

## Suburban Preservation Alliance

March 2, 2013

### Oak Park

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#### Present:

See attached attendance sheet.

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss two recent surveys: one in Oak Park and one in River Forest.

#### Oak Park

The Village Manager of Oak Park initiated a survey along the I-290 corridor in anticipation of expansion of the Eisenhower expressway. The survey cost \$29,000, of which \$21,000 was paid for with a CLG grant. It encompassed 904 properties and 1105 resources. Preservation Services and Technology Group based in Kentucky was hired to do the work. The firm used a software they developed called RuskinARC which was appealing to Oak Park because it will be an on-line, interactive system available to anyone. Doug Kaarre, Oak Park's Preservation Planner presented the results. The survey will be retained on RuskinARC's server until Oak Park decides how to accommodate it in-house.

RuskinARC's proprietary software is Google map based and the results are very impressive. The survey was done between September 2012 and January 2013. The database can accommodate current and historic photos, files created by non-surveyors, etc. Sorting can be done by virtually any field, with mapping to match.

There was a lively question and answer session following Doug's presentation, including a brief discussion about the historic status of the Eisenhower Expressway itself (which is complicated). One important point worth knowing: federal highways are exempt from the Section 106 process. However, Section 4f would apply if the highway was a local landmark.

Lisa DiChiera pointed out the value of Oak Park being proactive with surveying in the Eisenhower area anticipating future work to be proposed by IDOT. Doug noted that Oak Park already has three local landmarks adjacent to the highway. He also noted that the surveyors had two problems: when the survey boundaries are arbitrary, how do you determine significance? What are significant and contributing properties contributing to? The surveyors felt that this problem would be somewhat relieved if a second survey was done including everything to Roosevelt Road, the Village's southern boundary.

The survey has not been presented to the public yet and will not be until direction is given by the Village Board.

An additional section was added to the surveyed area by a survey class at the School of the Art Institute Historic Preservation program.

The question was raised as to whether such a survey could be done by volunteers rather than consultants. Doug noted that it is more work to have volunteers do the work: they need training and supervising and the

results are not as consistent. Volunteers do not generate recommendations and a final report either. He also noted that the Oak Park Photography Club did all the photos for the Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District extension. Nancy Schumm noted that using volunteers in some way at least engages the community. Nancy has used UIC volunteers from the master's degree program in planning with great success.

### River Forest

Lakota Group, with Nick Kalogeresis and Doug Gilbert, did a survey of the entire village of River Forest. River Forest got an HP ordinance in 2007, but they are not a CLG so the survey was paid for out of a Centennial special projects fund. It cost \$65,000 and encompassed 3000 properties. A subset of 280 properties received more intensive documentation due to their National Register eligibility. In River Forest the Commissioners did much of the leg work, including initial permit searches and photography. The survey was done between July and October 2012 and was deliberately designed to develop contexts beyond the typical Prairie School.

This survey was done using software developed by Lakota from a Filemaker Pro platform, using an iPad in the field for both data entry and photography. The iPad also enabled the team members to communicate when questions about specific sites came up in the field. While this seemed like a very good system, it was not as graphically appealing as the system used in Oak Park and does not have the same ability for many photos and additional documents to be part of the database. However, this "pack and go" system will enable Lakota to transfer the database in its entirety to River Forest when it is completed. This system generates Excel spread sheets for its reports.

Doug and Nick noted that there were some downsides to using an iPad: mediocre photo quality, fragility of the iPad itself and dead spots that sometimes caused data transmission errors and/or omissions.

This survey resulted in a recommendation to expand the existing National Register district in River Forest and add two additional ones, both mid-century modern in character.

### Statewide Preservation Conference

A general brainstorming went on to suggest session topics. It was agreed that today's survey information should be shared at the conference. In addition the following topics were noted:

- Teardowns—including Highland Park's demolition fee
- Enhancing economic development using hp
- Real estate broker education—providing continuing ed. credits
- Foreclosure/landbanking
- Next generation—how to engage them, using the conference to recruit "rising stars"
  - It was noted that the "Journey Through Hallowed Ground" program has good models for this

**THANKS AGAIN TO OAK PARK & TO DOUG KAARRE!**

Chicago Suburban Preservation Alliance  
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