
*Village of Oak Park
Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan
Community Workshop #3
March 17, 2010
7-9PM
Beye Elementary School*

The Village of Oak Park engaged Business Districts, Inc. (BDI) in August 2009 to develop a Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan. The final plan, to be completed in spring 2010, will guide the Village's historic preservation work through the next decade. Prior to this March 17 workshop, a draft final plan was submitted to Village staff, the Plan project Steering Committee, and the Historic Preservation Commission for review and comment. The draft plan will remain available for public comment on the Village's project web page through April 2010.

This was the third, and final workshop, scheduled for this historic preservation planning process, and the content of this workshop was based upon the strategies identified in the draft final plan. The purpose of this final workshop was twofold--to confirm plan strategies and to identify short-term implementation priorities. As with the two previous workshops, workshop content emphasized the future of historic preservation throughout the Village.

The agenda for this final Workshop consisted of four parts: an overview presentation of the draft report contents and recommended historic preservation strategies followed by three participation activities to consider those strategies. To conduct the three activities, BDI provided a list of draft strategies for use by workshop attendees. (A copy of this list is on pages 5-6 of this document.) In the first of the three group activities, participants were asked to identify their five most important strategic objectives for historic preservation in Oak Park from the list. Those five objectives with the greatest number of votes from workshop participants then became the basis for the third group discussion activity. For the second activity, participants were asked to select those three strategic objectives that they believed could be achieved by Oak Park within the next two years. In the final group exercise, each of the five objectives, identified in the first exercise, was discussed. Each discussion considered local assets and resources available to address that strategy, how to mitigate any local issues, potential programming, and what implementation will mean for the Village.

During the first group exercise, the five Plan strategies identified by workshop attendees as most important included:

- Develop and conduct formal training about Oak Park's historic preservation program, processes, and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)'s roles and responsibilities for new Village Board members and new members of Oak Park's Boards and Commissions.

- Increase collaborative work among Village departments engaged with one or more parts of the historic preservation process to enhance or improve internal processes and communications.
- Initiate a coordinated effort by Oak Park’s historic preservation organizations to identify and develop new education programs for Oak Park stakeholders, consistent with each organization’s mission, to supplement current Village efforts and to monitor programming success.
- Identify and initiate partnership opportunities, either short, mid, or long-term, with the local business community and major institutions supporting joint economic development and historic preservation activities.
- Continue to identify potential landmarks and historic districts throughout the Village during the next decade.

In the second exercise, each participant, using the same strategy list from the first exercise, identified the three Plan strategies that they believed could be implemented within the next two (2) years. This exercise had a slightly different purpose than the first and third exercises and was intended to test short-term priorities identified in the draft Plan. BDI will apply these priorities in refining the action steps for Plan implementation during the current draft Plan review process. Five strategies received the most votes. They included:

- Develop and conduct formal training about Oak Park’s historic preservation program, processes, and the Historic preservation Commission (HPC)’s roles and responsibilities for new Village Board members and new members of Oak Park’s Boards and Commissions.
- Increase collaborative work among Village departments engaged with one or more parts of the historic preservation process to enhance or improve internal processes and communications.
- Initiate a comprehensive outreach program to Oak Park’s commercial property and apartment building owners to understand their objectives for their properties.
- Initiate a coordinated effort by Oak Park’s historic preservation organizations to identify and develop new education programs for Oak Park stakeholders, consistent with each organization’s mission, to supplement current Village efforts and to monitor programming success.
- Continue ongoing involvement in Village planning-related processes, including any Planned Development processes, as appropriate.

Three of the strategies identified above as priorities were also identified for short-term implementation. All involve establishing a local structure for education about historic preservation addressing the needs of specific Oak Park constituencies. The remaining two identified as short-term strategies address Village internal processes and planning processes, how to better incorporate historic preservation into those processes, and how to consider each from a different perspective.

The third exercise took each of the five priority strategies and applied the following questions to each strategy.

- Which of Oak Park’s assets and resources can address this objective?

- Are there any local issues that could affect this objective, and how could those issues be mitigated?
- What kinds of local programs could address this objective?
- What does achieving this objective mean for the Village's future? For the future of historic preservation in the Village?

The discussion for each strategy is summarized, and key points made by attendees are noted below.

Strategy 1: Develop and conduct formal training about Oak Park's historic preservation program, processes, and the Historic preservation Commission (HPC)'s roles and responsibilities for new Village Board members and new members of Oak Park's Boards and Commissions.

Issues: Role of historic preservation in decision making; the impact of local politics; emphasis on formal training for local officials to help mitigate some contention

Assets/Resources: Consistent training programs using internal and external local resources

Programming: Recommend to Village Board for a historic preservation session for appointees to Boards and Commissions before seating; have training open to all Oak Park citizens; recommend visits (or attendance) to one HPC meeting annually

Goal/Achievement: Understanding by local officials of the historic preservation ordinance, preservation guidelines, and applicable codes in advance of their required, official decisions

Strategy 2: Increase collaborative work among Village departments engaged with one or more parts of the historic preservation process to enhance or improve internal processes and communications.

Issues: Need to improve the experience for local property owners of all types in improving properties; need mechanics in place to improve the historic preservation processes

Assets/Resources: The Village internal structure exists; similar function was conducted informally by former Village staff; the new Business Services function

Programming: Create 'one-stop team' with all related departments, including a liaison, for more complex projects; use the 'Naperville model'; create a comprehensive and coordinated central document that describes Oak Park's approval processes for public use; outreach to realtors and to property owners about the processes, including incentives to property owners

Goal/Achievement: Better local understanding of processes; improved reputation for historic preservation and economic development

Strategy 3: Initiate a coordinated effort by Oak Park's historic preservation organizations to identify and develop new education programs for Oak Park stakeholders, consistent with each organization's mission, to supplement current Village efforts and to monitor programming success.

Issues: Need for comprehensive education effort, given limited Village resources

Assets/Resources: Strong local organizations with lots of expertise

Programming: Create a group for education purposes to organize interactive meetings and processes to address property owners concerns; create a non-profit independent group to advocate on historic preservation issues; 'Peoria' organizational model

Goal/Achievement: Bring strong, existing preservation education efforts together and make them work together

Strategy 4: Identify and initiate partnership opportunities, either short, mid, or long-term, with the local business community and major institutions supporting joint economic development and historic preservation activities.

Issues: Balance of the review process; role of certain institutions, particularly schools and hospitals; proper integration of preservation and local institution objectives into concepts expressed in 1990 Comprehensive Plan

Assets/Resources: Strong institutions; existing partnerships, such as with Dominican University

Programming: Good role for possible advocacy group noted under Strategy 3; identify more partnerships from educational outreach, such as BOMA session; outreach to High School, Fenwick, and District 97 for preservation education; review corporate sponsorship opportunities

Goal/Achievement: Work together to enhance both preservation and economic development

Strategy 5: Continue to identify potential landmarks and historic districts throughout the Village during the next decade.

Issues: Need for additional surveys to identify landmark opportunities

Assets/Resources: Potential role of partnership organizations; downtown as a unique place with potential for designation of individual landmarks by individual owners

Programming: Education in advance of surveys to mitigate owner concerns; more frequent outreach to landmark owners and asking for their support in promoting historic preservation objectives; creating a 'community' around landmarks (a current HPC initiative) and understanding landmark benefits from the owner perspective

Goal/Achievement: Continue to recognize the importance of Oak Park's urban fabric

To conclude the workshop, the final project steps were reviewed with workshop attendees. The draft Plan will remain available on the Village's project webpage through April and comments can be submitted to the Village. The final Plan presentation is tentatively scheduled for May 2010, subject to the completion of HPC review.

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Group Exercise #1: Plan Objectives*

Part 1: Please select your five (5) most important objectives from the following list. Note that additional objectives appear on the reverse side.

Part 2: After Part 1 is completed, please select those three (3) objectives that could be completed within the next two (2) years.

- Develop and conduct formal training about Oak Park's historic preservation program, processes, and the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)'s roles and responsibilities for new Village Board members and new members of Oak Park's Boards and Commissions.
- Identify potential cooperative efforts between HPC and existing Boards and Commissions.
- Identify potential cooperative efforts between Village Historic Preservation officials and other Oak Park taxing bodies.
- Increase collaborative work among Village departments engaged with one or more parts of the historic preservation process to enhance or improve internal processes and communications.
- Initiate a coordinated effort by Oak Park's historic preservation organizations to identify and develop new education programs for Oak Park stakeholders, consistent with their mission, to supplement current Village efforts and to monitor programming success.
- Initiate a comprehensive education program for Oak Park's residential property owners.
- Initiate a comprehensive outreach program to Oak Park's commercial property and apartment building owners to understand their objectives for their property.
- Initiate a comprehensive outreach program to Oak Park's institutional property owners to understand their objectives for their property.
- Work with the local real estate community to formulate additional educational programs for new Oak Park property owners.

- Identify and initiate partnership opportunities, either short, mid or long-term, with the local business community and major institutions supporting joint economic development and historic preservation objectives.
- Initiate ongoing conversations to establish a basis for future discussions about Oak Park's economic development activities.
- Evaluate Oak Park's historic preservation ordinance and HPC processes to improve efficiency, applying an applicant perspective.
- Continue ongoing involvement in Village planning-related processes, including any Planned Development processes, as appropriate.
- Begin to identify other non-architectural resources throughout the Village that may qualify as landmarks during the next decade.
- Continue to identify potential landmarks and historic districts throughout the Village during the next decade.
- Continue and expand the efforts by Village officials to pro-actively and comprehensively address historic preservation and sustainability issues.
- Monitor emerging national preservation issues and their Village-wide implications.