

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS COMMUNICATION  
FEBRUARY 7, 2023 AGENDA**

<p><b>Subject:</b></p> <p>An ordinance to establish a Local Ordinance District for the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District of Little Rock.</p> <p><b>Submitted By:</b></p> <p>Planning &amp; Development Department</p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">√ <b>Ordinance</b> Resolution</p>	<p><b>Approved By:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bruce T. Moore City Manager</p>
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<b>SYNOPSIS</b>	An ordinance to establish a Local Ordinance District for the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District of Little Rock, which roughly encompass the area east of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Drive, south of 12 <sup>th</sup> Street, west of Jones Street and the South Park Street below Wright Avenue and north of West Roosevelt Road.
<b>FISCAL IMPACT</b>	None.
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Approval of the ordinance.
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	The history, architectural character and cultural value of the Wright Avenue and Central High Neighborhoods are significant to the story of Little Rock’s built environment and provide a historical touchstone for current and future generations. In recognition of this, the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District (“District”) was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. Thirteen (13) years later, despite welcoming thousands of visitors annually from around the world to the National Historic Landmark and Museum, the District was in jeopardy of losing its designation. In 2012, the boundary was expanded by nine (9) blocks to increase the number of historically significant resources and balance the deficit of lost structures. In 2014, the District was listed on <i>Arkansas’s Most Endangered Places List</i> by Preserve Arkansas, with the identifiers: “abandoned, endangered and demolished”.

**BACKGROUND  
CONTINUED**

Today, the District is an identified endangered historic resource and suffers extensively from demolitions, property neglect, and incompatible alterations. The City of Little Rock has enacted multiple indirect tools to address this endangerment over the years, but these have fallen short of impacting the issue in a meaningful way. The district is the second largest Historic District of the twenty-four (24) Historic Districts of Little Rock and comprises sections of the Wright Avenue and Central High Neighborhoods. The true loss to neighborhood residents and homeowners is the loss of financial tools accessible through the National Register status and the continued and persistent regressive development of their neighborhood. To remain a National Register Historic District, the District must retain a ratio of 51% or more of its historic fabric. The results of a recent staff analysis of the past decade shows that the district's current eligibility ratio is estimated to be 59% or less and dropping.

To retain and steward the surviving historical character and value of the neighborhoods; safeguard property owner access to economic development tools; and strengthen and stabilize the economy of the neighborhoods as the surrounding landscape of the Central High School National Historic Landmark, the creation of a Local Ordinance Historic District is proposed. For a detailed overview of the District and staff analysis, see attached "Local Ordinance District Report".

In order to establish a Local Ordinance District, the City of Little Rock must follow the requirements mandated by the State of Arkansas and the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Pursuant to these requirements, a report has been provided and establishing ordinance proposed. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, an agency of the Department of Parks Heritage and Tourism, the City of Little Rock Planning Commission, and the Little Rock Historic District Commission have recommended approval (see "Support Documents" and "Historic District Commission Minutes". In addition, Planning & Development Department Staff met with and received feedback from neighborhood associations throughout this process since July 2022. In response to neighborhood feedback, the Historic District Commission has submitted a resolution (see "Resolution of Support") to be considered concurrently with the establishment of the Local Ordinance District.

For these reasons, the Planning & Development Department is proposing the creation of a Local Ordinance District for the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District.