

Residents weigh in on expansion of FLW district

The Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission is considering an expansion of the Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. The boundaries of the National Register Historic District were expanded in 2009 as the result of a multi-year public process. Redrawing the boundaries was necessary to correct problems with the initial district, whose boundaries cut through blocks, ran down alleys, and omitted large groups of homes that were of the same style and date as the rest of the district. The HPC would like the boundaries of the local landmark district to match those of the National Register district.

Why do we need to take this extra step, if the buildings are already listed on the National Register? The answer is simple -- a listing on the National Register of Historic Places sounds impressive and brings recognition, but it offers no protection. Buildings on the National Register can be demolished, if the demolition uses private funds. Including these properties in a local historic district helps ensure that these beautiful buildings and homes will not be demolished and replaced with

something that is much larger and out of scale with the rest of the block, or that the exteriors are not radically altered in ways that will destroy the neighborhood's appearance and property values. Ultimately, it helps the Village maintain those things that make the Wright district such an interesting, attractive, and desirable place to live and work.

The HPC held a series of three public meetings this summer to gather comments from the residents in the district and the proposed expansion area. Turnout for these meetings was rather low, with the comments split fairly evenly between residents who support the expansion and those who oppose it. The HPC would like to bring this issue to a vote in the Fall, but we want to hear from you first. If you are a resident in the proposed district boundary, please send your questions or comments to Doug Kaarre at kaarre@oak-park.us. Also be sure to check out our Frequently Asked Questions about the district expansion on the Village website which answers some of the most common questions about local historic districts and the HPC review process.

New Landmarks



317 N. KENILWORTH AVE.: The William A. Douglass House was designed by architects Patton & Fisher in 1893 in the Queen Anne style. Designated on September 20, 2010



432 N. KENILWORTH AVE.: The Charles E. Matthews House was designed by architects Tallmadge & Watson in 1909 in the Prairie style. Designated on February 22, 2011



178 FOREST AVE.: The Nineteenth Century Club was designed by architect James L. Fyfe in 1928 in the Neoclassical style. Designated on September 20, 2010



1515 N. HARLEM AVE.: The Harlem Office Building was designed by architect W. B. Cohan Associates in 1958 in the Modern style. Designated on March 7, 2011



308 N. OAK PARK AVE.: The Rutherford-Dodge House was designed ca. 1872 in the Italianate style. Designated on January 3, 2011



130 S. EAST AVE.: The John D. Caldwell House was designed by architect George H. Borst in 1890 in the Queen Anne style. Designated on July 5, 2011



633 N. EAST AVE.: The Vernon W. Skiff House was designed by architects Nimmons & Fellows in 1909 in the Prairie style. Designated on January 3, 2011



629 FAIR OAKS AVE.: The Charles W. Helder House was designed by architect Charles E. White, Jr. in 1906 in the Prairie style. Designated on July 5, 2011

Historic Preservation Commission Members

Christina Morris, Chair

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Garret Eakin
Frank Heitzman
Bob Lempera
Rosanne McGrath*

*Regina Nally
Drew Niemann
Gary Palese
Michael Plummer
Tony Quinn*

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.