

THE McHENRY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN: GOALS AND STRATEGIES



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**THE
MCHENRY
COUNTY
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
PLAN**

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1: Landmark and preserve

A. Locate, designate, protect and maintain the County's most important historic and natural sites, districts, and landscapes.

The McHenry County Register of Historic Places was created by the McHenry County Historic Preservation Ordinance which was passed by the County Board in October 1991. The ordinance also created a Preservation Commission, and empowered it to evaluate nominations to the Register, recommend designation, and regulate landmarks after designation.

Landmarks are the most important of the County's historic resources. When the County Board designates a landmark, it is conferring on that site a special honor, recognition of its importance to the community because of its historical, cultural, natural, or architectural significance. The landmark may be a rare style of building, a structure with exceptional architectural integrity, the site of an historic event, or a building, such as a school, around which neighbors have historically centered their lives. County landmarks possess common traits. Each is important to the people of the County. Each contributes to the character of the County. Each could be threatened by changes occurring in the County.

The County Board enacted the Preservation Ordinance to begin the process of protecting these sites. To continue the process and achieve the highest level of protection for County landmarks, however, requires the cooperation and support of the McHenry Historic Preservation Commission, individual landowners and government agencies, among others. The Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for locating potential landmarks, recommending their protection, and regulating them once they are designated. Landmark owners are able to provide cooperation through a willingness to list their property on the County Register, following the procedures of the program once the property is listed, and maintaining their landmark property. Municipalities and other agencies can support preservation by recognizing the value of the County's landmarks, including historic and natural sites, districts, and landscapes, and affording them protection when they fall under their jurisdictions through annexation. This cooperative effort by individuals and groups is necessary to provide the maximum level of protection for County landmarks.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Continue to improve the County's inventories and knowledge of its historic and natural resources.
2. Encourage nominations to the McHenry County Register of Historic Places.
3. Afford an appropriate level of protection to all of the County's historic and natural resources.
4. Encourage high standards of maintenance and restoration of the exteriors of historic structures.
5. Encourage the restoration and preservation of the interiors of designated historic structures.
6. Preserve as much as possible the contexts of designated landmark sites, districts,

landscapes, and natural features.

7. Incorporate the preservation of important historic and archaeological resources into all planning and development.
8. Preserve natural resources that are individually significant, or are important in combination with historic structural resources, to the understanding or appreciation of the landscape.
9. Monitor demolition by choice or by neglect of historically significant sites.
10. Contact and coordinate with other plaquing groups to coordinate complimentary programs and minimize duplications of resources.

B. Complete a comprehensive survey.

One of the principal uses of the survey, and the ultimate goal of the Commission is to develop an overall preservation plan for the County. The comprehensive local survey will identify areas of buildings, landscapes and sites which are of particular importance to the history of the County. The survey will also be yet another means to broaden public awareness.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Re-update and incorporate all existing surveys with new information.
2. Conduct a comprehensive survey of all of the unincorporated areas of McHenry County to identify possible historic sites or conservation districts.
3. Encourage a proactive approach to preservation, avoid last minute conflicts to save resources that are threatened with destruction.
4. Increase public awareness and appreciation of our shared architectural heritage.
5. Identify possible historic or conservation districts through a comprehensive survey.
6. Encourage volunteers to participate in the field survey. Students or local volunteers could be trained and accompanied by a commission member.

C. Encourage preservation of the rural landscape and the historic character of the County.

Residential development is an obvious threat to the existing rural environment. Historic houses and barns are often removed to make way for new homes. While many existing buildings are not unique or extremely significant historically or architecturally, they are one reason new residents were and are attracted to McHenry County. If all of the historic resources located on property designated for development are destroyed, the character of the County will be irreversibly changed. McHenry County will become indistinguishable from its sprawling suburban neighbors to the southeast.

Retaining older farm buildings in suburbanized areas may often mean preserving them out of context. However, preserving these visual landmarks helps to maintain the character of, and identify a sense of place for, the community, thus contributing

development. Preservation also provides some measure of continuity to the long term citizens of the County.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage the retention of older structural features such as houses, outbuildings, bridges and fences to provide visual relief and architectural diversity. fences to
2. Retain existing buildings, such as barns and creameries, by facilitating their reuse in ways appropriate to their new environments.
3. Preserve historic structures, landscapes, and features when they help to define or maintain the sense of identity of new or existing communities.
4. Incorporate natural features and archaeological sites into new developments in ways that will ensure their protection and enjoyment.
5. Encourage surface collection of artifacts as less significant archaeological sites if disruption is inevitable due to development.
6. In cooperation with funding sources, develop programs to provide incentives and assistance to qualifying property owners through the use of grants, loans, easements, and tax incentives.

GOAL 2: Foster Municipal Cooperation

Because the McHenry County Historic Preservation Ordinance extends its protection only to the unincorporated areas of the County, it is essential -- if its purposes and objectives are to be achieved for the citizens of the County -- to foster municipal cooperation.

A. Enhance and develop lines of communication between county government, municipal government, interested individuals, and private preservation organizations.

In order to be effective in fostering municipal cooperation, the Commission believes a grass roots consensus is necessary. Natural allies, such as existing municipal preservation groups or commissions and private preservation organization, should be identified, contacted, and invited to participate in a united effort to achieve our mutual goals. The Commission intends to employ the following strategies to meet this challenge:

OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify and contact allied individuals, groups or organizations;
2. Establish and distribute a County preservation newsletter (see Goal 3, infra, for further details regarding the newsletter);
3. Request that each allied group include the Commission on its mailing list(s);
4. Support enactment of a county ordinance requiring demolition permits in all cases;
5. Establish procedures designed to ensure that the Commission is notified of relevant demolition and building permit requests, requests for zoning changes, etc.;
6. Encourage participation by interested groups and individuals, including key leaders from the community, to attend the meetings of the Commission and to participate in its various activities;
7. Encourage participation by all in the activities of allied preservation groups and organizations; and
8. Encourage close cooperation between the Commission and others, including co-sponsorship of appropriate seminars, activities and other events.

B. Cooperate with and assist municipalities to adopt historic preservation legislation and programs.

In order to be effective in the long term, the Commission must provide for protection of County landmarks or districts after they are annexed by the County's expanding municipalities. As more and more of the County's inventory of historic resources comes under municipal control, the efforts of the Commission must be focused on ensuring that the County's municipalities are prepared to continue to preserve these irreplaceable resources at the local level. To this end, the Commission intends to:

OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify and contact municipal leaders and officials who are already concerned

about, or reasonably likely to be concerned about, preservation issues;

2. Draft a Model Municipal Ordinance based upon the McHenry County Historic Preservation Ordinance, including provision providing for automatic, uninterrupted protection for County landmarks or districts that are subsequently annexed by municipalities.
3. After the Commission has drafted, and the McHenry County Board has adopted, an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan (zoning), adapt the County's Comprehensive Plan as a model for use by municipalities;
4. Lobby for municipal preservation legislation and programs;
5. Provide technical assistance and/or testimony to municipalities which are considering preservation legislation or programs;
6. Offer to assist municipalities in implementing local preservation legislation or programs; and
7. Encourage formal agreements among municipalities.

GOAL 3: Cultivate public knowledge

The success of McHenry County Historic Preservation program depends heavily on public support. That support has been demonstrated by the County Board's enactment of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Every effort to further general acceptance of the significance of our historic yore and its impact on the quality of life in McHenry County is of great importance.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide information to the newspapers and media on upcoming programs that will be presented by local historic organizations.
2. Endeavor to have representatives of the Commission contact other organizations to create a cohesive and united effort in the dissemination of information that emphasizes the historic programs that are being offered.
3. Attempt to develop a working relationship with members of the print media who have demonstrated an interest in the preservation movement in the County. Forward information to the press on a timely basis. Provide a list of Commissioners to the local press and media in an effort to be available for comments when necessary.
4. Inform the local radio stations on upcoming events that highlight to the community the positive effect preservation can have on the quality of life we enjoy in McHenry County.
5. Work with other organizations to develop preservation programs. Contact municipalities in an effort to assist them in developing local preservation programs. Attempt to assist historic organizations and historic societies in their programs and preservation efforts. Work cooperatively to prevent last minute struggles to save threatened areas. A cooperative effort will benefit all the citizens of McHenry County.
6. Publish a newsletter addressing preservation issues, announcing special events, meetings, and landmarking activities.
7. Work with the local libraries to develop a preservation bibliography and book exchange program.
8. Sponsor award programs which spotlight outstanding examples of preservation efforts within the County.

GOAL 4: Maintain The Character of the County Through Cooperation With Developers.

One of the primary goals of the Ordinance is to maintain the existing character of the County and reflect this in the character of future development.

In recognition that continued development is both inevitable and beneficial, this Commission will work to develop effective communication to make clear its position and intent, and thereby maximize cooperation with the implementation of this Commission's objectives. In particular, developers and municipalities have the option of protecting their historic resources. Some have taken steps to do so.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop positive relationships with developers by supplying them with the Mchenry County Preservation Ordinance, Commission newsletters and publications. Inform the developers when potential conflict may arise with historic sites. Solicit developer input and suggestions for the resolution of any conflict.
2. Target area developers in an effort to provide assistance and to educate them regarding the options, techniques, products and services available to them that better serve both preservation and development objectives.
3. Recognize and reward developer efforts which are sensitive to preservation.
4. Make available information on the benefits and techniques of preservation through a permanent library of reference materials. developer efforts which are
5. Identify and disseminate case studies of successful preservation efforts showing how these efforts have been an asset to both the development and the community.
6. Review land use legislation within the County for coordination with preservation. Incorporate historic preservation goals more fully into the County's Land Use Plan. Review County ordinances, particularly zoning, building and subdivision, for compatibility with preservation objectives.
7. Develop agreements, procedures, and lines of communication between County and other government agencies to promote a coordinated effort to protect and improve historic sites.
8. Develop a hot list of eminently threatened properties, and consider appropriate action.

GOAL 5: Promote Economic Development

Economic viability of preservation is vital to its success. Preservation efforts touch on many economic issues; from increased property values to tourism, jobs, grants and loans. McHenry County has an abundance of historic resources and, therefore is important to County residents and the preservation of the County's past.

To illustrate how preservation can generate economic activity, consider the following: it is believed that establishment of a historic district will lead to above average property values. This phenomenon has not been statistically proven at this point in time; however, this expectation is considered reasonable by professional realtors and preservationists. Residents of districts/landmarks, generally rise to the occasion, and put time and effort into the care and maintenance of their property. This care is illustrated in the new roofs, new electrical, heating and plumbing systems, landscaping, painting, etc. All of this economic activity and investment creates jobs and pride in the community. This pride may eventually manifest itself into house walks and other tourist events, which also stimulate the local economy. It is the intent of the Commission to stimulate this scenario throughout McHenry County.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Promote the adaptive reuse of obsolete historic structures;
2. Research the possibilities of offering financial support for projects within historic districts or for individual landmarks;
3. Encourage continued high levels of construction employment by promoting and facilitating rehabilitation projects;
4. Promote tourism associated with the historic sites, districts, landscapes, and natural features of the county;
5. Revitalize and/or maintain older and historic commercial and industrial areas, and
6. Enhance property values by promoting maintenance and rehabilitation projects in historic areas.

STRATEGIES

FACADE PROGRAM

Commercial building facade programs have been an effective, additional tool to foster the restoration/preservation of communities' business and commercial districts. Commercial building owners often have specific needs and concerns that warrant a targeted effort to encourage the preservation of our "downtowns." These efforts can also be more complex given the nature of the other parties and issues involved in addition to the building owners' needs. Consideration should be given to the current and future tenants, any downtown Merchants' Association, Chambers of Commerce, municipal building and zoning departments, as well as the general public.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Collect and evaluate similar programs from other communities. Interview the respective administrators of the programs to assist in evaluating the suitability and viability of our targeted commercial districts.
2. Determine objectives, priorities, applicant requirements, requirements for compliance, award benefits, time frame, etc.
3. Coordinate with potential funding/lending sources to further determine the capabilities of proposed programs.
4. In cooperation with the above interested parties, develop a suitable facade program to be presented to and approved by the County Board.
5. Solicit appropriate and viable applicants for inclusion into the program. Direct, review and otherwise administer compliance and program benefits.

TOURS

Historic district or theme tours are a popular way of increasing public awareness and appreciation for a community's historic resources. It can also be an effective way to generate some operating income. Accordingly, with due consideration to the rights of nearby property owners, the Commission shall provide assistance to groups offering tours and encourage inclusion of themes or districts not receiving due consideration.

OBJECTIVES:

Contact each existing tour conducting organization and extend an offer to provide any assistance we may be able to offer. This assistance may include such things as:

- Organization
- Soliciting participating property owners
- Public relations, including working with local media, publications or tour guides
- Historical/architectural research
- Soliciting and/or volunteering for docent work

AWARD PROGRAMS

The development of historic preservation award programs have been an effective tool in encouraging, giving recognition to, and educating the public regarding preservation efforts. Based on targeted objectives and public response, award programs, shall be tailored to address specific areas. The programs can be run in conjunction with other projects, events such as National Preservation Week or local events.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Develop an Awards Program based on specific objectives and anticipated public participation. For example:
 - . Best completed restoration (general, residential or commercial, usually this is for external treatments).
 - . Best example of a sympathetic addition.
 - . Best example of adaptive reuse.
 - . Best example of contextual infill for a neighborhood, individual or group who made the most significant contribution to preservation in the county.
 - . Other categories might include separate awards for each representative community.
2. Coordinate with any additional sponsors if needed, possibly merchants or providers of any prizes or gifts. Any prizes or gifts should relate to continued preservation efforts, examples might include tools or supplies used in restoration/preservation or gift subscriptions to restoration/preservation oriented publications. The award itself could be a framed certificate or plaque.
3. Publicize the event and solicit applications. Collect, review and nominate applicants for the appropriate award(s) and present the award and any gifts at a public event with as much local media coverage as is possible.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

The Commission's objectives for its own "discussion groups" can be found under Education Programs. Other discussion groups can be assisted additionally by this Commission by either directly providing speakers or acting as liaison by contacting or referring appropriate and knowledgeable speakers to address preservation related topics for interested groups.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Maintain a file, in conjunction with the directory mentioned under Preservation Library, as a resource for providing experienced contacts for the possibility of speaking or making presentations.
2. Individual Commission members should make an effort to be available to speak on behalf of the Commission or on topics of restoration/preservation they may feel qualified to address.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In recognition of the fact that the success of any preservation effort, and the realization of its benefits, depends on the understanding and support of the community; one of the highest priorities depends on effective communication and development of educational opportunities.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop educational programs around preservation themes both independently and in cooperation with other tangent organizations to increase public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the importance and benefits of historic preservation, both economic and in terms of "quality of life."
2. Inter-agency cooperation should be sought with municipalities, school districts, historical organizations and other neighborhood and civic groups.
3. Encourage the study of the history of McHenry County, including its architectural, economic and natural resources.
4. Encourage the preservation and study of the archaeological resources of McHenry County.
5. Promote the dissemination of technical information that could assist property owners in their research and restoration/maintenance efforts.
6. Encourage and assist organizations and municipalities in their individual preservation efforts.
7. Develop and distribute publications such as newsletters, brochures, posters, etc. that relate to historic preservation.
8. Promote media coverage of preservation efforts.
9. Develop a resource library of books, periodicals, newsletters, etc., as an educational aid to the community. (See Preservation Library.)

PRESERVATION LIBRARY

A resource library addressing the specifics of preservation related topics and issues can often provide a broader, more expert and convenient assistance to the community in its preservation efforts.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a research library on preservation themes independently or in conjunction with existing libraries, museums and/or schools.
2. Collect a bibliography of available books, periodicals, newsletters, slide and video publications dealing with preservation issues and themes.
3. Coordinate with other local and regional organizations to avoid duplication of effort, broaden the selection for the community as a whole and encourage shared resources.

RESOURCE LIST

A resource list of sources of additional assistance, information, professional services and governmental assistance relative to historic preservation is another valuable resource to those involved in preservation efforts.

OBJECTIVES:

Compile and have available updated "resource lists" that would include the following"

1. All preservation related organizations within the county.
2. All regional organizations, including neighboring counties, Chicago metropolitan area organizations, Illinois State, and Federal government preservation offices and groups.
3. A listing of professional service and trades people who are specialists in or expert in historic preservation related areas.

NETWORKING

A pro-active effort to network can produce many positive results, including accumulation of information and assistance, development, or relationships, and the ability to present a preservation aware position. a preservation aware position.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Based on the above "resource list", initiate contact with all groups and invite representatives to attend McHenry County Historic Preservation meetings. Conversely, every effort should be made to send a representative to attend functions, programs, or meetings sponsored by the other organizations.

2. This would include not just preservation related organizations, but also county and municipal groups, public and private.
3. Through the development of a newsletter, inform other organizations of the actions taken, programs and projects of the Commission. Likewise, request any published updates available from them.
4. Promote public attendance at Commission meetings through regular listings in local/regional media sources of the date, time and location of Commission meetings and programs.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

One of the major stumbling blocks confronting individuals seeking to restore historical structures is a lack of easily obtainable information. While much has been written on the historical, architectural and financial aspects of rehabilitation, the layman seldom knows where to find it or how to interpret seemingly confusing advice.

OBJECTIVES:

1. While Commission members are not necessarily expert in any particular aspect of historic preservation, the Commission will act to assist individuals in securing appropriate expert assistance.
2. As already outlined in the preservation ordinance every effort will be made to have represented on the Commission, individuals from various professions including, architecture, building trades, law, real estate, history, and related disciplines.
3. Technical assistance will be provided in the following areas (though not limited to):
 - . Historical: Provide documentation or resources to trace the history of a structure or site.
 - . Architectural: Provide information relating to the restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive reuse of historic structures and landmarks.
 - . Financial: Provide information on available federal, state and local preservation assistance programs.

GRANT PROGRAMS

The regulation of historic properties is generally accompanied with the development of financial incentives to ease the burden of retaining and restoring older properties. This can be done in a variety of ways including loans, grants, easements, professional assistance, and/or tax assessment freezes.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Obtain copies of similar programs from other preservation organizations. Review the various programs and evaluate the viability for some form of duplication within McHenry County. Consult with administrators of existing programs to aid in evaluation and suitability.
2. Consult with potential funding sources to determine viability and willingness to participate.

4. The Commission will work to administer the effective and beneficial outcome of the program. This would include the solicitation of appropriate program projects, continued review and approval, and program compliance.
5. Through the successful administration of such programs, the Commission will work to expand the program to provide greater assistance to the community.

LOBBY FOR LEGISLATION

Recognizing that historic structures and sites are often at risk even though they may have some form of historic recognition or protection, the Commission will actively work to encourage the upholding of existing protections, further strengthening of appropriate preservation related legislation.

Historic preservation does not exist within a vacuum and must be weighed along with the other needs and concerns of the community. As such, the Commission will endeavor to maintain an awareness of those actions being considered by local municipalities, county, state and federal governments that may impact the built and natural historic environment.

Given the availability of time, energy and resources, along with the weighing of overall community needs and the benefits of any particular preservation effort, the Commission would best be served by "selecting its shots" and focusing its efforts in those areas that it can provide the greatest benefit to the community.

Just as the Commission must encourage, support and cooperate with municipal preservation efforts in order to achieve its goals, it must also encourage the adoption of legislation sympathetic to historic preservation at the county, state and federal level.

The Commission may, therefore, from time to time, propose, support and/or oppose legislation and administrative decisions or actions at any level of government which affect or are related to historic preservation efforts or issues. No lobbying of any kind shall be done in the name of the Commission without express prior approval from a majority of the Commissioners.

To achieve these objectives, the Commission shall subscribe to appropriate publications, and join appropriate associations or organizations, which will enable it to be aware of opportunities to submit written or oral testimony regarding pending legislation. In addition, when appropriate, the Commission may draft and propose local, county state or federal legislation consistent with the goals of the McHenry County Historic Preservation Ordinance.