

City of Falls Church

Meeting Date: 01-16-24	Title: THE TINNER HILL HISTORIC & CULTURAL DISTRICT (AMENDMENT TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN)		Agenda No.: 01(a)
Proposed Motion: None, work session discussion.			
Originating Dept. Head: Paul Stoddard, AICP 703.248.5041 PS 1-10-2024	Lead Staff: Emily Bazemore (571) 421-7736 Cameron Gahres 571-419-7366 CJG – 1/9/24 Laura Arseneau 571-531-0607 LA- 1/9/2024		Disposition by Council:
City Manager: Wyatt Shields 703.248.5004 FWS 1-11-2024	City Attorney: Sally Gillette 703.248.5010 N/A	CFO: Kiran Bawa 703.248.5092 KB 1/11/24	City Clerk: Celeste Heath 703.248.5014 VP for CH 1/11/24

REQUEST: Council is requested to review and provide feedback on the draft Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The Amendment will formally establish the Tinner Hill District in the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Amendment includes a narrative history of the Tinner Hill community, a map of the proposed district, and strategies to activate the district.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council provide feedback related to:

- The Historic & Cultural District Map Boundaries– the Core and Outer Core
- Sites & Notable Figures highlighted within the district
- Activating the District Strategies

BACKGROUND: Staff proposes that the legacy of the Tinner Hill community and its ties to the Civil Rights Movement be commemorated through the establishment of a Historic & Cultural District.

Process

Following a recommendation required from the Planning Commission, the Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District Comprehensive Plan Amendment will be considered for final approval by Resolution and Ordinance.

Historical Commission Request

On April 17, 2023, the City of Falls Church Historical Commission submitted a memo (attached) to the City Council regarding establishing a Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District. The memo includes background information on Tinner Hill, potential boundaries of the proposed district, and notable sites that should be included.

History of Tinner Hill

The following information is sourced from “Tinner Hill: A Witness to Civil Rights” a historical document of the area prepared by Anna Buczkowska and Basem Saah of the Virginia Tech Landscape Architecture Program – Washington Alexandria Architecture Center in July 2011.

Following the Civil War, a local African American stone mason named Charles Tinner purchased property along the top of a hill in the southernmost portion of Falls Church. He subdivided the property into ten lots for his children. This established what is now the Tinner Hill Community. In the early twentieth century, African American Edwin Bancroft Henderson (E.B. Henderson) purchased a portion of nearby property to the Tinner Hill lots. E.B. and his wife Mary Ellen Henderson built their first home in 1913 adjacent to the Tinner Hill community.

In 1915, the Falls Church Town Council introduced discriminatory legislation that would prohibit African Americans from purchasing any new property within the town’s boundaries. The Colored Citizens Protective League (CCPL) was founded to fight this legislation. Members of the group included Charles Tinner’s son, Joseph Tinner, and E.B. Henderson. The group attended Town Council Meetings reading letters in opposition of the proposed ordinance. Despite their opposition, the Council voted to pass the legislation 4-1. Immediately following the passing of the segregation legislation, E.B. Henderson hosted a meeting of the CCPL at his home where the group decided to contact the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

E.B. Henderson wrote a letter to his friend, famed African American activist W.E.B. DuBois detailing the situation in Falls Church and need for additional assistance by the NAACP. Henderson was a member of the NAACP Washington Branch and inquired if the CCPL could become an affiliate of the group. The NAACP’s Secretary replied with information on how to organize a branch in Falls Church, and, if enough people joined, then the National Branch would consider their request. In the meantime, the CCPL was assisted by the NAACP lawyers to aid in their civil rights work at the local level.

For years the CCPL worked to fight for the rights of African Americans and prevent the enforcement of the segregation ordinance in Falls Church. The group saw victory in 1917 with the Supreme Court's ruling on *Buchanan v. Worley* which established that no state or municipality in the United States could create and enforce segregation districts – meaning the Falls Church ordinance was officially void.

In 1918, E.B. Henderson wrote the NAACP stating that due to the efforts of the CCPL the segregation ordinance was never enforced in Falls Church and that the group continued to be interested in being an affiliate. The NAACP wrote in response that the CCPL's effort had proven to be a success for the civil rights movement and the group should apply for national recognition. The CCPL's application was approved by the National NAACP Headquarters on July 17, 1918. The Falls Church NAACP led by Tinner and Henderson became the first rural branch of the NAACP in the United States.

Today the home of E.B. Henderson still stands and is occupied by E.B.'s grandson, Edwin Henderson. While his home no longer stands, Joseph Tinner's descendants still reside in the Tinner Hill community. The legacy of leadership, perseverance, and victory of these pioneers as well as others in the Civil Rights Movement is preserved and celebrated by the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation, established in 1997.

Tinner Hill Today and the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation

Tinner Hill is a community supported by the efforts of the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation (THHF), an organization with longstanding connections in the community. The THHF was founded in 1997 to preserve civil rights history in the Falls Church area. The THHF owns two properties with buildings that date to the Civil War and created the Tinner Hill Monument in 1999. The mission of the THHF is "History, Hope and Healing: Preserving and Presenting the African American Legacy and Promoting Racial Reconciliation in Northern Virginia."

The Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation hosts festivals, events, workshops, and educational opportunities in Falls Church and the Northern Virginia area. The Foundation's efforts and events are highlighted in the proposed amendment.

THE TINNER HILL HISTORIC & CULTURAL DISTRICT

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the official policy guide for shaping the future of the City. As proposed, the Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District would be included as part of the Comprehensive Plan in Chapter Three – *Community Character, Appearance, and Design*. Similar to the Arts & Culture District that the Council adopted in April 2021, the designation would be honorific, and would not impact zoning, permitting, or taxation.

The Virginia State Code Section § 15.2-943.1 enables localities to establish arts and culture districts:

A. Any locality, or combination of localities, may by ordinance, or in the case of multiple localities by substantially similar ordinances, establish within the boundaries of such localities one or more arts and cultural districts for the purpose of increasing awareness and support for the arts and culture in the locality. The locality may provide incentives for the support and creation of arts and cultural venues in each district. The locality may also grant tax incentives and provide certain regulatory flexibility in each arts and cultural district.

B. The tax incentives for each district may be provided for up to 10 years and may include, but not be limited to, (i) reduction of permit fees, (ii) reduction of user fees, (iii) reduction of any type of gross receipts tax, and (iv) rebate of real estate property taxes. The extent and duration of such incentive proposals shall conform to the requirements of the Constitutions of Virginia and of the United States.

C. Each locality may also provide for regulatory flexibility in each district that may include, but not be limited to, (i) special zoning for the district, (ii) permit process reform, (iii) exemption from ordinances, and (iv) any other incentive adopted by ordinance, which shall be binding upon the locality for a period of up to 10 years.

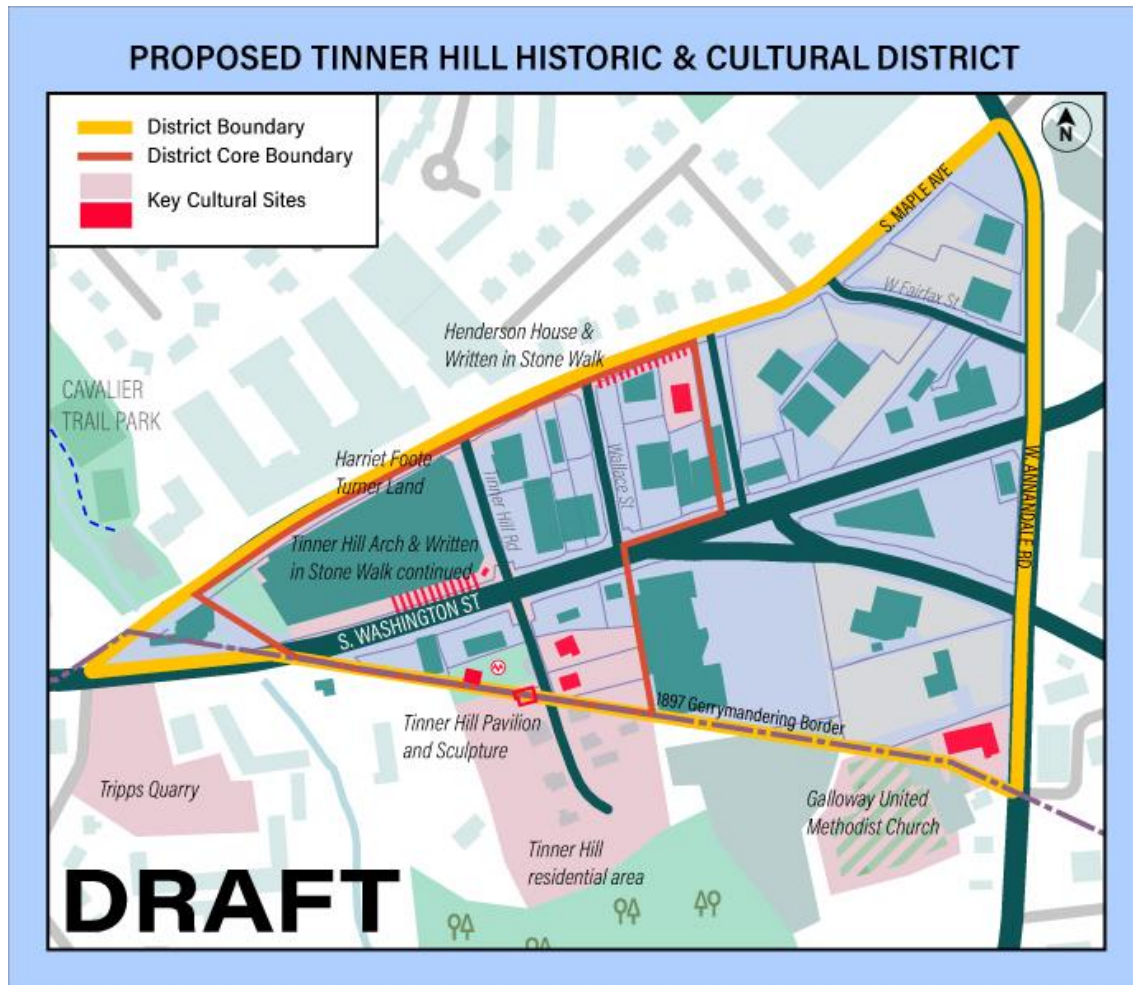
District Geography - the Core and Related Sites

The proposed district includes two areas – The Core area and Related Sites outside the core. The Core is a cluster of historic and cultural sites currently located in Tinner Hill that are significant to the original community. The following sites encompass the Core of the Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District:

- Charles and Mary Elizabeth Tinner House
- Joseph and Mary Tinner Home Outline (demolished)
- The Henderson House
- Tinner Hill Civil Rights Monument
- The Zig Zag (Adinkra) Sculpture
- Tinner Hill Historic Site Marker

Outside the core area of the Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District, are several related sites that are significant to the Tinner Hill community. The following significant sites are located outside the Core:

- Galloway Methodist Church (cemetery in Fairfax County)
- The Tripp Quarry – Trondhjemite (in Fairfax County)
- Written in Stone Walking Trail



Historic Figures

The draft amendment highlights several key leaders and historic figures associated with the Tinner Hill community. Brief biographies are included along with connections to the historic area and relates sites. The proposed amendment includes the following leaders and historical figures: Charles & Mary Elizabeth Tinner, Edwin Bancroft (E.B.) Henderson, Eliza Henderson, George & Harriet Brice, Harriet Foote Turner, Joseph Tinner, and Mary Ellen Henderson.

Activating the District

The Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District can help honor and celebrate the legacy of Tinner Hill. The proposed Amendment emphasizes celebrating the district through creative urban planning and urban design tools. Strategies for activation explored in this section include the following:

- Partner with the Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation to promote the District
- Promote Heritage Tourism
- Implement Historic and Cultural Placemaking Projects
- Explore Urban Design Opportunities
- Expand Public Art Efforts in the District

- Explore Branding for the District
- Elevate the District in Entitlement Projects and Site Plan Reviews
- Explore Potential Archaeological Significance

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no direct fiscal impact associated with the proposed Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District.

TIMING:

All upcoming dates are tentative and subject to change.

Historical Commission Memorandum to City Council	April 17, 2023
Tinner Hill Heritage Foundation Meeting (Outline & Map Review)	November 30, 2023
Historical Commission Meeting (Outline & Map Review)	December 14, 2023
City Council Kickoff Work Session	January 16, 2024
<i>Planning Commission Work Session</i>	<i>January 17, 2024</i>
<i>Economic Development Authority Meeting</i>	<i>February 6, 2024</i>
<i>Arts & Humanities Council Meeting</i>	<i>February 15, 2024</i>
<i>Historical Commission Meeting</i>	<i>February 22, 2024</i>
<i>City Council Work Session</i>	<i>April 2024</i>
<i>Planning Commission Work Session</i>	<i>April 2024</i>
<i>City Council 1st Reading and Referral to Planning Commission</i>	<i>April 2024</i>
<i>Walking Tour of the Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District</i>	<i>May 2024</i>
<i>Planning Commission Public Hearing/ Rec. to CC</i>	<i>May 2024</i>
<i>City Council Public Hearing & Final Consideration</i>	<i>May 2024</i>

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Staff and Background Materials
 - a. Tinner Hill Historic & Cultural District Comprehensive Plan Amendment
 - b. “Tinner Hill, Virginia – A Witness to Civil Rights”, produced by Virginia Tech (2011)
 - c. [South Washington Street Small Area Plan \(2013\)](#)
 - d. [Tinner Hill Film – 100 Years of Black Falls Church](#)
2. Board & Commission and Public Comments