

NOTES FROM MEETING WITH NATIONAL REGISTRY CONSULTANT, MICHAEL Houser, AND TIM WAHL, JONATHAN SCHILK AND HEATHER MICHAEL OF BELLINGHAM PARKS & RECREATION, AND KATIE FRANKS OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT 06/28/08.

Prepared for 2008 “Adapting Woodstock” charrette. (HM).

HM: When considering a property for a National Registry (NR) nomination, the NR places emphasis on properties that represent a “significant part of history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture of an area.” (NR). In order to be considered for nomination, a property must express a significant historic context. Historic contexts are historical patterns, trends, or themes that can be identified through consideration of the prehistory and history of the property and the history of the surrounding area. A property must be significant for one or more of the four ‘Criteria for Evaluation’ set forth by the National Registry, as follows:

- *The property’s association with important events*
- *Association with the life of an important person or group of people*
- *Importance in design or construction*
- *The property’s information potential and importance to prehistory and history*

The NR website indicates a property can be significant within one or more historic contexts, and if possible, all of these should be identified when establishing the properties historic context. Historic contexts are established at the local, state, and national levels.

After a summary of Woodstock Farm’s historical background and site features by Tim Wahl, Mr. Houser said that an NR listing of Woodstock Farm as a multiple-resource historic site at the local level should be a “slam-dunk.”

Houser said that Woodstock’s various buildings, drives, and landscapes reflect its multiple cultural resources. He said that it may be too challenging to blend prehistoric and historic themes into one nomination effort and recommended two separate nominations to take both themes into consideration. [HM: Messrs. Houser and Sullivan seem to differ as to whether multiple themes can be combined or acknowledged in a single nomination. More information is desirable on this point.]

Houser said that a listing is completely honorary once the property is registered with the NR, and, as a practical matter, it is not the role of the NR to monitor whether or not a property maintains its historic integrity once listed. He said as much of the site’s original features should be preserved as possible in order to retain its historic context. When considering potential site changes, character-defining features that contribute towards the site’s historic themes should be noted and retained or implemented throughout the site to maintain contextual unity.

While walking around the property, Houser admired small details such as the decorative galvanized steel chainlink fence post caps near the Chicken House Cottage (probably an addition by the Lee’s sometime in the 1950’s or 1960’s) and the Gates era, light standards located around the site. Houser encouraged retaining as many of these seemingly small, character-defining features as possible, noting that taking them away would detract from the site’s overall character. Houser thought the new

Woodstock Farm Conservancy benches— replicating a Gates era furnishing and molded from an original, were outstanding site elements and constituted an important effort to retain an original theme.

Before major changes are made to the site’s buildings or landscapes, Houser recommended conducting both a cultural landscape assessment and a heritage-oriented structures assessment. He said the NR places more emphasis on the exterior integrity of the buildings when considering a listing site for nomination, especially for peripheral buildings which have undergone significant adaptive changes during the past few decades, such as the conversion of the original chicken house below the Gates-Lee house to a caretaker’s studio dwelling. For instance, the relatively unchanged interior and exterior features of the dominant Gates-Lee house and the building facades visible from the house should be considered more essential to the overall character and history of the site than attending to restoration of details involving less central features.

While an NR listing can greatly increase the likelihood of receiving state and federal grants for site improvements, certain caveats apply when considering adaptive-reuse plans under the auspices of a listing. Standards for adapting site features may become stricter with larger funding requests. “adaptive reuse” can be fundamentally contrary to the objectives of many historic preservation funding programs, although it may be accommodated in well articulated grant proposals. Potential funding is available through the Washington Capital Heritage grant program, certain “cultural landscape grants” [define?], and a new state Heritage Barn grant and registry program that provides funding for the preservation of historic barns. [The next deadline for barn owners interested in nominating their barn to the Heritage Barn Register is August 15th, 2008.]

Katie Franks recommended consultations with regional representatives of the “Secretary of the Interior” [?] to ensure that adaptive reuse plans comply with the Secretary’s Standards for Rehabilitation. (The US Secretary of Interior oversees the National Park Service, which is responsible for advising Federal agencies on the preservation of historic properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.) The Secretary of the Interior recognizes that some repairs or alterations of historic buildings will be needed in order to provide for an efficient contemporary use; however, “these repairs and alterations must not damage or destroy materials, features or finishes that are important in defining the building’s historic character.” (SIC). These standards also pertain to related landscape features and the building’s site and environment. The Secretary can provide recommended strategies for adaptive reuse plans. (In the event of a private owner [probably not a lessee, TW] a rehabilitation project must be determined by the Secretary to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s), and where applicable, the district in which it is located, in order to be certified for Federal tax purposes.)

Houser extended warm invitations to receive questions and address concerns related to Woodstock and looked forwards to hearing about the outcome of the charrette.

[HM/TW: What is the difference between a National Historic Landmark listing (as emphasized by Michael Sullivan and reflecting possible local and state significance) and an National Historic Register listing.]