

**CITY OF KALAMAZOO  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2008**

**Introduction**

In 2008, the Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission was involved in a wide variety of projects including public education, publication, awards, historical resource surveys and rehabilitation advice.

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 or continued a variety of projects in 2008:

***“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 published 2500 copies of a new informational brochure entitled “Where Place Prospers” with the help of received a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Daniel Thorne Fund. The 17-page, full color brochure collected 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. Copies of the brochure were mailed to all downtown property owners and distributed through Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated and the City of Kalamazoo.

***“... 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 Historic Preservation Commission recommended that the 2009 city budget include funds for an updated Reconnaissance level Historic Resources Survey of the entire city. The last survey began in 1999 and was completed in 2001.

In December 2008, acting in its capacity as a Historic District Study Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission accepted the request of Housing Resources Inc to designate the Rickman House as a single resource Local Historic District, like the Marlborough apartments and the Kalamazoo House. This will allow the owners to utilize the enhanced Michigan Historic Preservation Income Tax Credit along with the Federal Rehabilitation tax credit for their planned renovations on the Rickman House.

***“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 and their annual Old House Expo. The Old House Network is a 501c3 and a Michigan non-profit corporation devoted to increasing knowledge of traditional materials and techniques for maintaining and repairing

historic houses in southwest Michigan. The HPC helped underwrite the expenses for the Old House Expo, held on 01/19/08.

- For the ninth 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:

#### INDIVIDUAL

- Dr. Peter Schmitt – historian for his outstanding work in laying the foundation for Kalamazoo's historic districts
- Nelson Nave, AIA – architect for his unwavering support of preservation and his exceptional designs for over two dozen historic buildings in Kalamazoo.
- Jon Stryker – for numerous projects, the most recent being the 401 Building on the northeast corner of North Pitcher and East Michigan

#### INSTITUTIONAL EXTERIOR

- 309 N. Burdick Street – The Burdick Block (This was also the site of the awards ceremony)

***“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 2008, the HPC worked with their Action Plan, designed by facilitator Alan Levy. The action plan articulates 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. Working with the Nehil-Sivak engineering firm the commission assembled a condition assessment report for the fountain. Part of their Action Plan calls for working in 2009 to identify possible grant sources and apply.

Throughout 2008, the HPC has facilitated the awareness and education campaign and the condition assessment for the State Hospital Water Tower. The city is acting again as fiduciary agent and facilitator accepting a grant for the preparation of plans and specifications for preparing an RFP in the near future.

#### **Concerns**

The HPC expressed concern about three specific sites within the city in 2008:

- **100 Block of E. Michigan Avenue (north side):** The HPC has expressed grave concern for the future of these five buildings in its annual report for the last five years. The HPC was very excited to hear of a serious developer interested in rehabilitating the buildings, which represent the last undeveloped historic buildings in downtown Kalamazoo. The commission stands ready to assist in designating these buildings in support of their rehabilitation.
- **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.
- **East Campus of Western Michigan University** – In 2008, the university moved all university activities from the East Campus hilltop buildings except the regional archives. The Commission is pleased to note that the university has called together an East Campus Task Force to address a future use of the buildings.

### **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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### **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 and provide more jobs 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 East 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 HPC is proud to be part of that process.