

New Castle County Historic Review Board

Annual Report

2009

The work of the New Castle County Historic Review Board (HRB) continued at a reduced rate in 2009, reflecting the economic realities of the housing industry in a severe national economic recession. In total, the Department of Land Use received 203 applications for land development plans or demolition of existing structures that fell within the possible purview of the HRB. Of that number, only 9, or less than 5 percent, reached a level of potential significance requiring a full board review. With only one exception, noted below, all applications were resolved promptly. In addition, the HRB reviewed four applications for changes to properties with Historic Zoning Overlays (HZO) as well as two requests for HZO status.

Land Development Plans

The HRB reviewed five new land development plans for properties with potentially significant historic resources. In all cases the HRB determined that the resources did not meet the threshold required for preservation protection for a variety of reasons: lack of outstanding integrity (Polly Drummond Road); loss of historic integrity through fire or alterations (Frazer Road; Kiaminski Road); or no adverse impact on existing resources (Bethel Church Road; River Road). The HRB also received the final archaeological report from the W.L. Gore Company on its Cooch's Bridge application. The HRB commends the Gore Company for the work it undertook on a site of high significance in Paleo-Indian history as well as in the Battle of Cooch's Bridge. This study, a metal

detecting survey, revealed important new information on the positions of the British Army and the lives of the common soldiers.

Demolition Permits

Four demolition permits came before the HRB in 2009. The board found all to be historically important within the guidelines of the UDC and required documentation to archival standards for two of the four (Summit Bridge Road; Kennett Pike). The applicants for the first two properties, an early log house and an early Colonial Revival house, agreed to the board's request, and those permits were released promptly.

The third applicant (Capitol Trail) chose not to comply and sat out the waiting period of the hold. That decision cost New Castle County the opportunity to preserve in archival form a record of the only known completely concrete dairy barns, including roofs, in the county. Those seemingly utilitarian and insignificant buildings encapsulated one of the most important agricultural changes of the early twentieth century: the creation of pure milk standards and laws at the state and national levels.

The fourth applicant faced the HRB as a case of demolition without a permit (Village of Christiana). The board understood the structural exigencies that required precipitant action and commended the applicant for the sensitive rebuilding undertaken.

Historic Zoning Overlays

Five of the applications reviewed by the HRB involved proposed changes to historically zoned properties. Those proposed changes ranged from sign design (Centreville) and rooftop bar (Centreville); demolition and rebuilding of an ancillary structure on the Weldin House property (Philadelphia Pike); architectural standards for the new development of LaGrange (Route 40); and the site plan for the proposed adaptive

reuse of the F.O.C. Darley House (Philadelphia Pike). The HRB approved all of the applications outright or with modest specified modifications.

The HRB received, studied, and approved the application of one historic zoning overly application during the year, while a second began in 2009 but was not completed until 2011 because of an applicant-requested delay. The structure at 1109 Yorklyn Road, the HRB voted, met criteria A, B, and I of NCC 40.15.110. This stone building of ca. 1830 has had a long history of adaptive reuse, as a house, school, and again as a private dwelling. Its location has significance to the industrial heritage of the Red Clay Valley and, just as importantly, to the history of Delaware's slow-to-develop public school system. The HRB was pleased that the Planning Board and County Council agreed with this recommendation.

National Register of Historic Places

The HRB heard one application from the Greenville Country Club for inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places and determined that the house and outbuildings, designed by a nationally recognized architect and built to the highest standards with the best materials, met criterion C for inclusion. The application has now moved on for state and then federal review.

Miscellaneous

In addition to the applications reviewed, the HRB has continued to work on education and public outreach initiatives, including the reinstatement of annual awards for projects of great merit.

The HRB is always available to discuss our work on specific applications or in general with members of Council or representatives of the Executive Office and would

particularly welcome the opportunity to discuss adjustments to the New Castle County Land Use Code that would extend the review process to some houses now unprotected and in danger of loss.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara E. Benson, Chair

Historic Review Board