

## REPORT

DATE: 20 November 2012

TO: Randy McClement, Mayor  
Josh Russin, Executive Assistant  
Richard Griffin, Director of Economic Development  
The City of Frederick

CC: Lisa Mroszczyk Murphy, Historic Preservation Planner – The City of Frederick  
Christina Martinkosky, Historic Preservation Planner – The City of Frederick  
Chairperson, Historic Preservation Commission – The City of Frederick  
Chairperson, Historic Preservation Commission – Frederick County  
President, Board of Directors – Frederick County Landmarks Foundation, Inc.

FROM: Anthony S. Moscato, Jr., Chair  
Frederick Preservation Trust

RE: Report on potential sites for downtown hotel and meeting space development

A committee of the Frederick Preservation Trust (FPT) toured the six sites that have been initially identified as potential locations for development of a downtown Frederick hotel and meeting space. The committee examined the sites for their impact on historic resources, mainly the Fredericktown Historic District and the Frederick Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The FPT committee has minimal expertise in marketing, economic development, and hotel development, but all committee members are deeply concerned about preservation of the integrity, scale, viewshed, and setting of the Fredericktown Historic District and the Frederick Historic District (National Register district).

Comments on each of the potential sites, from the perspective of their impact on historic resources, follow. The discussion is divided into three parts: sites with a lesser impact on historic resources; a site that will have a greater impact; and sites that would devastate the quality, character, and setting of the historic district. Every site under consideration has the potential to negatively impact the historic district, but with good design and planning, some sites could afford compatible development. Other sites would devastate the historic district, regardless of the quality of design, and should be withdrawn from consideration.

### **Lesser Impact on Historic Resources**

#### **Corner of South & East Streets**

This site could have a minimal impact on the historic district. It is located outside of the Fredericktown Historic District and appears to be partially in the Frederick Historic District (National Register district), in an area of new development (East Street, extended). The few buildings remaining from the Brick Works should be evaluated for their historical significance.

As the last remnants of this important local industry, they have some significance; however, their small scale may preclude effective adaptive re-use. This should be studied.

Importantly, this site will have little impact on views of the historic district and its spires. Due to its proximity to small-scale buildings on East South Street, any buildings developed on this site should maintain the massing of the Board of Education building. Preferably, its height should be two stories on the street and stepped up to four at the center of the development. Surface parking should not be evident from either East or South streets.

### **Parking lot behind MARC Train Station**

This site has the advantage of being at a lower elevation, which in theory would keep new development a story lower than elsewhere. It also is offset from the historic district to a certain extent, and would not impact views of the historic district from the east as much as some other sites. However, the site seems to have many practical drawbacks, including access to the site and close proximity to the railroad, and from some vantages, it would not present the views of downtown Frederick that should inspire visitors. Any construction on this site should respect the low scale of the buildings on Patrick Street and Water Street, and maintain the highest elevation toward the McCutcheons side of the site.

### **Allegheny Power/Potomac Edison Power location (AP/PEP) – East Patrick Street**

The AP/PEP site is a noncontributing property within the Frederick Historic District (National Register district). As such, it is in between contributing properties: a) the Wayside Apartments (formerly the Schley House and the Wayside Inn); and b) other East Patrick Street houses and businesses to the west. The industrial complex that houses the Goodwill on Church Street, included in the Frederick Historic District (National Register district) is visible to the north.

The scale of any new construction on the site should respect the scale and setting of nearby historic properties with setbacks and stepped back street façades. The setback should not accommodate surface parking, but provide a green buffer to the street.

### **Greater Impact on Historic Resources**

#### **U.S. Postal Service (USPS) Site – East Patrick Street**

The post office is a noncontributing building in the historic district, bracketed by surface parking lots. As such, it is not a great asset to the historic district. However, it was designed to maintain the scale of the historic district and the rhythm of the streetscape (including the wall surrounding the east parking area). Its impact on properties to the north is minimal, particularly compared to the impact of a hotel on these properties.

The post office site is one of the most prominent gateways to the historic district; construction of a hotel would compromise this important gateway and overwhelm the streetscape in that block, the block to the west and on Carroll Street, and the houses on Church Street. Hotel development

on the post office site would seriously compromise the integrity of one of Frederick's most alluring streets.

### **Devastating Impact on Historic Resources**

#### **200 East Patrick Street - Former Frederick News-Post (FNP) Location**

The former site of the FNP is unacceptable for hotel development because of the serious damage it would inflict on the historic district. Not only would it compromise or result in removal of Frederick's last tannery building, but it would dominate East Patrick Street and Carroll Creek as a looming presence out of scale with the historic district. The historic scale of the district is one of its greatest assets. A hotel would compromise the integrity of the east end of the historic district and impact views of the historic district from many vantages. Large-scale development of this site would damage the resource intended to impress visitors. Development of this site would confirm that Frederick is willing to compromise its greatest asset—the historic district—in pursuit of a “more sophisticated” downtown image.

#### **All Saints and East Streets, next to the Delaplaine (Warmold)**

Development at the Warmold would negatively impact the views of the historic district, including views of the spires, and the disparity between the scale of new development and more diminutive historic buildings, including the Delaplaine, the depot, and Carroll Street buildings. If placed too close to Carroll Creek, large massing and height could overwhelm the tiny waterway and undercut efforts to showcase its charms. Any development should preserve the open vista to Frederick. The committee recommends that the site include a city park and/or maximum 2-story housing and shops as the site is already cleared and there is a completed parking deck.

### **Conclusion**

The FNP and Warmold sites should be withdrawn from consideration for hotel development. The impact of hotel development on these sites would irreparably harm the historic district. These sites are situated at an important gateway to the historic district, and the scale of hotel development would compromise visitors' experience of the historic district and residents' enjoyment of areas that today compatibly accommodate residences, commercial buildings, and public buildings. A large commercial site—such as a hotel and meeting space—would change the ambience of these areas and those in the vicinity. Large-scale economic development projects should be taken elsewhere.

The other sites proposed for hotel development are better candidates to varying degrees, with the key to compatibility with the historic district dependent on good design that acknowledges the scale, materials, texture, and design qualities of the Fredericktown Historic District. New construction should be respectful of nearby buildings and views toward the historic district. Preservation of Frederick's important skyline, punctuated by its well know spires, should be a prevailing design consideration.

The Frederick Preservation Trust respectfully submits these comments for consideration by the Hotel Advisory Team responsible for studying the potential for hotel development in the vicinity of the Fredericktown Historic District.