**

- I. Reconstruction or repair of historic walls and fences**
- II. Installation or removal of walls or fences visible from the public right-of-way.**
  - Install new fences made of the historically appropriate materials for ElmHeights which, depending on the type and style of architecture, may include iron, stone, brick or wood.
  - Install new retaining walls appropriate in height to the grade of the yard. Rear yard concrete block retaining walls may be considered depending on position, visibility and design.
  - Install new walls or fences so the total height does not obscure the primary facade of the building.
  - Installation of rear yard fences should begin no farther forward than a point midway between the front and rear facades of the house.
  - Consideration is given for fences that pertain to special needs, children and dogs. Temporary seasonal fences for gardening are permitted and do not require a COA

## **Things to Consider As You Plan**

Historic walls and fences should be restored and maintained using the appropriate methods for the materials. Refer to *Project Planning* in the *Existing Buildings Materials* section for helpful information on maintenance and rebuilding of historic stone or metal fences and walls. Make sure that your new fence also complies with the setback and height restrictions stipulated by the City of Bloomington. Hedges and other plant barriers are encouraged as long as they do not obscure the primary facade of the building.

## **3.4 Walkways and Automobile Areas**

Automobiles were just coming into their own during the time of Elm Heights development, although they were prized possessions they were never the less placed out

of view. Where alleys were available, garages and parking areas were placed at the rear of the lot or sometimes beneath the grade of the house, away from the primary façade. If an alley was not available, garages were usually set back from the front facade with a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor or an outdoor terrace above.

### **Preservation Goals for Walkways and Automobile Access**

To maintain the traditional patterns established within the neighborhood for driveways, walkways and alleys.

To avoid open areas for car storage visible from primary streets.

### **Guidelines for Walkways and Automobile Areas**

**A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded, numbered items. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.**

**I. Installation, removal or expansion of all driveways and parking areas, as well as walkways visible from the public right-of-way.**

- Design walkways, driveways and parking areas in keeping with the neighborhood setting.
- Locate parking at the rear of the property and screen appropriately.
- Protect and maintain mature trees, plantings and green space as much as possible when planning parking areas.
- Refer to the guidelines for *Accessibility, Safety and Aging in Place* when planning disability access.
- Pervious pavers or pavements cannot to be used in exchange for green space requirements.

### **Things to Consider As You Plan**

When available, use the traditional alley network for access to garages or parking areas. To help preserve green space, city code prohibits parking areas larger than 20 by 20 ft. unless the property is zoned multifamily. Other restrictions may apply; please contact City Planning for more information.

### **3.5 Lighting**

Iron street lamps on Hawthorne Drive were purchased by the original homeowners and installed in tree plots to be maintained by the City. Smaller homes often had fixtures on porches and a lamp post at the beginning of the sidewalk or stair for ambiance and safety.

## **Preservation Goals for Lighting**

To maintain and preserve the historic lighting standards and fixtures in Elm Heights .  
To maintain and replace the ambient low intensity lighting that is traditional in the neighborhood.

## **Guidelines for Lighting**

**A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded, numbered items. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.**

- I. Installation or removal of exterior lighting visible from the public right-of-way.**
  - Install historically appropriate exterior lighting that is low-intensity.
  - Locate lights to minimize light pollution adverse impacts to surrounding properties, streets and alley ways.
  - Install light fixtures so as to minimize damage to historic building materials. Avoid removal of character-defining building features when installing light fixtures.

## **Things to Consider As You Plan**

Identify and then repair, restore and maintain historic exterior light fixtures when feasible. Lighting fixtures of this era were made from high quality materials that are easily repairable and difficult and expensive to replace. If replacements are necessary, choose reproduction light fixtures that are appropriate to the architectural style or time period of the house.

**Shining light upward** is historically inappropriate and should be avoided. When choosing outdoor light fixtures, minimizing light pollution is an important consideration. Light pollution is the result of inefficient outdoor lighting that shines light upwards or in other directions where the light is neither needed nor wanted. This not only wastes energy and irritates neighbors but can also affect wildlife and is actually counterproductive to the purposes for which outdoor lighting is usually intended. Unshielded lights do not direct as much light downward where it is useful, and the associated glare of unshielded or overly bright outdoor lighting can actually make it more difficult to see steps, sidewalks, and people in the shadows outside the lighted area because your vision becomes less dark-adapted. The increase of upward shining light over recent decades has blotted out the natural beauty of the night sky near concentrations of population, because upwardly directed light, when scattered by particles in the atmosphere, produces a bright background sky through which stars, planets, and nebulae become more difficult to see. Reducing light pollution is one of many ways in which we can sustain our natural as well as historic environment, and it is not hard to do. First, be sure that the outdoor lighting you plan is really necessary. If so, then make sure that the fixtures you choose are properly shielded and shine all their light downward on your own property. Choose lights

that are no brighter than required for your purpose, and use energy-efficient light emitters. More information on security and accessibility lighting can be found in section 5.6.

Consider using properly shielded exterior light fixtures that carry the seal of approval of the International Dark-Sky Association ([www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)).

### 3.6 Other Landscape Features

Elm Heights has many features designed and installed with the development of the area that made it unique. Included in the original sale of the lots were a birdbath and limestone bench crafted locally. There were also a significant number of residents involved in the limestone industry that lived in the neighborhood and exhibited their craft and livelihood on their homes and in their yards. Limestone sculptures still dot the area and add to its visual interest and charm.

#### Preservation Goals for Other Landscape Features

To retain distinctive and historic features which make the neighborhood unique.  
To encourage the placement of inappropriate features and modern updates or mechanical service equipment in unobtrusive locations or screen them appropriately.

#### Guidelines for Other Landscape Features

**A Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) is required for the following bolded, numbered items. The bullet points that follow each numbered item further assist applicants with the COA process.**

- I. Moving, removing or adding decorative yard features and artifacts visible from a public right-of-way.**
  - Retain contributing limestone, wooden or metal features; their removal requires either a COA or staff approval. (This stays in yellow until we confirm with Nancy, take input from workshop )
  - Addition of decorative features such as sculptures and benches do not require a COA.
  - Shifting a decorative yard feature for maintenance or it's safety does not require a COA but the feature should not be removed from the property.
  
- II. Installation of service and technical equipment visible from the public right-of-way.**
  - Locate service, mechanical, electrical, or technical equipment such as satellite dishes, substations, central air conditioning equipment, or heat exchangers so they are not visible from the street. Refer to the *guidelines for Sustainability and Energy Retrofits* for energy-generating technologies.

- Screen equipment so it does not disrupt the integrity of the site or building's architecture.
- Historic materials should not be damaged or removed when installing equipment whenever feasible.
- Locate historically inappropriate items to be as inconspicuous as possible

**III. Installation of swimming pools and permanently installed yard equipment visible from the public right-of-way such as playgrounds, barbecue pits, greenhouses, and pet enclosures.**

- Locate equipment in the rear yard, and site, landscape, and/or screen so they are not within public view.
- In-ground pools are preferable to above-ground pools. Take into consideration the possibility of damage to surrounding historic vegetation, outbuildings and features when determining the location.
- Locate historically inappropriate items to be as inconspicuous as possible

**Things to Consider As You Plan**

Great caution should be used if you move limestone objects; they are very heavy but brittle and can shatter or chip easily. See section 4.2 for care and maintenance of limestone. If you must move limestone artifacts it is recommended to pad carefully and make sure its new location has a stable base that will not shift during freeze and thaw cycles. Limestone planters and birdbaths should be carefully emptied and covered for the winter to prevent cracking and spalling.

Use of service equipment is an inevitable part of homeownership; staff level approvals are available for minor small scale installations. Swimming pools can be very obtrusive and space-consuming involving new screening, pervious surface, and landscape considerations. Because of their potential impact on the historic neighborhood they require a full review by the Commission. Creative ways of screening and buffering are encouraged.

Some yard features that do not require review are rain barrels and clothes lines, these traditional items should be placed at the rear or side of a home or screened from public view in some way. Consider painting additions such as these in a complementary or corresponding color scheme. If adding a rain barrel please note that changes to copper gutters or downspouts require a COA or staff approval. (question group and Nancy about downspouts and gutters)  
(insert a green box possibly about rain gardens, water barrels?)