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Mayor and Town Council Members
PO Box 90003
Blacksburg, Virginia 24062-9003

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Dear Mayor and Council members,

As you may know, Hill Studio surveyed the Historic District (HD) in 2016 (report attached). Members of the Historic Design or Review Board are very concerned that without action from Town Council, the results and recommendations in the 2016 survey will not come to fruition. Some of you may not know that another HD survey was undertaken in 2006 and there was no action taken by Council to implement the recommended changes to contributing status or to update information/records in the HD zoning overlay. We are concerned that there are many more structures at risk in the HD if no action is taken by Council and we will certainly lose more structures in the HD. We have had the Hill Studio report since last summer, yet I have observed no sign of moving forward in the process (public hearing, etc.) toward getting the necessary public hearing on the Town Council agenda.

A good example of a property at risk of demolition is 202 Lee St., which was recently purchased by the Methodist Church. I have heard that they are interested in expanding their parking lot. Although that property was updated to contributing status in the **2006 survey**, the Town has not followed through with the process to include it in the HD zoning overlay as a contributing structure. This leaves 202 Lee St. with no protection against demolition.

I know when I first read the Hill Studio report I was a bit confused by the multiple surveys that have been conducted in the district and the process required to implement the survey results, etc., so I have spent some time making a summary of some key points in the Hill Studio report. My summary is attached to this email, as well. I hope my summary is accurate and think it may help everyone to get a better grasp of the survey history and make the Hill Studio report easier to understand.

Another extremely important point is that there are inaccuracies and mistakes in the original survey work and it is in the interest of the Blacksburg Historic District to get the most accurate and complete survey registered ASAP (think old National Bank of Blacksburg building mistakenly being left off of the contributing structures list) and certainly to update the list of contributing structures (41 additional structures to be updated as contributing based on the 2006 and 2016 surveys) as soon as possible so that these properties have some protection.

A third concern is that the most recent survey was made possible by a Certified Local Government grant through the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR). These grants are competitive and I am sure that the expectation of DHR is that the Town would take action on recommendations of a CLG-funded survey of a historic district. It is the aim of these grants to strengthen and expand local preservation programs and I think Blacksburg wants to remain competitive for future CLG grants.

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A fourth concern is that historic tax credits are available to structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and there are **three surveys** that have been undertaken in the HD and no nominations to the NRHP have followed from these surveys.

Our concern is that we have had 2 surveys performed since 2006 and no action by Council. I appreciate your consideration and attention to this matter that is so important to the Blacksburg Historic District and the members of the HDRB urge timely action to get this on the Town Council agenda and move toward expanding preservation in the HD and updating the NRHP nomination.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Elizabeth Bush', written in dark ink on a light background.

Elizabeth Bush, Chair HDRB

- 1986 original survey of structures in the historic district, plus ongoing survey 1989-90
 - “This survey work formed the basis for the Blacksburg Historic District [~137 contributing structures + ~57 non-contributing structures with a period of significance from 1789 to 1940], listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) in 1989 and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1991.” (Refer to attached Hill Studio report, Fig. 1.)
- 1996-1997 updated survey to include structures from **1940-1946** in the period of significance (I think these structures are included in the local HD overlay, but not nominated to the register [again, refer to Fig. 1].)
- In 1999 Blacksburg’s local Historic District was established.

TWO OTHER SURVEYS OF BLACKSBURG’S HISTORIC DISTRICT THAT HAVE NOT BEEN ADDED TO THE ZONING OVERLAY OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT; TOTAL OF 3 SURVEYS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN UPDATED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

- 2006 Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources + Town paid for another survey to be performed to include structures **pre-1957 (33 additional structures recommended to be contributing)** in the period of significance **BUT “Neither the period of significance nor the inventory in the NRHP Blacksburg Historic District nomination were updated to reflect the contributing/noncontributing status changes [from the 2006 survey].”** Nor were the 33 structures added to the HD overlay.
- 2016 Hill Studio survey: Major goals were to establish a consistent and complete historic district inventory and update old survey record and evaluate expanding the list of contributing structures to include a new period of significance
 - “Town of Blacksburg entered into a Cost Share agreement with VDHR to conduct a survey update for the NRHP Blacksburg Historic District. Through a competitive bidding process, VDHR and the Town retained Hill Studio of Roanoke, Virginia.”
- Some points from the 2006 and 2016 HD surveys and key recommendations from the Hill Studio 2016 survey
 - 2006 survey results: 24 + 9 or **33 structures** updated from non-contributing to contributing structures in the HD (Refer to Table 3 & 4 in the attached Hill Studio report) reflecting the **expanded period of significance to 1946**
 - 2016 survey results: **8 structures** updated from non-contributing to contributing in the HD (Refer to Table 2 in the attached Hill Studio report) to reflect an **expanded period of significance to 1965**
 - Update the National Register Nomination for the Blacksburg Historic District. **“This update to the NRHP nomination should be undertaken as soon as possible so that the survey information entered into the VCRIS database as part of this project will be current and accurate for the nomination.”**
 - Refer to Chapter 5 in the Hill Studio report to see all the recommendations.