

KALAMAZOO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Introduction

In 2006, the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission was involved in a wide variety of projects including a Historic District Study Committee, a National Register nomination, 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”:

The commission is continuing to sell their most recent publication, Kalamazoo: Lost and Found which is in its second printing.

“... 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. 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. When the nomination was

submitted to the national Park Service in March 2006, the keeper of the National Register returned the nomination for revisions. The nomination is being revised.

2. 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 committee studied these proposed districts and buildings:
 - 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 – 270 properties bounded by West Michigan, West Main and the City Limits not including Kalamazoo College.
 - d. The Citizens Railway Streetcar Barn at 1308 Cameron
 - e. The David Lilienfeld House at 447 West South
 - f. The Nelson-Kirkpatrick House at 2104 Sheffield

On July 20th, 2006 a public hearing attracted 30 property owners and interested parties to comment on the proposed districts. On November 2, 2006, the Planning Commission approved the proposed historic districts. The final step is presenting the study committee report to the City Commission for a public hearing. If approved by the commission, exterior alterations to properties located in the new historic districts would be reviewed by the Historic District Commission and owners would be eligible for Michigan Historic Preservation Income Tax Credits.

“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. In 2006, the commission helped the Network by paying part of the speaker’s fee for nationally known preservationist and old house rehabilitation specialist Bob Yapp. Mr. Yapp presented a free community wide presentation at the County Center Building on January 21st and also participated as the keynote speaker at the Old House Expo, held the following day.
2. Assisted in planning Kalamazoo's first ever "Great Unveiling" removing the siding from a Queen Anne House at 914 S. Westnedge. In cooperation with the Old House Network and Vine Ventures, over two dozen volunteers removed the siding on the two and a half story house in a little over four hours.
3. On February 21, 2006, the commission sponsored Historic District Commissioner Training with instructor Kristine Kidorf from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network. Twenty-nine commissioners from four southwest Michigan communities attended to learn about the process of defensible decision making in historic districts.
4. Advised Kalamazoo Public Library staff on new books to purchase to make preservation and how-to resources on old house rehabilitation more easily available to the public.
5. 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 2006 the awards for projects in 2005 went to:
 - 1) Commercial/Institutional/Government – 402 East Michigan – Grand Rapids and Indiana Depot - Owner: Depot Landmark LLC. In addition, the Michigan Historic Preservation Network honored the project with an award at their annual conference in April.

- 2) Residential Property – rental – 830 West Main - owned by Brian Spaulding (Stuart Historic District.)
- 3) Residential Property – owner occupied – 305 Stuart - owner Ryan Mervyn (Stuart Historic District.)
- 4) Individuals or institutions – Southwest Builders - Over the last six years, Pat Halpin and Southwest Builders have taken on several projects in downtown Kalamazoo. including the Style Shop building at 217 South Kalamazoo Mall which won a Historic Preservation Award of Merit, and the Arcadia Condominiums at 222 North Kalamazoo Mall. (Koopsen’s Building/ Woodbury Block)
- 5) Interior rehabilitation – *The Historic Preservation Commission decided to add a new award category for 2006. Interior rehabilitation of historic buildings is generally less visible to the public, but demonstrates that historic preservation is more than the exterior shell of the building.*
 - i) Restoration - 430 Elm St – Home of Sharon Carlson & Tom Dietz
 - ii) Mixed - 244 East Michigan - Josh & Christine Willson. The award for interior rehabilitation is for the Button-Jannasch Block at 244 East Michigan. In addition to this award from the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission, this project also received an award from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network at their annual conference in April.
 - iii) Adaptive Use - 222 N. Kalamazoo Mall - Hospice Care of SW Michigan

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 it 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. The commission would like to establish preservation of the city’s remaining historic properties become an integral part of new planning.

In 2006, this historic resource was demolished:

Park Building – 130 West South – demolished to allow the construction of a combination parking ramp and office building. This sound, fully tenanted masonry building, originally constructed in 1904, was demolished for new construction. The commission feels that the existing building could have been integrated into the project or the project could have been reconfigured to retain the Park Building. The building was part of a proposed National Register Historic District. Its demolition required revising the nomination for the Burdick-South National Register Historic District.

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

The commission has sent a representative to the ad hoc committee reviewing the Fountain of the Pioneers. The commission feels that the Fountain of the Pioneers,, designed by Alfonso Iannelli 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 about the fountain, the process by which it was designed and built and about the artist, Alfonso Iannelli.

The commission has endorsed a condition assessment report by Tom Nehil of Nehil-Sivak consulting engineers. Mr. Nehil's report recommended further technical study including concrete coring and petrography, fountain plumbing and circulation review and a proposed cover for the fountain to protect it from the destructive actions of the freeze-thaw cycle.

CONCERNS

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

- **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 four years. The Historic Preservation Commission believes that redevelopment in a thriving downtown should allow for the retention of the buildings, especially if they are included in the adjacent Haymarket Historic District to add the incentive of Federal and state tax credits for their redevelopment. These four smaller historic buildings represent the last opportunities for small-scale investors downtown and the commission believes that they should be offered for sale individually for redevelopment.
- **Fountain of the Pioneers:** The Historic Preservation Commission strongly supports retaining the fountain and sculpture with the addition of an interpretive plaque or marker discussing the history of the Pottawatomi and their transportation from Kalamazoo in 1840 as well as the fountain itself and Alfonso Iannelli's design.
- **The State Theater:** The Historic Preservation Commission expresses concern about the slow deterioration of this architectural gem. Although the building was determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, it was not listed at that time. The Historic Preservation Commission recommends listing this building on the National Register and adding it to the local historic districts as a single resource district.
- **Power House at the Bryant Mill Site** – This last remnant of Kalamazoo's first large scale paper mill still stands, waiting for final state funding of its demolition. Understanding that the building is a contaminated site, the commission would be gratified if some way could be found to redevelop the building rather than demolish it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Historic Preservation Commission makes the following recommendations to the city commission in the coming year, asking for their support for these projects:

1. Revision of the Downtown Design Review Guidelines to require pedestrian active spaces on the ground floor of any new buildings and to protect our remaining downtown historic buildings. Over 50% of the buildings that existed downtown in 1950 are now gone, with less than half replaced by new structures.
2. To address the same goal of protection, the city should explore stronger demolition controls through ordinance revisions allowing historic buildings more protection and considering protection of non-historic sound commercial buildings, especially in the central business district.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Historic Preservation Commission wishes to thank City Manager Ken Collard and Community Planning and Development Director Jeff Chamberlain for their continuing support and encouragement; Karleen Steppenwolf for record keeping and Beth Timmerman and Catherine Larson 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.

February 27, 2007

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Ferraro, Historic Preservation Coordinator