

**Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission**  
**October 8, 2015 Meeting Minutes**  
**Oak Park Village Hall, Council Chambers/Room 201, 7:30 pm**

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Chair Rosanne McGrath, Greg Battoglia, Fred Brandstrader, Laura Jordahl, Don McLean, Dan Moroney, Chris Payne, Tony Quinn, Tom Sundling  
**ABSENT:** Regina Nally, Vice Chair Gary Palese  
**STAFF:** Douglas Kaarre, AICP, Urban Planner

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

*Motion by Payne to approve the meeting agenda. Second by Brandstrader. Motion approved 9-0.*  
*AYE: Battoglia, Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Moroney, Payne, Quinn, Sundling, Chair McGrath*  
*NAY: None*

**NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**MINUTES**

*Motion by Sundling to approve the August 13, 2015 and September 10, 2015 meeting minutes as submitted. Second by Brandstrader. Motion approved 9-0.*  
*AYE: Battoglia, Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Moroney, Payne, Quinn, Sundling, Chair McGrath*  
*NAY: None*

**REGULAR AGENDA**

- A. **HPC 2015-58: 204 S. Harvey Avenue (Everson): Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish a two-story coach house and construct a two-story garage (Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District)**  
Property owner Mary Lynn Everson and architect Patrick Thompson were present.

Planner Kaarre introduced the application. The house is a Contributing Resource within the *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District*. The house was constructed c. 1890. The two-story detached frame coach house was likely constructed at the same time or soon after. The proposal is to demolish the coach house due to its seriously deteriorated condition and replace it with a new two-story detached garage in a design and size similar to the existing, clad in cedar siding. The owner has saved and reused the historic hayloft door in the new garage. The applicant submitted an inspection report by their architect Patrick Thompson, Manske-Dieckmann-Thompson, which outlines the deterioration, leaning walls, and lack of foundation. The garage is visible from the street, and is a Contributing Resource as its design and age are contemporary with the house, and the structure is significant to the character of the property. Therefore, Staff has forwarded the Certificate of Appropriateness application to the Historic Preservation Commission for review.

Although the garage is a significant accessory structure, contemporary in design and age with the c. 1890 house, it is seriously deteriorated, warped and leaning in many directions, and has no foundation. Stabilization and rehabilitation would be cost prohibitive. The design of the new garage is compatible with the house as it is similar in size, massing, design and materials to the existing garage, and meets the Architectural Review Guidelines. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness application to demolish the structure.

Mary Lynn Everson, property owner, stated that there have been major changes to the condition of the coach house over the last several years and she had several people assess it for restoration, but it is not feasible. She is reusing the hayloft door in the same location facing the alley.

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Patrick Thompson, Maske Dieckmann Thompson Architecture, stated that the reality of its condition is more dire than the photographs show. The building is settling, walls are concave, and windows are shifting within their frames. What they are proposing does not match the existing, but is compatible with the house.

*Motion by Brandstrader to open the application for discussion. Second by Battoglia.*

Mr. Thompson stated that they looked at various roof types. They used a gable roof to provide additional usable space. Hip roofs are also more expensive to construct. The proposed coach house is approximately 25% smaller than the existing.

Commissioner Brandstrader noted that they appreciate the condition of the property and the potential safety hazard. The proposed design does a nice job with being compatible with the character of the house. Commissioner Moroney agreed.

*Motion by Brandstrader to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the coach house at 204 S. Harvey Avenue and the construction of a new coach house as submitted by Manske Dieckmann Thompson Architecture, which meets the Architectural Review Guidelines. Second by McLean. Motion approved 9-0.*

*AYE: Battoglia, Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Moroney, Payne, Quinn, Sundling, Chair McGrath*

*NAY: None*

**B. Hulbert Houses Historic District: Discuss results of property owner outreach process regarding a potential Local and/or National Register historic district and determine next steps**

Chair McGrath introduced the item. She noted that the Commission does not vote on designations, but only makes recommendations. The process involves identifying and surveying the neighborhood, then contacting the State Preservation office to find out if it is eligible. The next step was to conduct public outreach to property owners and hold public information meetings. The next step after that, if either the local or National Register were recommended, would be to research and prepare a nomination report and send to either the Village Board or the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council.

This evening marks the end of the initial public outreach process. The Commission is looking at four possible outcomes:

- a) Recommend not moving forward with either district.
- b) Recommend proceeding with National Register only
- c) Recommend proceeding with Local only
- d) Recommend proceed with both Local and National Register districts

The Commission members take their roles seriously; however, we cannot over-step our bounds nor can we ignore our responsibilities to be the advocate for historic preservation in the Village. That does not mean that you should vote for or against this. The item will be opened for discussion now, and at the end of the discussion there will be two votes – one on whether a Local district will be recommended to the Board, and one on recommending a National Register district.

The staff presentation will provide an overview of the entire process so that everyone is at the same level of understanding.

Planner Kaarre presented an overview of the process. He gave an overview of the National Register of Historic Places, which is the Federal honorary recognition and does not involve local review.

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Property owners in a National Register district may be eligible for the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program.

Local designation does involve the review of exterior changes from the street by the Historic Preservation Commission or Staff. Any project that involves full or partial demolition requires a Certificate of Appropriateness and approval by the Village. Property owners in a Local district may be eligible for the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program.

He provided an overview of the historic significance of the neighborhood. It was determined to be eligible for the National Register by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency as a good example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century development. There are 170 Contributing Resources, 158 of which were built by Thomas Hulbert. The period of significance is 1905 to 1928. The boundaries include the 500-800 blocks of S. Kenilworth and Clinton Avenues.

We have done preliminary research on Thomas Hulbert, who was born in Massachusetts in 1848 and moved to Chicago in 1886. He started as a realtor and developed his first large subdivision in Humboldt Park in 1890. His subdivision here in Oak Park was referred to by him as Hulbert Houses, and he used an aggressive marketing campaign to attract the growing middle class from Chicago. The area is also architecturally significant based on its cohesive design in terms of scale and setbacks. There are many Foursquares with Craftsman and Prairie School influences which include a variety of details and materials, as well as other architectural styles such as Queen Anne and Colonial Revival.

While there was early recognition of the Hulbert subdivision, such as the 1983 *Ridgeland/Oak Park Historic District* nomination report, it was officially identified as a potential future district and a future goal in the 2010 Strategic Historic Preservation Plan. Also in 2010 the Village Manager asked the Historic Preservation Commission to look at what historic resources were near the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway and identify what tools the Village had when dealing with potential expansion of the expressway. In 2011 the Historic Preservation Commission conducted a historic resource survey for one block to the north and south of the expressway. In 2012 another survey was completed of the Hulbert and Hogans subdivisions.

The preliminary research report was submitted to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in 2013 to request a preliminary determination of eligibility for the National Register. If something is not considered eligible, then it would not make sense to pursue a listing. They determined that it was eligible and Community Planning and Architecture.

The Historic Preservation Commission added to their 2014 and 2015 work plans to conduct outreach to property owners regarding a potential historic district. We also applied for a \$20,000 Certified Local Government grant in November 2014, which would cover %70 of project costs. This grant would expire in September 2016.

The Hulbert subdivision was included in the 2010 Strategic Historic Preservation Plan as a potential resource that we should look more closely at.

The public outreach process began in March 2014 with a direct mailing to each property owner of an informational brochure and Frequently Asked Questions. The Historic Preservation Commission held two public meetings in April and May 2015, with total attendance at 75 people. Some feedback received was that the Commission should do a survey of each property owner and allow them to vote. That survey was sent to owners in August, 2015.

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Chair McGrath asked if property owner votes were done for previous historic district designations. Planner Kaarre stated that he was not aware that any were done. The survey postcard asked if people were in support of a National Register district and also a Local district, or if not, why not. There were 70 responses representing 70 properties or 40% of the neighborhood. The survey results were as follows:

### National Register Historic District

Opposed = 33 (19%)

Neutral = 10

Support = 27 (15%)

No Response = 106

### Local Historic District

Opposed = 41 (23%)

Neutral = 6

Support = 23 (13%)

No Response = 106

Based on the sign-in sheets at the two public meetings, there were 51 properties represented or 29%. There were 31 of the survey responses that had attended a public meeting (18%) and 39 that had not (22%). Chair McGrath noted that she asked staff to prepare these numbers to try and get a sense of if the same people who attended meetings were the same returning the survey. She wanted to see if they were getting everyone's opinion. Unfortunately it seems like most of those who attended the meetings also returned the surveys. It makes sense that those who are most passionate about a subject are going to show up and respond to the survey.

There were five categories for reasons for opposition, including a fear of rise in properties (12), concern about potential increase in permit review times (29), concern about a potential increase in construction costs (29), and a concern about being told what to do by the Village (35).

There were 22 written comments on the survey postcards. Several comments were repeated, such as protection of private property rights, fear of making it harder to sell their house, and concern that the architecture was not significant. There were three written comments in support of one or both districts.

Property owners submitted a petition in opposition of a local historic district signed by 68 property owners representing 39% of the district.

Commissioner Brandstrader asked about when the Gunderson Historic District was designated and how it compared in size. Planner Kaarre stated that the Gunderson Historic District was designated in 2002 and is slightly larger (230 properties). It was first listed on the National Register and then designated locally. This was done most likely because the National Register has no requirements for property owners.

Chair McGrath stated that back in 2014 when the Historic Preservation Commission was discussing whether to look at the National Register first. Ultimately the Commission decided to look at both at the same time so as not to duplicate the process.

Planner Kaarre stated that October 19 is the tentative date this will be reviewed by the Village Board.

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Commissioner Sundling asked if all the districts are both Local and National Register. Planner Kaarre stated that they are except for the Gunderson (First Subdivision), which is only locally designated. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency stated that was not eligible because more than 50% of the houses had artificial siding.

Commissioner Sundling asked about the approval process for National Register districts. Planner Kaarre stated that although they have determined its eligible, a completed nomination report still needs to be prepared and approved by the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council. If a nomination is not approved it may be resubmitted with revisions. Commissioner Sundling asked how Oak Park would benefit from a National Register historic district. Does the Village benefit from having more historic districts? Planner Kaarre stated that official recognition of Oak Park's historic resources through the National Register is an honorary designation that provides for a public input process if there are any negative impacts of a state or federal project using licenses, funding or fees.

Commissioner Battoglia asked for an overview of the local district requirements. Planner Kaarre stated that the Historic Preservation Commission would review exterior changes visible from the street. It would also trigger the federal review process for state or federally funded projects that impact it.

Commissioner Brandstrader asked if a Local or National Register district has been removed from designation? Planner Kaarre stated that it has occurred occasionally with Landmarks (not in Oak Park), but he has never heard of district being de-designated.

Commissioner Brandstrader asked about permit review numbers and fear of permit review time. Planner Kaarre stated that they had 1169 permits in 2014. There were no denials. Only 74 of the 1169 required a Certificate of Appropriateness, and only 30 of the 74 required review by the Commission at a meeting. The remaining 1069 were approved by Staff. Denials are rare as the Commission usually works with a property owner to achieve a project that can be approved.

Commissioner Brandstrader asked if Historic review adds to the permit review time. Planner Kaarre stated that it depends on the scope of work and timing of the submittal. Chair McGrath stated that if they submit for review prior to submitting for a permit, it does not delay at all. If they submit a permit for a large project 3 weeks before the next meeting, then it could add a month to the review.

Commissioner Sundling stated that having guidelines and an oversight committee for a neighborhood helps to maintain property values. If others do something inappropriate it affects your property values. Planner Kaarre stated that there have been many studies on the impact of historic district designation on property values. Every property finds that property values are either stable or increase over time. Those studies agreed that the same review for everyone provides stability.

Commissioner Battoglia stated that only pursuing a National Register district would mean potential risk to historic resources. If a local district were pursued in the future, would the work be lost? Planner Kaarre stated that you would need to update the historic resources survey. He clarified that this proposal is not that the neighborhood is threatened. It's always been an attractive and well-maintained neighborhood.

Commissioner Jordahl asked if they can go through the National Register process and then not get approved. Their letter says it "may" be eligible. Planner Kaarre stated that they are commenting on a preliminary report and that listing would be likely assuming the nomination explains the criteria. The Village Board will be asked by the State if they support a National Register nomination, but it's not required.

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Chair McGrath stated that the process is that they are potentially making a recommendation to the Village Board to allocate funding to prepare a report and go through the process. Planner Kaarre agreed that this project would need Board approval because the HPC is recommending it and requesting funding. The National Register approval process does not require Village approval, although for a district it does require 51% approval of property owners.

Commissioner Jordahl asked if one report can be used for both districts? Planner Kaarre stated yes. She asked if it's possible to have too many historic districts and dilute it's significance. Planner Kaarre stated that a district would have its own significance based on its. Boundaries.

Chair McGrath asked for public comment and requested they stay within 3 minutes.

Kurt MacKey, 518 S. Kenilworth, stated that he is opposed to a historic district. Getting a tax break will cost all the other owners who end up paying for it. He was insulted by the question of whether he is afraid his property taxes will go up.

David Sokol, 222 N. Marion, stated that he served in the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council and the Historic Preservation Commission. When they were looking at creating the Gunderson Historic District they did outreach beyond a survey. They held a photo exhibit at the library to help get people interested. Although the Commission initiated this process, anyone can nominate a property to the National Register.

Margaret Prechel, 810 Clinton, stated that she wanted more information about the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program. She is afraid people are confused and misinformed about it.

Planner Kaarre provided an overview of the Property Tax Assessment Freeze program. An owner is not automatically going to receive a Tax Assessment Freeze for being in a historic district. You have to spend at least 25% of the assessed market value on a rehab that meets historic Standards. Both interior and exterior work are eligible costs, but not new construction.

Commissioner Moroney left the meeting.

Peter Schmitt, 610 Clinton, thanked the Commission for their work, time and effort. He supports the creation of a historic district. He loves the area and spent \$50,000 on rehabbing his house. There have been some negative changes to the neighborhood. He agrees they should make an informed decision.

Elaine Petkovsek, 850 S. Kenilworth, stated that she is opposed to a historic district. They were not given enough time to return the postcards. There has not been enough support shown to be a majority. She likes the diversity of the neighborhood. Two of the Non-Contributing properties are the prettiest of the houses.

Commissioner Brandstrader asked if the surveys were available on-line. Planner Kaarre stated that they were not. He noted that every postcard returned was included in the final numbers, including one that was received today.

*Motion by Brandstrader to recommend that the Village Board authorize the Historic Preservation Commission to initiate a formal process to hire a consultant and prepare a nomination of the Hulbert Houses Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. Second by Battaglia. Motion approved 8-0.*

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*AYE: Battoglia, Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Payne, Quinn, Sundling, Chair McGrath*  
*NAY: None*

*Motion by Sundling to recommend that the Village Board authorize the Historic Preservation Commission to initiate a formal process to hire a consultant and prepare a nomination of the Hulbert Houses Historic District as an Oak Park historic district. Second by McLean. Motion approved 5-3.*

*AYE: Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Quinn, Sundling*  
*NAY: Battoglia, Payne, Chair McGrath*

**CONSENT AGENDA**

No business

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Staff Approvals: September 2015 Staff permit approval report

**ADJOURN**

*Motion by Battoglia to adjourn. Second by McLean. Motion approved 8-0.*

*AYE: Battoglia, Brandstrader, Jordahl, McLean, Payne, Quinn, Sundling, Chair McGrath*  
*NAY: None*

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Douglas Kaarre, Urban Planner.