

KALAMAZOO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Introduction

In 2005, the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission was involved in a wide variety of projects including education, publication, awards, historical resource surveys and rehabilitation advice.

NEW INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN

The duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, as defined in Article V of the Code of Ordinance of the City of Kalamazoo are:

“It shall be the duty of the Commission to prepare and keep current an inventory of historic resources within the city which, in its judgment, have such value as to warrant preservation and/or redevelopment; to publish such inventory; and to cooperate with owners of such resources in devising and carrying out appropriate means for their preservation and/or redevelopment. The commission shall also encourage the collection of materials illustrative of the history of Kalamazoo and encourage their deposit into public or educational institutions within the city or the state that the commission deems most suitable for their preservation and use. The commission may support and produce historical publications. The commission shall cooperate with the city in preserving official documents and records so that they may be available for public use. The commission shall be responsible for the coordination and nomination of National Register and state register historic districts, sites and/or individual properties, and may support the creation of local historic districts. The commission shall encourage and promote historic preservation and educate the public on preservation wherever possible. The commission may support the inclusion of historic preservation concepts in planning and land use; and carry out other activities as assigned by the city.”

In support of the duties described above, the commission undertook a variety of projects in 2004:

“The commission may support and produce historical publications”:

Published late in 2001, *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found* has sold over 4500 copies. In the summer of 2005, 5000 copies of a second printing were delivered. In addition, a 2006 *Kalamazoo: Lost and Found* calendar is available with photos and text from the book.

“... inventory of historic resources within the city which, in its judgment, have such value as to warrant preservation and/or redevelopment; to publish such inventory; and to cooperate with owners of such resources in devising and carrying out appropriate means for their preservation.” And ***“The commission shall be responsible for the coordination and nomination of National Register and state register historic districts, sites and/or individual properties, and may support the creation of local historic districts”:***

1. Washington Square – a National Register nomination for the commercial district has been written. The nomination was promoted to the Washington Square business owners in November 2005. The nomination will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office by spring 2006. This will make the Rehabilitation Investment Income Tax Credit available to business owners in Washington Square as it re-emerges as a vital commercial district.
2. Burdick-South National Register nomination. This small commercial district was nominated to the national Register of Historic Places in September 2005 and was accepted in a unanimous vote of the State Historic Preservation Review Board. The commission expects confirmation of the listing from the National Park Service by the end of 2005.
3. In December 2004, the city commission appointed a Historic District Study Committee to study possible expansion of local historic districts and/or the creation of new local historic districts. The Historic Preservation Commission and the historic preservation coordinator in Community Planning and Development have received letters from the following entities asking that their buildings or neighborhoods be added to Kalamazoo’s local historic districts:
 - a. The Marlborough Apartments – 471 West South
 - b. The Rhodes Block – a block of four buildings on the southeast corner of West North and Douglas – to be added to the Stuart Area Historic District.
 - c. West main Hill Neighborhood – In a recent neighborhood survey, 61% of the respondents favored designating their neighborhood as a local historic district. The neighborhood is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

“The commission shall encourage and promote historic preservation and educate the public on preservation wherever possible”:

1. The commission has provided financial support for the Old House Network, a non-profit extending knowledge of rehabilitation of historic homes to the greater Kalamazoo area. Founded in 2002 with a Good Neighbor grant from the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, the Network holds hands-on workshops and regular educational presentations on topics from window repair to researching old house histories to safety and security.
2. In cooperation with the Northside Association for Community Development, the Old House Network and the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, window specialist Jim Turner taught a one day workshop on window rehabilitation on site at the NACD owned house at 727 North Westnedge. Attendees learned how to install new sash ropes and replace broken glass and putty.
3. On May 11, 2005, the commission sponsored Historic District Commissioner Training with an instructor supplied by the Michigan Historic Preservation Network. Thirty-seven commissioners from seven southwest Michigan communities attended to learn about the process of defensible decision making in historic districts.
4. For the eighth 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 2004 the awards for projects in 2003 went to:
 - Residential Property – rental – **621 West Kalamazoo**, owners **Steve Sattem and Jim Cavender**. (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. The most impressive rehabilitation involves the restoration of the original storefronts, based on an excellent set of historic photos. (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 and opened up the porch. (South Street-Vine Area Historic District)

The commission shall also encourage the collection of materials illustrative of the history of Kalamazoo and encourage their deposit into public or educational institutions within the city or the state that the commission deems most suitable for their preservation and use.

Building on work in 2004 to digitize previous historic resource surveys, the Kalamazoo Public Library is integrating the material into their website, making this material readily accessible to the public.

The commission may support the inclusion of historic preservation concepts in planning and land use... ”

Over the past several years, the commission has consistently expressed concern about the ongoing loss of important historic properties. As Kalamazoo moves away from its industrial past, the surviving manufacturing buildings are being demolished. The commission would like to establish preservation of the city’s remaining historic properties become an integral part of new planning. In 2005, these historic resources were demolished:

Bryant Paper Mill – aka Performance Paper: Once the largest paper mill in the city, this 27 acre complex of late 19th century and early 20th century paper mills has been reduced to a single structure. (Demolition except the power house completed in early 2005.)

Kalamazoo Tank and Silo – In the nineteenth century only factories wanted to be located on the side of the river. As times and tastes change, along with the efficiency of waste treatment, what was once the least desirable land has become sought after. (Demolition completed in late summer 2005.)

“... cooperate with owners of such (historic) resources in devising and carrying out appropriate means for their preservation...”

The commission has conducted a detailed structural inventory of the current condition of the Fountain of the Pioneers (Iannelli Fountain) in Bronson Park preparatory to seeking additional grant funds and providing specifications for Phase II repairs. The commission is consulting Nehil-Sivak to produce a recommendation for repairs.

At its December meeting, the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission unanimously approved a motion that the Fountain of the Pioneers, also known as the Iannelli Fountain, in Bronson Park, should be unaltered, that funds should be found to restore the sculpture and fountain and that appropriate interpretive markers be installed to address the history of the Potawatomi in southwest Michigan along with information the fountain, the process by which it was built and the artist, Alfonso Iannelli. The commission has worked closely with the city of Kalamazoo over the past four years to restore the fountain, especially in the decision making process in administering an \$85,000 State of Michigan Arts, Cultural and Quality of Life Grant in cooperation with the Public Works Department. Throughout the planning cycle for utilizing this grant for repairs to the fountain pools and the sculpture in the west pool, the sub-committee frequently expressed the opinion that interpretive markers for the fountain would be an important addition to the park.

CONCERNS

The commission expressed concern about three specific sites within the city:

- **Kahn/Upjohn Tower – East Lovell and Henrietta** – The irrevocable loss of this tower, designed by one of America’s premiere industrial architects, has permanently altered Kalamazoo’s skyline. When Pfizer demolished the tower, the city lost a unique piece of architectural history as well as a multi-million dollar opportunity for re-investment in the downtown.
- **100 Block of East Michigan (north side):** The commission perceives that growing development pressure downtown may endanger these historic commercial buildings and has expressed grave concern for the future of these buildings in its annual report for the last three years. The historic preservation commission believes that redevelopment in a thriving downtown should allow for the retention of the buildings, especially if they are added to the adjacent Haymarket Historic District to add the incentive of tax credits for their redevelopment. These four smaller historic buildings represent the last opportunities for small-scale investors downtown.
- **Fountain of the Pioneers:** The commission strongly supports retaining the fountain and sculpture with the addition of an interpretive plaque or marker discussing the history of the Potawatomi and their transportation from Kalamazoo in 1840 as well as the fountain itself and Iannelli’s design.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The commission wishes to thank former City Manager Pat DiGiovanni, City Manager Ken Collard and Community Planning and Development Deputy Director Jeff Chamberlain for their continuing support and encouragement; Karleen Steppenwolf for record keeping and Catherine Larson and Beth Timmerman at the Kalamazoo Public Library for facilitating the inclusion of Kalamazoo historic survey reports in their website.

CONCLUSION

Historic preservation is a vital part of community character enhancing not only our environment, but also our economic development. The recent announcement of the Kalamazoo Promise opens the door to further promotion of Kalamazoo’s unique collection of historic resources. Preservation has been proven nationwide to retain more development money in the local area, improves property values and enhances the experience of living and working in the city as well as offering opportunities for the smaller scale investor. The City of Kalamazoo can look with pride

at the handsome, restored, historic buildings along East Michigan and at the Stuart and Vine neighborhoods and their steady improvement. Much more of our city could be protected and should be preserved and the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission is proud to be part of that process.

Respectfully submitted,

December 15, 2005

Sharon Ferraro, Historic Preservation Coordinator