

Dayton considers adding historic district

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DAYTON - A proposed historic district for Dayton's main thoroughfare has prompted a mixture of enthusiasm and concerns from residents.

City leaders will consider putting a historic protection overlay zone along Sixth Avenue that would regulate any visible changes to structures in the district.

Proponents believe this will ensure properties are maintained while others fear it will put another layer of restrictions on property owners.

The proposed district would extend along Sixth Avenue from the city's western border on O'Fallon Avenue east to Main Street. This would include 190 homes.

If the city council approves the overlay, it would require homeowners in the district get approval from a city board before making exterior changes to their property that would be visible from a public street.

It is similar to other historic districts like those in neighboring Bellevue, said Michael Giffen, Dayton's Main Street manager.

"We want these homes to be around for our kids and grandchildren," Giffen said. "Dayton is lucky to have nice architectural homes."

Property owners in the district who want to make visible changes to their property would need a certificate of appropriateness issued by the city's newly assembled Board of Architectural Review, made up of a cross-section of residents. The board can serve as an asset to homeowners in the district and refer them to quality contractors and suppliers, said Lynn Adam, vice chairman of the board.

"This is a historic old river town with a lot of contributing buildings," Adam said. "I think the character should be maintained. That benefits everyone in the city to maintain that historic character."

It wouldn't require homeowners to make any changes to their properties and wouldn't change the zoning along the street. Dayton's planning and zoning commission will vote on the district in two months and send a recommendation to the city council for it to vote on, said City Administrator Dennis Redmond. If the district is put into place, the city will then pursue a National Register of Historic Places designation from the federal government, he said. That will make property owners in the district eligible for federal tax credits and grants.

"There's a huge correlation with bringing good people to the community, businesses to the community and energizing the city," Giffen said.

Ben Baker, who lives on Sixth Street, said he think the historic overlay will improve the street.

"I think the integrity of district should be maintained," Baker said. "I want to make sure nothing falls further into blight than it already is. I just want to see Dayton succeed, and I think there's a lot of hope here and a lot of opportunity here"

Others fear it will put onerous restrictions on the residents. Sixth Street resident Alvena Stanfield said many residents might not be able to afford what the review board would require.

"Our street in the 300 block is called 'inheritance row' because somebody has to die before a piece comes up for sale," Stanfield said. "That is not unusual for people to live in houses here 25, 30 years, 40 years. Those people who are unable to maintain their properties could be forced of having to dispose of it, or live in falling down situations because of not being able to afford appropriate renovations."