

# LANDMARK LINK

*The newsletter of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission*

Interest in architecture guided early efforts

## Historic Preservation Commission celebrates 40 years on the job

Oak Park has some of the most significant historic resources in the nation, and for the last 40 years the Historic Preservation Commission has supported those conservation efforts on the local level. Oak Park's historic properties, including many architectural styles dating from the mid-1800s through the present, draw thousands of tourists to Oak Park each year to enjoy its residential neighborhoods and commercial districts, and to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio, Unity Temple, Pleasant Home and the Hemingway Museum.

The Village's unwavering support of historic preservation efforts for 40 years has contributed to Oak Park's international reputation and its association with the Prairie School of Architecture. The Village's local historic districts include nearly 4,000 properties, as well as 58 officially recognized Historic Landmarks and five historically significant interior spaces.

It was not always this way. Oak Park's architectural awareness and interest in its preservation began in the 1960s. Unity Temple spent \$20,000 to repair the roof and exterior of the building, and began offering public tours in 1967. The church was also designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1971. The owners of Wright's Home and Studio began offering tours in 1966. Also, a Frank Lloyd Wright Festival was held in Oak Park and River Forest in 1969, resulting in the first local guide to Wright's architecture in the community.

In 1970 the Village of Oak Park commissioned an architectural survey of the community to identify its historic resources. The survey, conducted by Wilbert Hasbrouck and Paul Sprague, resulted in the designation of Oak Park's first preservation ordinance and the creation of the Landmarks Commission (renamed the Historic Preservation Commission in 1986). At the same time, the ordinance created the Oak Park Historic District, which in 1973 was listed in the National Register of Historic Places and renamed as the Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. The boundaries of this



**The Gunderson Historic District, designated in 2002, is the newest historic district in Oak Park.**

historic district were expanded in 2012. The Landmarks Commission also created "A Guide to Oak Parks' Frank Lloyd Wright and Prairie School Historic District," which was updated a number of times between the mid-1970s and the current edition in 2000.

Another architectural study resulted in the creation of the Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and was designated as Oak Park's second local historic district in 1994. The Historic Preservation Commission also created a second guide book called "Ridgeland Revealed," which was released in 1993.

The Village of Oak Park revised the preservation ordinance in 1994 and created Architectural Review Guidelines to guide property owners when making changes to historic buildings. The most notable changes to the new ordinance were its focus on demolition and the ability for the Commission to designate Historic Landmarks. The first five Landmarks were designated in 1996, bringing a greater level of protection and recognition to the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, Unity Temple, Ernest Hemingway Birthplace,

Pilgrim Congregational Church and Pleasant Home. In the years that have followed, another 53 owners have designated their properties as Landmarks.

The Historic Preservation Commission also recognized the importance of educating property owners about how historic preservation relates to the quality of life in Oak Park. To address these needs, the Commission secured grant funds and created the Long Range Historic Preservation Plan, adopted in 1994. The plan outlined goals and objectives for future preservation, identification and education needs, helping to steer the Commission's work for the next 15 years.

A new Strategic Historic Preservation Plan was created in 2010, again with the assistance of a consultant and grant funds, to help focus the Commission's work over the next decade.

Continuing in its strong tradition of conducting architectural surveys for future planning, the Village conducted the Gunderson Housing Survey in the late 1990s.

Built between 1906 and 1920, the First and Second Subdivisions by S. T. Gunderson

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For more information, call 708.358.5417 or e-mail [historicpreservation@oak-park.us](mailto:historicpreservation@oak-park.us).

# Historic preservation awards program set for Nov. 13

**The annual celebration** of historic architecture and leadership in environmental initiatives -- Celebrating Stewardship: Heritage, Environment, Design -- is set for Nov. 13.

Each year, the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission, Environment & Energy Commission and the Community Design Commission recognize those people whose commitment to protecting our unique heritage and environment helps keep Oak Park such a vibrant and wonderful place for residents and visitors alike.

Please join us at Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple for an evening filled with food, fun and music as we honor the 2012 Preservation Award, Green Award and Cavalcade of Pride Award winners.

The event takes place Tues., Nov. 13, 2012 at Unity Temple, 875 Lake St. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and the awards program begins at 7 p.m. A reception and hors d'oeuvres will follow. Please RSVP to [aschell@oak-park.us](mailto:aschell@oak-park.us).

**Building and demolition permits** must be reviewed for properties that are designated as Historic Landmarks or located within a Historic District. There are approximately 4,000 buildings which fall under those categories. Between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31 this year, the

Historic Preservation Division reviewed 1,035 permits, of which only 4 percent required review by the Historic Preservation Commission.

**Weatherizing your home** is a smart way to save money throughout the year. The National Trust for Historic Preservation created a Weatherization Guide for Older and Historic Buildings at [www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/weatherization](http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/sustainable-communities/weatherization) for info on programs, incentives and strategies.

**The Historic Preservation Program** at the School of the Art Institute has assigned graduate students to work on projects for the Historic Preservation Commission this semester.

The Physical Documentation class is preparing detailed HABS drawings (Historic American Building Survey) of Pleasant Home to document the building for the Library of Congress, completing a project begun in 1933.

The Preservation Planning Studio is conducting an intensive architectural survey of the Hogans and Hulbert Subdivisions on Home, South Kenilworth and Clinton avenues between Madison and Harrison. Both classes are taught by architect Charles Pipal.

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and Sons include high quality single-family, American Foursquare homes and brick two-flats. Following the survey, the Gunderson Historic District was designated in 2002. The larger, Second Subdivision was listed in the National Register of Historic Places, while both subdivisions are designated as local historic districts.

Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, the Commission has worked closely with the Plan Commission on the creation of local business district plans by including architectural surveys which identify important historic commercial resources, often overlooked in a community with so many outstanding homes. Those surveys included Downtown Oak Park, Madison Street, Lake and Austin, Chicago and Harlem, South Town, and the Arts District on Harrison Street.

The Commission has continued its work by meeting and working with other boards and commissions, local organizations and community partners, and residential and commercial property owners. This architectural legacy generates economic benefits and helps define the Village's image. Oak Park's long association with historic architecture and preservation, in addition to the Village's unique urban fabric, are important community assets worthy of preserving for future generations to enjoy.

The Historic Preservation Commission would not have been able to accomplish any of these important projects without the many volunteers who have served on the Commission, the staff and elected officials who have supported the Commission, and the many property owners who have worked with the Commission.

On this 40th anniversary of historic preservation in Oak Park, the Commission would like to thank all those involved and encourage many future years of successful collaboration.

For more information, call Commission staff at 708.358.5417 or visit [www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation](http://www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation).

## New Landmarks



**241 S. ELMWOOD AVE.:** The William J. Ehlers Flats was designed by architect E. E. Roberts in 1909 in the Prairie style. Designated on July 2, 2012.



**410 N. KENILWORTH AVE.:** The Edwin H. Ehrman House was designed by architect Lawrence Buck in 1908 in the English Arts and Crafts style. Designated on July 2, 2012.



**743 COLUMBIAN AVE.:** The George L. Smith House was designed by architect John S. Van Bergen in 1914 in the Prairie style. Designated on Nov. 5, 2012.

Sign up to receive monthly email notices about Historic Preservation in Oak Park. Email [historicpreservation@oak-park.us](mailto:historicpreservation@oak-park.us) to be added to the list.

### Historic Preservation Commission Members

Christina Morris, Chair

Joerg Albrecht  
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Garret Eakin  
Frank Heitzman  
Rosanne McGrath

Regina Nally  
Drew Niermann  
Gary Palese  
Tony Quinn  
Tom Sundling

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

Commission 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.