

LANDMARK LINK

The newsletter of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission.

Strategic Historic Preservation Plan

The Village of Oak Park engaged Business Districts, Inc. (BDI) in August 2009 to develop a Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan to guide the Village's historic preservation work through the next decade. BDI is an Evanston, Illinois based consulting firm with expertise in historic preservation, market analysis, and economic development. The development of this Plan has been substantially funded by a Certified Local Government grant from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). In addition to Village officials, a fifteen member Steering Committee, representing multiple Oak Park constituencies and local Boards and Commissions, actively led the formulation of this Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan.

The Plan process has been conducted in three phases: an assessment of Oak Park's historic preservation planning activities, the visioning phase to test preliminary Plan strategies, and the development of the final Plan. The specific process activities for each phase incorporated stakeholder and public input, Steering Committee comment, and research into national best practices in historic preservation programs and strategies applicable to Oak Park's preservation activities. All of the documentation from this Plan process is available via a link on the Historic Preservation page of the Village of Oak Park's website - http://www.oak-park.us/planning/Historic_Preservation_strategicplan.htm.

This Plan also serves as an update to the 1994 Long-Range Historic Preservation Plan, which was never formally adopted. Oak Park's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and Village staff have completed much of the work suggested in the 1994 Plan. This work has included ongoing identification of historic resources, regulatory updates,

education and outreach, and incentive development.

Throughout this Plan process, the emphasis has been on what will work best for the entire Village, not just one commercial district or one residential neighborhood. This Village-wide perspective was also focused on common facts and on the future, not on past ideas, misconceptions, or controversies. The resulting Plan will assist Village officials, the HPC, local property owners, and Oak Park's preservationists in becoming even better stewards of their shared legacy and their



commitment to Oak Park and its unique urban fabric. This result is both strategic and pragmatic.

The Plan document has four sections. These sections are described below:

- **Plan Process and Activities:**

Describes the meetings and actions completed in the development of this Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan.

- **Historic Resources:** Provides an overview of Oak Park's historic context and historic resources. This section is a slightly expanded version of the same section that appeared in the interim State of Historic Preservation in Oak Park report.

- **Village-wide Historic Preservation Strategies:** Organizes key categories of strategic issues uncovered during the Plan process into an integrated vision for the next decade.

- **Action Plans:** Lists those specific action steps necessary to achieve the integrated vision for historic preservation throughout the Village of Oak Park.

This final Plan document describes an integrated strategy for the Village's historic preservation activities for the upcoming decade. This integrated strategy combined the seven categories of issues into four strategic aspects:

- 1) education about historic preservation,
- 2) economic development and incentives,
- 3) Oak Park's historic preservation structure and process, and
- 4) national preservation issues.

Foremost is education about historic preservation for and among all stakeholder groups. This emphasis on education underlies the remaining three strategic aspects. Economic development will remain an important local issue, and historic preservation can be an important element of local success. Local preservation regulations must support good preservation, good building stewardship, and good redevelopment. Finally, Oak Park will need to seek out national ideas for success in its historic preservation actions. Oak Park may be a unique place, but similar communities elsewhere can be a valuable source of insights and solutions.

Ultimately, the Village's historic preservation work over the next decade will require that the Plan work get done. Historic preservation, as a discipline, recognizes the value of change over time. Oak Park's future preservation programs, activities, and local partnerships can not only protect its many resources but also can contribute to the Village's evolution and vitality.

The Historic Preservation Commission will continue to accept public comment on the draft Plan document through early May, before finalizing the document and forwarding to the Village Board for adoption.

New historic landmarks approved

Four new Historic Landmarks were approved by the Village Board on March 15, 2010.

639 FAIR OAKS AVE.: The Charles Schwerin House is a two and one-half story stucco house designed by architect E. E. Roberts in 1908 in the Prairie style. The house is considered a model of Roberts' mature Prairie style in its monumental full-width porch, whose roof is supported only at the ends by stout piers, and in its grouped casement windows, decorative details, broad stucco masses, and symmetrical front. Roberts frequently inflated the third floor dormers on hip-roofed houses to give them maximum flair. The house was constructed by mason William A. Pillinger.



639 Fair Oaks Ave.



178 N. Euclid Ave.



231 N. Euclid Ave.



647 Linden Ave.

178 N. EUCLID AVE.: The Russell Wallace House is a two and one-half story stucco house designed by architect E. E. Roberts in 1906 in the Prairie style. The house displays numerous traits of the mature Prairie style, including a low-pitched hip roof, wide overhanging eaves, a broad open front porch, and prominent horizontal banding. The house has retained excellent integrity, and its exterior stands virtually unchanged from its 1906 appearance.

The house was constructed by mason William A. Pillinger. Pillinger originated from Bristol, England and learned the mason's and bricklayer's trade in his youth. He came to Chicago in 1870 and was a long-standing resident of the Austin neighborhood of Chicago. Pillinger is credited with building at least 70 homes, apartment buildings and commercial buildings in Oak Park between 1902 and 1921. In addition to the Wallace House, Pillinger constructed nine other homes

in collaboration with architect E. E. Roberts.

231 N. EUCLID AVE.: The Edward and Caroline McCready House is a two-story brick house and garage designed by architects Spencer and Powers in 1907 in the Prairie style. A covered breezeway connects the house to the three-car garage. The horizontality of the structure is accentuated by use of Roman brick. The low-pitched hip roof is covered with clay tiles and features wide overhanging eaves. The majority of the windows are casement windows with art glass that are arranged in horizontal bands. The house is bordered on the east by a low brick wall matching the house capped with limestone, with planters flanking the five steps up from the sidewalk.

647 LINDEN AVE.: The Charles Castle House is a two story brick house and garage designed by architect Frederick Schock in 1924 in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The main hipped roof is clad in green ceramic clay tiles. The majority of the windows are casement with a trapezoidal decorative muntin pattern. A two-car yellow brick garage with a hipped, green clay tile roof sits at the west end of the lot facing Augusta Street.

Schock is most known for his elaborate Victorian designs in Austin, including his own home designed in 1886. The towers on the south and west wings, complete with crenellated parapets, raises speculation about Schock's sense of humor when he created this castle-like dwelling for the Castle family.

Other News

Historic Preservation Award Nominations sought

Nominations are now being sought for the 2010 Historic Preservation Awards. Nomination forms are available at Village Hall and on the Village web site. The deadline for submittal is Friday, August 13, 2010. The awards will be presented in September. Any type of property may be nominated in the following categories – restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive use and additions/new construction. Additional awards may be presented for stewardship, detail and design. Sustainable or "Green" projects are encouraged. Projects should have been completed within the past five years, and located within the boundaries of the Village. Nominations need not be in an historic district. Any resident, owner or tenant may make nominations. Past award winners may be viewed on the Village web site - http://www.oak-park.us/Community_Services/Historic_Preservation.html.

Day in Our Village Festival

The 37th A Day In Our Village Festival is scheduled for Sunday, June 6, 2010 from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. This year, the Historic Preservation Commission is joining up with the Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest and the Unity Temple Restoration Foundation to provide exciting and educational fun for the whole family, including "Ask an Architect", preservation award and historic landmark displays, contractor demonstrations, and historic candy! Be sure to visit the booth located in Scoville Park.

For more information, call 708.358.5417 or e-mail planning@oak-park.us

Historic Preservation Commission Members

Tom Bassett-Dilley, Chair

Joerg Albrecht
Kristen Diamond
Garret Eakin
Frank Heitzman
Bob Lempera

Chris Morris
Drew Niermann
Gary Palese
Tony Quinn
Carmen Vitello

The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member body of citizen volunteers appointed by the Village President to implement the Village's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Its mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the distinctive historic and

architectural heritage of Oak Park. The Commission strives to preserve the historic integrity of the Village by reviewing alterations of the exteriors of historic properties to ensure that the historic character of the building exteriors is preserved. The Commis-

sion also identifies landmark buildings and historic districts, and seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the Village by educating property owners and citizens about the importance of preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of properties.