

The Creation of a Drumheller Springs Conservation Park Historic District

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Hello Neighbors -

The future of our neighborhood's unique character needs to be protected by the City of Spokane's Historic Preservation Office and the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission. We need to begin this process before additional incompatible structures threaten our neighborhood's mid-century modern architecture and historic significance.

The Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office and the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission are local government programs that share responsibility for the stewardship of historic and architecturally significant properties within the City of Spokane. Spokane's historic districts are areas in which historic buildings and their settings are protected by public review. A district's boundaries must relate to the significance of the district and the "period of significance" of the district. Currently Spokane's historic districts encompass buildings deemed significant to the city's cultural fabric, however, I believe the historic significance of Drumheller Springs Conservation Park in addition to the classic 1950-1970 architecture of the area is also protected by the intent of the Historic District due to its contribution to the Spokane's cultural fabric.

Drumheller Springs Conservation Park is a historically significant property because of its rich Native American history, including Chief Spokane Garry operating a long house and school for Native Americans in 1870. Some historians claim that Garry was the "first schoolteacher" in Spokane country. Extensive Native American burial grounds were scattered over much the land above the spring. Drumheller Springs Conservation Park is the last remaining burial ground in the area not covered by city streets, shopping centers, and middle-class homes.

"This site has been a landmark in the Spokane area for decades. It was important to the aborigines because it was nearly the only available water on the North Hill; that is, the plateau extending for some four or five miles from the Spokane River to the foothills. It was particularly useful to the Indians because it lay beside a natural route or trail leading from the upper Spokane River to the Spokane House, Little Falls, and other down river areas. Countless Indian gatherings have been held there throughout the centuries. A branch of the Spokane Indian tribe made it its winter headquarters; and there are, consequently, numerous Indian burials in the immediate surroundings. Originally, the Indians gave it a name which is difficult to translate into English because it involved one of their complicated legends. Some early settlers referred to it as "Lone Pine"; and it is known by that name to many early settlers and their descendants. Other people referred to it as "Spring Hill." Still others have called it "Garry's Spring." More recently, however, it usually has been called "Drumheller Springs" for reasons hereinafter described.

-excerpted from United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form July 1969

The significance of Drumheller Springs Conservation Park was recognized by the Eastern Washington Historical Society when they purchased the property in 1968.

Additionally the Drumheller Springs Conservation Park district has had a continuing ecological significance in its unique contribution to migrating wildlife and vegetation. Drumheller Springs Conservation Park flourishes with more than 175 distinct plants.

“Water was by far the most important resource at the spring, but the land also provided an abundance of native foods, especially brown camas (*itxʷeʔ*, *camassia quamash*), bitterroots (*sp'eʌm*, *lewisia rediviva*), wild onions (*sehč*, *allium geyeri*), desert parsley (*sp'xʷenč*, *lomatium macracarpum*), and Indian carrots (*sʌuk'wɪm*, *perideridia gairdneri*). These plants were among the principal foods of the Spokane people, and at one time, they were quite abundant throughout the region. However, extensive urbanization has no doubt destroyed most indigenous habitats within the city limits. Drumheller Springs is among the last and best preserved urban sites where traditional foods are still found.” - excerpted from *s u l u s t u* Where Two Worlds Come Together by Barry Moses

A property included in a historic district, valued for its historical associations or architectural quality, is worth protecting because it is a virtue to the special and unique personality of the city.” (National Trust for Historic Preservation). A district's boundaries must relate to the significance of the district and the “period of significance” of the district. All properties within the proposed historic district must be photographed and have a resource sheet prepared and included with the nomination form. Specific design standards and guidelines must be prepared for the proposed district. In order to form a local historic district, a balloting process must be completed and requires approval by a majority of the property owners. For information about the creation of historic districts on the Spokane Register, you might consider reviewing the Historic Preservation ordinance in the Spokane Municipal Code. - excerpted from The Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office website

How a neighborhood becomes a historic district:

In 2015 neighbors in Browne's Addition were faced with unsightly growth that did not conform to the established architecture of their neighborhood. In response to this threat the Browne's Addition Neighborhood Council began work on nominating Browne's Addition as a local historic district. The process they undertook is documented here <https://www.historicspokane.org/pro-brownes>. In 2019 the district creation was successfully passed by property owners, and City Council passed the overlay for the historic district.

There are already several Spokane historic districts:

Spokane's Local Historic Districts:
Browne's Addition Local Historic District
Cannon Streetcar Suburb Local Historic District
Corbin Park Historic District
Hillyard Historic Business District
Comstock-Shadle Historic District
Booges Addition Historic District

Designating the Drumheller Springs Conservation Park neighborhood as a Spokane Registered Historic District would protect it from non conforming private development.

Conforming neighborhood development occurs thoughtfully “preserving the fabric that people love— homes with history, vital dwellings that preserve the past, while acknowledging modern lifestyles. Historic district designation can preserve the essential features of a neighborhood, while permitting contemporary improvements and additions that contribute to the historic character of the area.” - excerpted from The Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office website

Here are 10 points that outline the benefits of establishing a Drumheller Springs as a Historic District.

1. Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents of historic properties. Insensitive or poorly planned development can make an area less attractive to investors and homebuyers, and thus undermine property value. In contrast, historic district designation encourages people to buy and rehabilitate properties because they know their investment is protected over time.
2. Properties within local historic districts appreciate at rates greater than the local market overall as well as faster than similar, non-designated neighborhoods. Findings on this point are consistent across the country. Moreover, recent analysis shows that historic districts are also less vulnerable to market volatility from interest rate fluctuations and economic downturns.
3. Local districts encourage better quality design. In this case, better design equals a greater sense of cohesiveness, more innovative use of materials, and greater public appeal—all of which are shown to occur

more often within designated districts than non-designated ones.

4. Local districts help the environment. Historic districts encourage communities to retain and use their existing resources in established neighborhoods. This reduces the need for cars, cuts back on pollution and congestion, and eliminates landfill waste.

5. Local districts are energy-efficient. Many older buildings were designed with energy conservation in mind, taking advantage of natural light, cross-ventilation, and climate-appropriate materials. Preservation commissions are also increasingly improving their design guidelines to make it easier for historic building owners to use renewable-energy technologies.

6. Historic districts are a vehicle for education. They are a tangible link to the past and a way to bring meaning to history and to people's lives. They preserve the original character of buildings and streets, while welcoming growth and innovation within those spaces. They are a living, active record of communities and their residents.

7. Historic districts can positively impact the local economy through tourism. An aesthetically cohesive and well-promoted district can be a community's most important attraction. According to a 2009 report, 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers are cultural and/or heritage travelers who spent, on average, \$994 on their most recent trips—compared to \$611 spent by non-cultural and heritage travelers.

8. Protecting local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential. Vibrant commercial cores and charming neighborhoods with character attract new business and quality industry. Companies continually relocate to communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which successful preservation programs and stable districts enhance.

9. Local districts provide social and psychological benefits. People living in historic districts enjoy the comfort of a human-scale environment (a mix of aesthetics and functionality that fit the average person's dimensions and capabilities); the opportunity to live and work in attractive surroundings; a recognizable and walkable neighborhood; and the galvanizing effect of community-based group action.

10. Local districts give communities a voice in their future. By participating in the designation process, citizens can help direct their communities' path. Making these decisions together in a structured way—rather than behind closed doors or without public comment—gives everyone involved a sense of empowerment and confidence.

The better you can articulate the benefits of a local historic district, the more easily you'll attract and retain supporters.

- excerpted from The Spokane City/County Historic Preservation Office website

Resources:

City of Spokane's Historic Preservation Office and the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission <https://www.historicspokane.org/pro-brownes>

Browne's Addition Local Historic District Historic Preservation Office Nomination was prepared by Holly Borth - Historic Preservation Specialist and owner of Borth Preservation Consultant LLC. Contacting Holly about creating a Drumheller Springs Historic District might be beneficial if we decide to pursue this approach.



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About

With over eight years of professional experience in the Historic Preservation field, Holly has the education, experience, and skill set that will quickly add value to any organization. Holly has surveyed almost 3,000 historic resources in the City of Corvallis, over 1,000 in Clark County, and dozens throughout various portions of Oregon and Washington States. Holly has conducted historic resources as either part of the Section 106 process, Section 4(f), or as part of a SHPO grant-funded project to improve local zoning ordinances.

Your input is very appreciated. Thank you - 