

February 3, 2014

Len Sand
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Dear Mr. Sand:

The Lincoln Public Works & Utilities Dept. has asked me to report to you on historic resources in the projects planned by the City and by Nebraska Department of Roads on NW 48th Street in Lincoln, Nebraska, from West O Street on the south to West Adams Street on the north. I have also reviewed the vicinity of a proposed detour route associated with the projects utilizing West Holdrege St., NW 56th Street, and West Adams Street, and I have received and reviewed an archeological reconnaissance of the area by Nolan Johnson, highway archeologist with the Nebraska State Historical Society (attached).

I concur with Mr. Johnson's finding that there are no apparent archeological resources in the area that appear eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

The only NRHP-listed property in the general vicinity is the Lincoln Army Air Base (LAAB) Regimental Chapel at 4601 NW 48th Street, over a mile north of the West Adams St. intersection.

The other historic resource in the area recommended as eligible for NRHP listing is the Arnold Heights neighborhood, on the west side of NW 48th Street, extending north from West Adams approximately 6300 feet, and west from NW 48th 2445 feet. The area encompasses 350 acres, more or less, and contains approximately 1,000 housing units. It was constructed in 1955 and 1960 by the U. S. Air Force as housing for the Lincoln Air Force Base (LAFB), adjacent to the east of NW 48th Street. LAFB was a reactivation and rebuilding of the World War II-era LAAB, which had been deactivated in 1946. LAFB was authorized in 1952 and operated until deactivation in 1966.¹

Architect Selmer Solheim of Lincoln designed the first 400 units of LAFB housing, between West Adams and West Benton Streets. The Clark Enersen firm of Lincoln designed the second 600 units, authorized

¹ The Lincoln Air Force Base Online Museum, <http://www.lincolnafb.org/arnold.php>, accessed January 30, 2014.

by an act of Congress sponsored by Senator Homer Capehart of Indiana², hence the typical reference to Air Force housing areas of that era as “Capehart” developments. The housing is mostly single family and duplex in form, single-story “ranch” in style, with a variety of repeating designs. A few four-unit, two-story buildings were constructed along NW 54th Street in the second (1960) phase of development.

The south portion of the neighborhood is more curvilinear in layout and leaves open space behind the houses in many of the blocks, with dedicated walkways providing access to the interior open spaces from the streets. A wide drainageway extending east-west near the middle of the southern portion provides additional open space. Sidewalks are constructed on only a single side of most of the streets. Throughout the southern part of the development, most of the large original overstory trees are cottonwoods, along with a few catalpas.

North of West Benton, the street pattern is more rectilinear, with loops extending south from West Knight Road and west from NW 50th. The major open space of the north part is consolidated into Arnold Heights Park, which also provided a site for an elementary school (no longer extant). In the northern part of the area, oaks are prevalent on many streets.

Both of the development phases were laid out with the residential lots oriented inward, with all access to the area provided by streets off NW48th St. There are no entrances to the area from West Adams on the south or from the north or west. Only back yards line the lengths of West Adams and NW 48th, and the intersection of NW48th and West Adams abuts the acute angled corners of two house lots oriented in the opposite direction, towards the curved intersection of West Zeamer and NW 49th Streets.

Arnold Heights neighborhood is recommended as eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the Cold War LAFB. It is the most intact large unit of that locally significant military establishment. It is also recommended as eligible under Criterion C for landscape design, demonstrating two patterns of residential development in close proximity. The integrity of the individual houses of Arnold Heights varies considerably, but a high percentage demonstrate clearly the overall forms of the original construction, and the ensemble still conveys the major characteristics of their original development, despite new siding, windows, and modest additions on some of the houses.

When LAFB was deactivated, the housing area was platted as Arnold Heights Addition in 1970 and replatted in 1971. Lincoln Housing Authority (LHA) purchased most of the area to provide affordable housing. Exceptions to LHA ownership are Arnold Heights Park, dedicated to the City as a public park, and the school site, dedicated to Lincoln Public Schools. LHA still owns and maintains approximately half of the housing units. The suggested boundaries of the eligible historic district correspond to the 1971 replat, extending about 6290 feet north from the West Adams ROW along the west side of the NW 48th St. ROW, and extending 2429 feet west from NW 48th along the West Adams ROW.

² *Ibid.*

No other historic resources potentially eligible for the NRHP appear to exist along NW48th between West O and West Adams Street, or along the proposed West Holdrege/NW 56th/West Adams detour route. There are two small, mid-20th century residences at 1212 NW 48th St. and 1475 NW 48th Street that appear to date during or just after the construction period of Arnold Heights neighborhood. They do not appear to offer any characteristics of NRHP eligibility. On the detour route, there is one earlier 20th century farmhouse (ca. 1920) at 5805 West Holdrege, SW of the NW56th & West Holdrege intersection. It is a typical American Foursquare with some rear additions but overall good integrity. It has later outbuildings and does not constitute an intact historic farmstead. The quarter-section on which it stands was sold by John Bauer and wife to John G. Hellerich in 1924³ and the house remained in Hellerich family ownership at least until 2008⁴. It does not appear to possess NRHP-level significance.

The proposed NW 48th St. projects will utilize minor portions of the southeast corner of the Arnold Heights Addition at the NW 48th and West Adams intersection, using 10,097 sq. ft. (0.231 acres) for temporary construction easements, 2,261 sq. ft. (0.052 acres) of permanent easements for drainage systems, and permanently occupying 1,535 sq. ft. (0.035 acres) for permanent right-of-way. None of the permanent or temporary right-of-way acquisitions appear to materially change the significant characteristics of the potential historic district. No effect is anticipated on the LAAB Regimental Chapel, located more than a mile north of the project area.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Edward F. Zimmer, Ph.D.

Historic Preservation Planner

Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept.

For the City of Lincoln, a Certified Local Government



Attached:

Nolan Johnson archeological survey form

Illustrated Review of Historic Resources, NW48th St vicinity

³ Lancaster County Deed 247:610

⁴ Lancaster County Plat of Hellerich-Colgrove Addition, #08020833