

**Village of Kenilworth
Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning
Recommendations Regarding Historic Preservation**

BACKGROUND

In June of 2004, The Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning conducted a village-wide survey to gauge community opinion about the issues of demolition, new home construction and additions, village character, and long-range planning in Kenilworth. The intent of the survey was to evaluate, in an accurate and unbiased manner, community opinion on these issues.

Based on the results of the community-wide survey, the Ad Hoc Committee drafted a Vision Statement as a foundation for the development of a comprehensive plan, and outlined goals and objectives regarding how the village should address the issues relating to teardowns, new construction, and change of Village Character. This vision statement was subsequently adopted by the Village Board, and is as follows:

VISION STATEMENT

PROTECT THE VILLAGE OF KENILWORTH'S CHARACTER AS A COMMUNITY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY, THROUGH PRESERVATION OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, AND THE MAINTENANCE OF HOMES, NEIGHBORHOODS AND SPECIAL PLACES THAT LEND SIGNIFICANT AESTHETIC AND CULTURAL VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY.

The five formal goals, and corresponding objectives that resulted from analysis of the survey results, were presented to the Village Board of Trustees in January, 2005. The five goals are as follows:

- **GOAL 1: *Prevent new homes or additions to existing homes from degrading the neighborhood character or disrupting neighborhood continuity or compatibility among homes, and maintain a suburban vs. an urban feel to the village.***
- **GOAL 2: *Preserve green space in the Village***
- **GOAL 3: *Minimize the loss of older, smaller or historically significant homes to teardowns.***
- **GOAL 4: *Preserve and enhance the resource of mature trees and attractive public and private landscapes***
- **GOAL 5: *Minimize the impact of construction activity on the enjoyment of life in the Village***

The Committee has previously made recommendations to the Village Board regarding Goals 2, 4 and 5, specifically the design of new homes, preservation of green space, and construction management. The Board has accepted recommendations addressing the Goal Three objective of "encouraging the renovation of existing homes" through

zoning credits and amendments to the Zoning Board of Appeals ordinance, and the Board has sent these recommendations on to the Building, Planning and Zoning Committee for further definition and public comment.

Regarding historic preservation specifically, the survey results showed strong resident support, as seen below:

- 73% of Village Survey respondents marked six or higher (scale of 1- 10) that they want Historic Districts that encourage preserving or renovating existing homes. (Question six)
- 62% marked six or higher (scale of 1-10) that they support Historic Preservation district(s) that conserve historic character and require approval of changes to building front facades. (Question six)
- 61% of respondents indicated that the demolition of older homes negatively impacted Kenilworth (Question 2)
- The second most frequent written comment was that the Village should preserve its existing character---prevent teardowns and preserve homes, and that new construction was negatively impacting Village character.

In response to such strong Village support for historic preservation, the Ad Hoc Committee has researched and discussed the options available to the Village, and the benefits associated with each. (See attached summary). After careful consideration, the Committee has concluded that a historic preservation program, tailored to the needs of Kenilworth, can be an effective tool to achieve the goals and objectives derived from the community survey.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the creation of National Register Historic Districts in all or part(s) of the Village that apply. This approach is being recommended because it provides the greatest flexibility for property owners:

- Provides owners attractive voluntary financial incentive options that encourage renovation over demolition;
- National Register designation does not restrict an owner's ability to modify or even demolish their home, and requires no review of planned rehabilitation work;
- National Register districts can encompass the greatest number of properties, can make the eligibility easier for some homes to attain Landmark status, and will provide the greatest number of homeowners access to incentives for rehabilitation.

It is important to note that local preservation options, (both individual local landmarks and local landmark districts), should also be considered, especially if parts of the Village don't fall into National Register districts, or if some resources important to the Village are not eligible for listing in the National Register, or simply because local designation is necessary for local recognition of some structures, sites, etc.

A distinction should be made between individual landmarks and historic districts. Both are possible with either National Register designation or by designation by a local

Historic Commission. The same structure can be designated “historic” both nationally and locally, either individually or in a district. (See attached.) District designation potentially benefits the entire community, and individual designation is an option available to historically significant individual homes, or architecturally significant homes not within districts. (Kenilworth currently has five properties listed individually on the National Register, making them eligible for tax benefits). However, recognition can be more difficult for individual structures to achieve, and often there are only a few individually designated National Historic landmarks in an area. Usually a larger number of properties are eligible to be a “contributing structures” in historic districts

It is therefore the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee that the Village Board create a Historic Preservation Ordinance, which establishes a Historic Preservation Commission, to accomplish the immediate goal of establishing National Register Historic Districts within the Village. The Preservation Commission should also work to “minimize the loss of historically significant homes” by defining and communicating Village Character, providing information to property owners about financial incentives, methods and materials available for the renovation and restoration of buildings, and establishing an architectural “identity” for the Village by applying for landmark designation for individual properties and/or districts, and producing educational materials and programs.

PURPOSE

To create a Historic Preservation Commission with the mission of preserving the character of community life by identifying and recognizing the significance of those structures, sites, areas of the village, geographic features, and trees which exemplify or reflect the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the village, and educating property owners and residents about how to preserve, protect and enhance their homes or buildings.

The Commission should work toward inclusion of Kenilworth historic districts in the National Register of Historic Places. Districts would serve several purposes, some of which are: increase public awareness of our architectural and historical resources, enable homeowners to access tax benefits available for qualified rehabilitation work on contributing structures, and increase community pride. National Register listing is an *honorary* designation that puts no restrictions on home rehabilitation, no review of changes, no restrictions on a property owner’s ability to tear down a structure.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Historic Preservation Commission shall:

- 1) Through ongoing survey and research efforts, identify and recommend to the Village board those structures, neighborhoods, sites, geographic features and trees which have historic, community, architectural, or aesthetic importance, interest, or value and should be recognized, preserved, acquired or acknowledged, including, but not limited to, the designation as national or local Historic Districts and/or landmarks.

- 2) Recommend to the Village Board that it complete the nomination process for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
- 3) Gather, create, organize and disseminate materials such as maps, newsletters, brochures and pamphlets, and administer public educational programs, including a website, which promote the appreciation of local historical character, architecture and historic preservation.
- 4) Provide technical assistance to property owners wishing to preserve or restore significant properties and/or artifacts within, or significant to, the Village by developing and maintaining technical information pertaining to the physical and financial aspects of preservation, renovation, rehabilitation and reuse, and on procedures for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and to make such information available to the owners of potential and designated landmarks.
- 5) Compile and maintain information concerning potential and registers of potential and designated landmarks, including all information required for each designation. In addition, compile and regularly update information about historic landmarks and/or districts or Historic Commissions in surrounding communities.
- 6) Seek funding from public or private agencies and/or individuals, where appropriate, to accomplish its purpose. This could include hosting fundraising activities such as architectural tours of the Village; events to celebrate our homes, buildings and neighborhoods, or any other historically related events or items for sale to raise funds as necessary.
- 7) Communicate, cooperate with and solicit advice from the Kenilworth Historical Society and, when appropriate, include representatives of the Society in the Commission's deliberations, where necessary.
- 8) Upon receipt of an application for local landmark designation from a property owner, to hold public hearings and make findings and recommendations to the Village Board on the application.
- 9) Include the significance of open space as a contributing factor to the character of historic districts.
- 10) To establish an appropriate system of certificates, markers or plaques for designated local landmarks and/or historic districts, if necessary.
- 11) Upon authorization by the Village Board, undertake any other action or activity necessary or appropriate to the implementation of the powers and duties, or the implementation of its purpose, including requesting technical advice and assistance from Village staff members and to retain specialists or consultants when expressly authorized by the Village Board.
- 12) Investigate the economic ramifications to the citizens of the tax impact of the programs.

COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP AND TERM OF OFFICE

The Historic Preservation Commission shall consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of nine members, including the Chair, each of who serve without compensation. A majority of the members of the Commission should be residents of the village, with members appointed by the Village President with the advice and consent of the Village Board of Trustees. The term of office of each regular member shall be for three years, or until a successor is appointed.

The Village President shall seek recommendations for appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission from qualified individuals and organizations including the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning and the Kenilworth Historical Society.

The President shall consider residents who would bring special skills or knowledge to the Commission such as architects, historians, owners of structures currently listed on the National Register, persons well versed in the rehabilitation of old structures, artists, craftsmen or tradesmen, museum curators, librarians or others.

CRITERIA FOR LOCAL LANDMARKS AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The Commission shall consider the criteria provided here in order to recommend a structure, building, or site for designation as a local landmark, or an area for designation as a local historic district.

A. General Considerations:

1. The structure, building, site, or area has significant character, interest, or value as part of the historic, aesthetic, or architectural characteristics of the Village, the State, or the United States.
2. The structure, building, site, or area is closely identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the Village, the State, or the United States.
3. The structure, building, site, or area involves the notable efforts of, or is the only known example of work by, a master builder, designer, architect, architectural firm, or artist whose individual accomplishment has influenced the development of the Village, the State, or the United States.
4. The unique location or singular physical characteristics of the structure, building, site, or area make it an established or familiar visual feature.
5. The activities associated with a structure, building, site, or area make it a current or former focal point of reference in the Village.
6. The structure or building is of a type or is associated with a use once common but now rare, or is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure and possesses a high level of integrity or architectural significance.
7. The structure, building, or site is in an area that has yielded or is likely to yield historically significant information, or even prehistoric data.

B. Architectural Significance:

1. The structure, building, site, or area represents certain distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a time period, type of property, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials.
2. The structure, building, site, or area embodies elements of design, detail, material, or craftsmanship of exceptional quality.

3. The structure, building, site, or area exemplifies a particular architectural style in terms of detail, material, and workmanship.
4. The structure, building, site, or area is one of the few remaining examples of a particular architectural style
5. The structure, building, site, or area is, or is part of, a contiguous grouping that has a sense of cohesiveness expressed through a similarity of style characteristics, time period, type of property, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials and accents the architectural significance of an area.

C. Historic Significance:

1. The structure, building, site, or area is an exceptional example of an historic or vernacular style, or is one of the few such remaining properties of its kind in the Village.
2. The structure, building, site, or area has a strong association with the life or activities of a person or persons who has significantly contributed to or participated in the historic events of the United States, the State, or the Village.
3. The structure, building, site, or area is associated with an organization or group, whether formal or informal, from which persons have significantly contributed to or participated in the historic events of the United States, the State, or the Village.
4. The structure, building, site, or area is associated with a notable historic event.

CONCLUSION

The Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning recommends the establishment of a Kenilworth Historic Commission, charged with the task of creating historic district or districts and/or landmarks in Kenilworth. This recommendation is supported by strong Village survey results in support of both preservation of the existing character of the Village, as well as preserving green space, minimizing the loss of older homes and encouraging the renovation of existing homes. National Register historic districts are honorary districts, inclusion in which allows owners of “contributing” homes and buildings access to a variety of State and Federal tax benefits. Inclusion as a contributing structure in a National District, of all the options considered, allows the greatest number of property owners the maximum number of available tax credits and/or deductions, while incurring no restrictions on a property owner’s ability to modify or demolish their home or building. It also potentially results in increased community pride and increased knowledge about Kenilworth’s history and significant architectural past and present. It is the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee that this document should be referred to the Community Affairs committee to be put into an ordinance to be approved by the Village Board of Trustees.

APPENDIX

Comparison of Historic Recognition Programs and Benefits, attached.