

Update: Village of Kenilworth National Register District Nomination

The Community Affairs Committee of the Village Board hosted a kick-off public forum regarding The National Register of Historic Places on January 23, 2008. This informational forum featured consultants Susan Benjamin and Theodore Hild, who are preparing Kenilworth's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Ms. Benjamin, an architectural historian, lecturer, and author, whose book North Shore Chicago: Houses of the Lakefront Suburbs 1890-1940, spoke about the variety of architectural styles that shaped Kenilworth. Mr. Hild, the former Deputy Director of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, explained what the National Register is, the nomination process, and the opportunities for public input built into the process. Many questions were asked, and many are reproduced here, with answers, for your information.

Why is the Village Board nominating Kenilworth to the National Register?

There are several reasons:

- The National Register was chosen as a compromise between residents who requested more prescriptive programs and those who preferred none. The Village's listing on the National Register of Historic Places celebrates the community's history, planning, and architecture while at the same time bringing no restriction on the alteration, sale, or demolition of an owner's property.
- Becoming a National Register District is a positive, non-regulatory way to address the range of historic preservation desires that have been discussed in our village. It is completely honorary, and is review, regulation, and restriction-free for property owners
- Many residents have expressed support for preservation of community character which can be evidenced by the 2004 Village survey results and public input received during the Village's recent process to develop Kenilworth's first comprehensive plan.
- Listing on the National Register of Historic Places celebrates Kenilworth's history, planning, and architecture.
- The National Register nomination process will help the Village recognize and define the historic significance of homes and neighborhoods, for current and future residents.
- Listing on the National Register is prestigious, particularly since very few entire villages meet the criteria to be listed in their entirety. Currently only two Illinois communities are listed on the National Register: Riverside (for its Olmsted landscape design) and Elsah (a Civil War era Mississippi River town).
- Kenilworth's designation as a National Register Historic District may enhance the Village's marketability to both new residents and businesses. Designation formally recognizes the exceptional quality of our individual homes

as well as the planning, design, and cohesive nature of the Village as a whole.

- Listing on the National Register provides owners of historic residential and commercial properties the opportunity to participate in State and Federal financial incentive programs, with little or no impact on other taxpayers. Additionally, technical rehabilitation assistance may be available to owners of commercial buildings on the National Register.

For residential developers, listing may increase the attractiveness of rehabilitating existing Kenilworth homes by enabling developers to pass tax benefits on to new resident owners of renovated properties.

What other communities in our area have National Register Districts?

There are numerous National Register Districts along the North Shore and in the Chicago area. On the North Shore, there are currently four districts in EVANSTON, two in WILMETTE, five in HIGHLAND PARK, one in LAKE BLUFF and five in LAKE FOREST. Wilmette's Ouilmette North District (the Chestnut-Ashland-Greenwood-Elmwood area of Wilmette), was added to the National Register in 2006, and is roughly the same size as Kenilworth's district would be.

How did the Board arrive at the decision to undertake a National Register nomination?

A wide variety of options were considered as a response to resident requests for a preservation program. The National Register nomination comes after research and study over a period of four years, and at the direction of multiple Village Boards, multiple Community Affairs Committees, and the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning, which was comprised of three Village Trustees and four residents. During this period the Village Board voted unanimously to refer the National Register recommendation to the Community Affairs Committee of the Village Board; to fund historic preservation in the FY 2008 budget; to solicit and to hire historic preservation consultants; and to fund the current nomination process.

What are the tax benefits associated with a Kenilworth home being listed on the National Register of Historic Places?

Since 1983, Illinois owners of historic homes that are listed on the National Register are eligible to receive a property tax assessment freeze if they undertake a qualified rehabilitation of their property. The Property Tax Assessment Freeze is offered by the State of Illinois to provide a financial incentive to owners, including developers, for the renovation of historic homes.

How does the Property Tax Assessment Freeze work?

A property's assessed valuation is frozen for eight years at the level it was the year the approved rehabilitation began. At the end of the eight years, the assessed value increases gradually, over a four year period, to the value of the improved property. The freeze, therefore, offers an 11 year tax benefit to property owners. In addition, Federal income tax incentives are also available to owners of income producing properties and residential property listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

What must a property owner do to receive the freeze?

An owner needs to spend at least 25% of the Assessor's Market Value on the rehabilitation, and the rehabilitation needs to follow historic property rehabilitation guidelines. The project must be approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Will properties participating in the State of Illinois Property Tax Assessment Freeze raise our property taxes?

The effect of a Kenilworth property taking the freeze on other Kenilworth property taxpayers would be de minimis and would have to be weighed against any benefits of the resulting renovated historic home which has met the State program's cost threshold and architectural standards. The number of property owners participating in the tax assessment freeze program is expected to be low in Kenilworth for a variety of reasons:

- Experience of other North Shore communities show use of the assessment freeze has been extremely low or not at all.
- Many Kenilworth homes have already undergone major renovations.
- Proposed projects must follow rehabilitation standards for both interior and exterior work and be approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.
- Projects must meet a cost threshold.
- Cook County already gives a four year "Home Improvement Exemption" whereby improvements of up to \$75,000 are not added to a property's assessed valuation for four years.

Although Kenilworth's tax base is small, only two taxing entities draw revenue exclusively from Kenilworth property owners (the Park District and the Village). In addition, Sears School taxes primarily Kenilworth property owners. Taxes paid to these three taxing bodies make up about 55% of your tax bill. The other 45% of your property tax bill is paid to taxing bodies funded by a larger number of taxpayers such as Cook County.

Will a National Register listing affect Sears School's ability to renovate its facilities?

As with any private home or business, National Register designation does not require any review, restriction or regulation on the alteration, sale or demolition of property. However, if the School used State funding for rehabilitation work, whether it was listed on the National Register or not, it would be subject to State regulations.

Does the Village need to put the National Register question on the November ballot as an advisory referendum?

Past and current members of both the Village Board and Community Affairs Committee considered the question of a referendum and decided not to pursue a referendum because:

- The National Register process already provides a built in process for all property owners to express their support or opposition to the establishment of a district. During the public input phase of the nomination process every property owner is given the opportunity to approve or object to their property being listed in the proposed district. If over 51% of property owners object the district will not be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- In the case of a ballot referendum, some properties may have multiple voters who are not all property owners, and some properties may not have any owners who vote in Kenilworth. The National Register process makes sure that all property owners have the opportunity to register their approval or objection to being included in a nominated historic district.
- Unlike voting for a ballot referendum, which takes place over the course of one day (unless an absentee ballot is used), the National Register process provides each property owner with an entire month to approve or to object to the nomination.
- The National Register's built-in process, widely used across America for decades, ensures that property owners receive correct and complete information about the proposed district and the National Register at the same time they may register their approval or objection to the proposed district.

How will residents stay informed about the progress of the nomination, the details of the nomination, and the public input process?

Residents will be informed through both printed and electronic media including articles in the Village newsletter, information on the Village website, a notice in the Wilmette Life newspaper, Village Board and Community Affairs Committee meetings, meeting minutes, a public forum to present the nomination, and by a letter mailed directly to all property owners in the Village. Both the letter and the public forum will explain the architectural significance of the proposed district; what it means to have National Register designation; where to get more information; and how to register approval or objection. (Continued on Page 6)

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What is the downside of Kenilworth being on the National Register?

After researching a variety of topics and sources, the Village Board has not identified a downside to Kenilworth being listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Becoming a National Register Historic District celebrates our village's history, planning, and architecture, and brings with it no restriction on the alteration, sale, or demolition of your property.

Will National Register designation lead to a potentially restrictive local historic district?

National historic districts and local historic districts are very different entities. They are created independently of one another, by different processes, and by different levels of government. The National Park Service oversees the National Register of Historic Places. Local governments create and oversee local historic districts. Your village government has chosen a National Register Historic District as the best historic district option for Kenilworth, for the reasons previously outlined. Neither the Village Board nor the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning have ever recommended the creation of a local historic district, and one is not under consideration. We invite you to visit the Village website at www.villageofkenilworth.org, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency website at <http://www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/index.htm> (click on "Financial Incentives" for information on the programs listed above). For more information on the National Register, please see the January 8, 2008 Village of Kenilworth newsletter. Past newsletters can be found on the Village's website. The Board also invites you to attend upcoming meetings and forums for much more information about this topic.

Winnetka Fire Department to Test Kenilworth Fire Hydrants

The Winnetka Fire Department will be flow-testing fire hydrants during the months of May through September. Flow testing will be conducted Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Flow testing of fire hydrants aids the Winnetka Fire and Water departments in determining the water system capacities, and in pre-planning for emergencies. Fire hydrants are also checked for visibility and accessibility to fire personnel in the event of a fire.

Sediment accumulations are removed from the system during flow testing. You may notice water discoloration for a brief period of time after the flow test in your area. While the water is safe to drink, it can discolor laundry. If you experience discoloration of your water, run your sink for approximately twenty minutes or until the discoloration subsides.

Be Prepared for Tornado Season: March to June

Tornadoes are a relatively rare weather phenomenon, but in the Midwest between March and September the weather conditions may cause these deadly storms to form. By learning a few simple facts and taking proper preventative measures, you can keep disaster from catching you unprepared.

A "**Tornado Watch**" means that conditions are right for a tornado. Plan your actions. Stay Alert! Always stay tuned to a radio (battery operated) or television for further developments during the "**Watch**" period.

A "**Tornado Warning**" means the National Weather Service has sighted or detected a tornado on radar. Take Shelter! Tornadoes strike fast. Often there are only minutes to act.

When the Village of Kenilworth staff members become aware that the National Weather Service has issued a "**Tornado Warning**" for our area, the audible "Outdoor Warning Siren System" (OWSS) will be activated. This system uses an emergency siren located at the Kenilworth Village Hall at 419 Richmond Road. The siren is activated to alert persons who are outside that they need to seek proper indoor shelter. The emergency sirens are tested on the first Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. If there is a "**Tornado Warning**," do not call the Fire or Police Departments. Instead, take cover in your predetermined shelter (the basement or the lowest level of the building). Stay there until the danger has passed. If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway or small inner room without windows, such as a bathroom or closet. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls. Stay away from corners because they attract debris. Get under a piece of sturdy furniture such as a workbench or heavy table and hold on to it. Use cushions or pillows when available to protect head and neck. If sturdy furniture is not available, make yourself as small a "target" as possible by squatting low to the ground and placing your hands on your knees with your head between them.

After the OWSS has stopped, monitor the radio and local television channels for emergency information or instructions. If a touchdown has occurred, check for injured victims. Do not attempt to move severely injured victims unless absolutely necessary. Call 911 and wait for emergency medical assistance to arrive.

For further information, call the Kenilworth Police Department at (847) 251-2141 or the Winnetka Fire Department at (847) 501-6029.

