

**CITY OF KALAMAZOO
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT
2009**

Introduction

In 2009, 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 2009:

“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”:

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.

In the spring of 2009, the commission determined that the South Burdick Local Historic District, established in 1996, should be eliminated since two of the three buildings comprising the district have been demolished.

Additionally Downtown Tomorrow Inc, the owners of the 100 block of East Michigan, officially requested that the four buildings be designated historic to facilitate their redevelopment on July 31, 2009.

“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 01/23/10.
- The HPC provided a \$500 grant to the city of Kalamazoo to help in the production of “1884” a video celebrating Kalamazoo’s 125th anniversary as a city. Over the latter half of the year, the commission sold over 60 copies of the video to the public.
- For Preservation Month in May 2009, the commission organized an exceptional schedule of twelve events, partnering with the Kalamazoo Public Library, Kazoo Books, Old House Network, Eckert-Wordell Architects, Gazelle Sports Historic Walking Tours, Friends of Historic East Campus, the Southwest Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, Kalamazoo Nature Center’s Terry Todd International Speaker Series, and the Kalamazoo Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.
- For the tenth 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:

INSTITUTIONAL EXTERIOR

- 401 East Michigan – known as Food Dance
- The new barrier free ramp on the south side of City Hall

HOUSES

- 3434 Madison – A Sears Kit House
- 628 S. Park – R. Dexter Walker House – built in 1853

“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...”
Members of the commission have attended the public meetings for the Master Plan.

“... 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 2010 to identify possible grant sources and make applications.

Concerns

The HPC expressed concern about two specific sites within the city in 2009:

- **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 to maintain the tax base.

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, at the steady improvement of the Stuart and Vine neighborhoods and the preservation of the West main Hill neighborhood. Much more of our city could be protected and should be preserved and HPC is proud to be part of that process.

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Ferraro
Historic Preservation Coordinator