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New Effort Begins to Achieve National Status for Wright Historic District

A public meeting to recruit and train volunteers to help conduct an architectural survey of the Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., Wed., Nov. 16, in Village Hall, 123 Madison St. The meeting also is an opportunity for property owners learn more about the survey.

The meeting is the first of what is likely to be many hosted by the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission as it works to gain National Historic Landmark District status for the area bounded by Division Street on the north, Lake Street on the south, Ridgeland Avenue on the east and Marion Street and Woodbine Avenue on the west.

The new survey will allow the Commission to update an existing nomination for landmark district status completed in 1973. If the updated nomination is accepted by the National Park Service, the district would be upgraded to a National Historic Landmark District, a designation given only to areas that have national significance in American history and culture.

National landmark status would not change the district's status on the National Register of Historic Places or as a local historic district.

The survey will document the area's extensive collection of late 19th and early 20th century residential architecture. Among the architectural features that will be recorded are roof shape and material, siding material and architectural details such as porches, dormers and chimneys. Some areas adjacent to the historic district also will be examined as part of the project.

Volunteer surveyors and members of the Oak Park Photography Club will be out in the historic district during the fall and winter months. The survey is expected to be completed in 2007.

The Frank Lloyd Wright - Prairie School of Architecture Historic District is the world's single largest concentration of residences designed by architects collectively known as the Prairie School. Created in 1972 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973, the district has about 1,500 buildings.

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Wright District Survey
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Illinois currently has only 11 National Historic Landmark Districts, including Columbus Park and Pullman in Chicago, Fort Sheridan on the North Shore and the Riverside Historic District in Riverside. The state has about 70 individual National Historic Landmarks, including four in Oak Park – the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio (931 Chicago Ave.), Unity Temple (875 Lake St.), Pleasant Home (217 Home Ave.) and the privately owned Heurtley House (318 Forest Ave.).

To volunteer to help with the survey or for more information, call 358.5417 or email comsvcs@oak-park.us.

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