



NEWS RELEASE

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Highland Acres Neighborhood to be Surveyed for Historic Significance

BISMARCK, ND – The City of Bismarck is working with a consultant and the North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office to conduct an in-depth architectural survey of the Highland Acres neighborhood. Work on this survey has begun and is expected to continue throughout the summer. This work will involve the expertise of historic preservation professionals who will conduct in-field research as well as review of historic documentation. The in-field research will consist of documentation of neighborhood and housing characteristics via written and photographic methods and will occur outside of each property from the street and/or sidewalk. The main purpose of conducting architectural surveys of the neighborhood is to determine its viability as a National Register of Historic Places district.

The City of Bismarck has received some calls from residents who expressed concern that a property listing on the National Register of Historic Places would prohibit their ability to remodel or make changes to their property. Contrary to misconceptions about the National Register program, being individually listed or within a listed historic district does not prevent owners from altering their property, restricting the use or sale of the property, or require that the owner establish times that the property must be open to the public. Entry into the National Register of Historic Places does give a property prestige, provides protection from federally assisted projects, and provides eligibility for certain preservation financial incentives.

The surveys are a fact gathering activity that once completed will inform historic preservation professionals whether there is substantial historic significance and sufficient historic architectural integrity to be eligible for listing in the National Register program. After the architectural survey work is completed, the results will be provided to the Bismarck Historic Preservation Commission and verified by the State Historical Society of North Dakota. If enough historical integrity and significance is present, the City may elect to proceed with preparing a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Prior to submission of a nomination, property owners will be contacted by the North Dakota

State Historic Preservation Office and may indicate their objection to the district listing. If over 50 percent of property owners object to the historic district it would not be forwarded to the National Park Service for nomination or would be proposed with a reduced district boundary.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's list of properties considered worthy of preservation. The documentation process for listing demonstrates that the resource is significant in some aspect of the nation's history. The City of Bismarck has two recognized historic districts: The Downtown Bismarck Historic District and the Cathedral Area Historic District.

Highland Acres was developed after World War II as a housing cooperative for returning World War II veterans. The development exemplifies post World War II land development patterns and was the first of its kind in North Dakota. It was platted as a subdivision in 1947 with curvilinear streets, cul-de-sacs and lots that follow the natural topography of the area. This development pattern is common now, but at the time was a departure from the gridded streets that were typical throughout Bismarck and North Dakota. The area also embodies the period of post-war prosperity and utilized national building programs that arose to address housing shortages in this and other regions.

The earliest constructed homes were modest and priced affordably for returning veterans. Over time, the cooperative dissolved. As the remaining lots were developed, many were designed and built by prominent architects in the mid-century modern style. Among a handful of architects that built their own homes and homes for others in Highland Acres were Robert Ritterbush, Donald Froeschle, and Arlo Beattie. These men were also responsible for the spread of the mid-century modern architecture style throughout the state.

Many of Bismarck's influential residents have lived or currently live in Highland Acres. Influential people associated with Highland Acres include former Bismarck Mayor Robert Heskin; oil man and philanthropist Frank Bavendick; Republican National Committee Chairwoman and political figure Geridee Wheeler; foreign-born Dutch Resistance fighter Dr. Pieter Smeenk; and attorney William Strutz.

The architectural survey has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, a division of the United States Department of Interior, and administered by the State Historical Society of North Dakota. The contents and opinions, however, do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Interior or the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

For more information, contact Will Hutchings, Planner with the City of Bismarck Community Development Department, at 701-355-1850 or the State Historic Preservation Office at 701-328-2089.

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