

# KALAMAZOO HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2005

## INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the Kalamazoo Historic District Commission was 295 project applications for the 1,809 historic resources located in Kalamazoo's five locally designated historic districts. The commission meets every third Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. in the Commission chambers. Over the summer months, during the construction season, the commission also meets on the first Tuesday at the same time, as needed, to facilitate timely work on projects.

## NEW INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN

**Historic District Commission Newsletter:** For the third year, the Historic District Commission has published a newsletter covering historic district information and emphasizing the availability of the Michigan historic preservation income tax credits. This year three issues of the newsletter were mailed to almost 1,200 property owners in the five districts. This has been an immensely successful tool for the commission increasing awareness of the historic districts and encouraging compliance.

**Historic Preservation Tax Credit Information sessions:** The commission supports informational sessions on the Michigan historic preservation income tax credits. These sessions are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month in the Development Center east conference room. As a result, the number of tax credit applications originating with Kalamazoo rank second only to Detroit in Michigan. Since 1999, property owners in the Stuart, Haymarket and Vine historic districts have earned over a million dollars in tax credits representing over four million dollars of investment in the districts

## IMPORTANT DECISIONS RENDERED

According to Chapter 16 of the City of Kalamazoo Code of Ordinance, the charge of the Historic District Commission is:

Sec. 16-22. General powers and duties.

- 1) Historical preservation is a public purpose. To serve that purpose, the Historic District Commission is hereby charged with the following responsibilities:
  - (a) The Kalamazoo Historic District Commission is empowered to regulate Work on the exterior of historic resources and non-historic resources in historic districts in the City of Kalamazoo and shall otherwise have all powers invested in historic district commissions pursuant to the Local Historic Districts Act, MCL 399.201 et. seq. 1970 P.A. 169, as amended. (Adm. Code § A229.2)
  - (b) To regulate work on resources which, by city ordinance, are historic or non-historic resources located within local historic districts, including but not limited to the moving of any structure into or out of, or the building of any structure in, a historic district.

To fulfill that obligation the commission convened twelve regular meetings on the third Tuesday of the month.

Altogether, the full commission reviewed sixty-three applications for project review. Of these applications, seven were denied. Two of these were brought back to the commission with a revised application and were subsequently approved. One of the denials in 2004, the Greenbriar Apartment fence was appealed to the State Historic Preservation Review Board at a hearing in February 2005 and the commission's denial was upheld at the review boards meeting in May 2005..

In their appeal, The Greenbriar owners, Trident Development, maintained that the HDC had arbitrarily denied the fence since the Greenbriar Apartments are not historic structures and that the historic district standards are not applicable. The commission denied the fence because of the impact of an eight-foot tall chain link fence on the surrounding historic properties. The Review Board supported that decision with a unanimous vote in May 2005. Since then, the owners of the Greenbriar apartments have reapplied and their new proposals were unanimously approved by the HDC.

Another denial of the installation of a barrier free ramp at 1007 South Westnedge in the South St.-Vine Area Historic District, has given the commission the opportunity to open up better communications with Kalamazoo County Community Mental Health. The commission hopes to facilitate CMH in providing expedited review for barrier free projects.

In 2005 the historic preservation coordinator reviewed and administratively approved 232 applications and the full commission reviewed 63 with six denials for a total of 295 applications for project review. The commission and the coordinator approved over 98% of the applications submitted. Nationally an average of 95% of applications to historic district commissions are approved.

## **STATUS OF PROJECTS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED TO THE COMMISSION**

### **Preservation Awards**

For the ninth year, two Historic District Commission members worked with the Historic Preservation Commission in identifying candidates for the HPC's annual Preservation Awards for buildings, people and projects that promoted historic preservation in the city of Kalamazoo. In 2005 the awards for projects in 2004 went to:

- Residential Property – rental – **621 West Kalamazoo**, owners **Steve Sattem and Jim Cavender**. Built around 1900, the house was covered in cement-asbestos siding and experienced long term deferred maintenance as a rental property. Sattem and Cavender stripped the siding, re-roofed and re-decked, rebuilt deteriorated attic windows and restored the front steps to their original location centered on the front of the house. (Stuart Area Historic District)
- Individuals or institutions – **DKI Building Revitalization Program** – Since 1999, DKI has offered façade grants through their Building Revitalization Program. As of year-end 2004, DKI had invested \$1.8 million in key downtown buildings. The total investment (including these grants) on the part of the program participants has been over \$22 million. This represents a 12 to 1 return on investment and is a spectacular example of the power of leveraging investment with grant money. This program has assisted projects, which, in the past, have been nominated for or

received the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Awards of Merit. And, delightfully, buildings outside the Haymarket historic district have also benefited with historically appropriate rehabilitation of their facades.

- Commercial/Institutional/Government - Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (Nominated by the Edison Neighborhood Association - ENA) Working together with the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, the Community Planning and Development Department and Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services, the Edison Neighborhood Association identified a house at the east end of Hays Park to be rehabilitated for use as a Community Police Officer station. This rehabilitated house at 1427 Hays Park will remain as a public safety station for three years and then will be sold to a qualified low-income family. This station will provide a stabilizing influence on this fragile neighborhood.
- Mixed Use – Commercial and Residential – Arlington Hotel/Bimbos & Club Soda; owners **Ron and Matthew Smilanich**. With the assistance of a grant from DDA Project Review, the exterior of this building has been transformed. A modern garage on the west side has been removed, bricks repaired and repointed, the cornice repaired and windows rehabilitated. The most impressive rehabilitation involves the restoration of the original storefronts, based on an excellent set of historic photos. The brick infill has been removed and storefronts restored. New, historically appropriate signs hang over the sidewalk. (Haymarket Historic District)
- Residential Property – owner occupied – **624 South Westnedge**, owner **Dwight Theodore**. Since 1992, owner Dwight Theodore has worked on rehabilitating this house, converting it from a multi-family rental back to a single family home. Beginning with a new roof, he also removed the existing cement-asbestos siding and the Permastone veneer on the front porch and upper front façade. He has re-installed missing windows, removed exterior stairs and inappropriate additions, repointed the foundation and opened up the porch. (South Street-Vine Area Historic District)

## **SUMMARY**

The Historic District Commission feels that the built environment provides an important sense of place and adds to the vitality and diversity of the community. The historic districts continue to speak for the past as the city moves towards the future. The Historic District Commission looks forward to continuing its role in preserving our architectural heritage.

Submitted December 21, 2005

Sharon Ferraro

Historic Preservation Coordinator