

Windshield Survey of Historic Structures in Norwich Begins

Initial work is beginning on a comprehensive “windshield survey” to identify all historic structures and sites throughout the Town of Norwich. The purpose is to provide all of us with information about our town’s history and architecture, and to assist Town planners.

The “windshield survey” is so-named because it originally involved driving around and looking through the “windshield” to get a quick overall sense of the historic structures in an area. Over time it has evolved to mean a knowledgeable person with camera doing a quick overall inventory of a community or area. (It does not mean something will be left on your windshield nor will you be asked to fill out a survey!)

Photos will be taken from public ways of structures, as well as out-of-doors objects such as monuments. Caution will be used not to be on any private property without the permission of the owner. The photography is starting in late April and will continue over the next several months.

This initial survey will conclude with a community meeting in the fall to share information, as well as recommendations for more in depth survey work. It will also identify potential listings for the National Register of Historic Places. Such listings help to identify and recognize structures and places of historic importance across our country. They do not limit in any way what property owners can do with their property.

Currently Norwich has a large district listed on the National Register in 1991. This Village District includes 136 contributing buildings in our village center. The Beaver Meadow and Root School Houses were listed on the National Register in 2013.

The Norwich Historic Preservation Commission is carrying out the windshield survey with contractor Lyssa Papazian of Putney, who has extensive expertise in Vermont historic surveys. The windshield survey will also help test an iPad app for surveys that is being developed nationally.

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation is providing a grant of \$5,600 for the survey, using funds from the National Park Service. Members of the NHPC are donating their time and work as matching funds. The Norwich Historical Society is providing historic photos and other research material.

The NHPC previously developed the Norwich Historic Walking Tour brochure, available locally at Tracy Hall and the Norwich Inn. It also produced the exhibit “Cycles of Change, Farming in Norwich” in partnership with NHS; the exhibit continues at NHS through the summer.

If you would like further information please contact Peter Brink, Vice-Chair of NHPC, at 649-7029; Phil Dechert, Planning Director; members of NHPC: Bill Aldrich, Anne Silberfarb, Nancy Osgood, Cheryl Hermann, Stuart White & Roger Blake (Advisory); or Judy Brown, NHS Executive Director or Jane Korey, NHS President.

(rFinalWindshieldSurveyStatemt; April 29, 2015)