

**CITY OF KALAMAZOO**  
**COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2007**

**Introduction**

In 2007, the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission was involved in a wide variety of projects including establishing five new historic districts, education, publication, awards, historical resource surveys and rehabilitation advice.

**New Initiatives Undertaken**

The duties of the Historic Preservation Commission are defined in Article V of the Code of Ordinance of the City of Kalamazoo. In support of its duties, the commission undertook a variety of projects in 2007:

***“The commission may support and produce historical publications”:***

- The commission continued selling their most recent publication, Kalamazoo: Lost and Found which is in its second printing.
- The commission began exploring a partnership with the Kalamazoo County Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (KCCVB) to reformat its historic walking tour brochures and make them available on the City of Kalamazoo and KCCVB websites.
- The commission received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Daniel Thorne Fund to publish an informational brochure tentatively entitled “Where Place Prospers”. This brochure will collect information on economic development tools for urban, commercial buildings that encourage historic preservation and adaptive re-use using case studies to illustrate the different tools such as brownfields, Federal and state Rehabilitation Incentive Tax Credits and other tools.

***“... 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”:***

The City Commission unanimously approved establishing the following, new historic districts on 04/30/07:

- Marlborough Apartments – 471 W. South Street
- 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
- West Main Hill Neighborhood – 270 properties bounded by W. Michigan Avenue, W. Main Street and the City Limits, not including Kalamazoo College
- Citizens Railway Streetcar Barn – 1308 Cameron Street
- David Lilienfeld House – 447 W. South Street
- Nelson-Kirkpatrick House – 2104 Sheffield Avenue

In addition, the City Commission approved an ordinance change that appointed the HPC as a permanent historic district study committee in compliance with the requirements of Public Act 169.

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

- The HPC 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. The HPC helped the Network by paying the speaker’s fee for Jim Turner of Turner Restoration to participate as the keynote speaker at the Old House Expo, held on 01/20/07.
- On 06/21/07, the HPC co-sponsored an Historic District Orientation for property owners in the new and existing local historic districts.
- For the eighth year, the HPC worked with members of the Historic District Commission to identify candidates for the HPC’s annual Preservation Awards of Merit for buildings, people and projects that promoted historic preservation in the city of Kalamazoo. The awards went to:

**RESIDENTIAL**

- 422 Stuart – Jonathan O’Brien and Amelia Katanski
- 704 Axtell – Pat and Tracy Bullard
- 714 Dutton Place – Nora Chaus

**INDIVIDUAL**

- Fire Marshall Marty Myers - Fire sprinkler installation grants
- Transportation Director Bill Schomish - Intermodal transportation center addition and rehabilitation of an historic structure

**INSTITUTIONAL EXTERIOR**

- Intermodal transportation center addition and exterior rehab of historic station

**INSTITUTIONAL INTERIOR**

- Intermodal transportation center - interior rehab of historic station

***“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 HPC worked with the Kalamazoo Public Library to integrate 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 HPC 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 as an integral part of new planning and pursue ordinance-driven requirements for the retention of identified historic properties.

In November 2007, the HPC worked with a professional facilitator to hold a planning retreat, articulating their goals and objectives for the next year and further into the future.

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

The HPC continued to participate in the deliberations of its ad hoc committee reviewing the Fountain of the Pioneers by sending a representative to the meetings. The HPC felt that the Fountain of the Pioneers, designed by Alfonso Iannelli, should be unaltered and that funds should be found to restore the sculpture; that interpretive markers or monuments should be installed to address the history of the Potawatomi in southwest Michigan; and that an historical marker should be installed to interpret the fountain, including the process by which it was designed and built and about the artist. The HPC worked closely with Tom Nehil of Nehil-Sivak consulting engineers to continue studying the fountain and to pursue its repair, with the completion in 2007 of the concrete coring and petrographic analysis and exploration of options for protecting the fountain from freeze-thaw damage.

Throughout 2007, the HPC has facilitated the awareness and education campaign and the condition assessment for the State Hospital Water Tower. A beloved icon of Kalamazoo, the HPC feels that the city should continue to act as fiduciary agent and facilitator for preserving this unique building until an appropriate non-profit entity is formed.

### **Concerns**

The HPC expressed concern about three specific sites within the city in 2007:

- **100 Block of E. Michigan Avenue (north side):** The HPC perceives that growing development pressure downtown may endanger these historic commercial buildings, and has expressed grave concern for their future in its annual report for the last five years. The HPC believes that redevelopment in a thriving downtown should allow for the retention of these buildings. Including them in the adjacent Haymarket Historic District would add the incentive of federal and state tax credits for their redevelopment. Implementing property tax incentives such as Michigan’s Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Act would also be useful to their preservation. These four smaller historic buildings represent some of the last opportunities for small-scale downtown investment, and the HPC believes that the private owner should offer them for sale, individually for redevelopment.
- **The State Theater:** The HPC 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 HPC 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 HPC would be gratified if some way could be found to redevelop the building rather than demolish it.

### **Recommendations**

The HPC makes the following recommendation to the City Commission for the coming year: To address the goal of protection, the city should explore stronger demolition controls through ordinance revisions allowing historic buildings more protection and considering protection of sound, non-historic commercial buildings, especially in the central business district.

### **Acknowledgements**

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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 the Library's website.

### **Conclusion**

Historic preservation is a vital part of community character, enhancing both our existing built environment and future development. Preservation has been proven nationwide to retain more development money in the local area, to improve property values and to enhance 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 E. Michigan Avenue and at the steady improvement of the Stuart and Vine neighborhoods. Much more of our city could be protected and should be preserved and the HPC is proud to be part of that process.