

# In More Detail: Kenilworth Pursues National Register of Historic Places Nomination

During the next six months, we will be learning more about Kenilworth's history...and we hope you can help. Do you have old architectural plans gathering dust in the attic? Do you know who designed and built your house, or when? Any information you have would be greatly appreciated, and should be sent to Brad Burke, Village Manager, at 419 Richmond Road, or [bburke@villageofkenilworth.org](mailto:bburke@villageofkenilworth.org).

After years of research, analysis and discussion, the Village Board of Trustees has decided to nominate the entire village of Kenilworth to the National Register of Historic Places. Two preeminent experts in the field of architectural history and preservation services, Ted Hild and Susan Benjamin will be preparing and presenting the nomination to the State Historic Sites Advisory Council.

As part of the nomination process, historical information about Kenilworth's place in history, within larger historic contexts like development of the North Shore, transportation and suburbanization, planning and development, and architectural and landscape design, will be studied. We also hope to discover much more information about individual homes and important residents who helped shape our village and Chicago's businesses and institutions.

## **Background**

While a wide range of historic preservation options have been studied by the Village, a *nonrestrictive* National Register historic district was chosen as a positive, non-regulatory way to celebrate our history. National Register Historic District(s) were originally recommended to the Village Board, and are currently being pursued because they allow the greatest number of houses to be eligible for designation.

The resulting district will not require review of any architectural changes to, or restrict the demolition of, homes.

In the 2005 Kenilworth Village Survey, 73% of respondents said they wanted historic districts in Kenilworth. In addition, the idea that the Village should preserve its existing character was the second most repeated written comment. These sentiments were repeated during the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Community Workshop where in answering the question "list the top three issues in Kenilworth", residents listed preservation, historic preservation, preservation of community character and historic districts as top priorities.

The Community Affairs Committee of the Village Board of Trustees has done much work on this issue over the past few years, including two Community Forums on the National Register of Historic Places, a four page letter to the community about preservation and the National Register of Historic Places, multiple Village newsletter articles about the National Register and Community Affairs Committee activities, study of available preservation options, and hosting preservation experts at multiple public meetings and on village tours.

## **The National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the inventory of buildings, districts and sites that are significant to the history of our nation. Preserving historic properties important to our heritage became national policy a century ago, with the Antiquities Act of 1906, and was affirmed again with The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which created the National Register as we know it today.

The National Register of Historic Places includes 80,000 listings representing 1,400,000 historic

resources representing every state in the nation, and is growing all the time. Illinois alone has over 1,500 listings on the National Register, many of which are districts. To qualify as a district an area must have a large percentage of original homes and meet the following as well as one (or more) of four related criteria:

*"The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association."*

Many North Shore suburbs have one or more districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places including: Evanston, Wilmette, Highland Park, Lake Bluff, and Lake Forest. In addition, parts of Barrington, Elgin, Geneva, Glen Ellyn, Hinsdale, Naperville, Oak Park, River Forest, and Woodstock are listed on the National Register. Only two Illinois villages are currently listed in their entirety: Riverside, planned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in 1868, and Elsau, a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Mississippi River town.

## **Why is Kenilworth Special?**

Historic suburbs are of interest to historians, particularly since they are becoming an increasingly smaller percentage of homes in America. To put this into perspective, approximately 80% of American homes were built after WWII.

Historic suburbs in general are special because their design required a variety of disciplines. To quote from an article entitled Historic Residential Suburbs in the National Register on the National Park Service website:

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*“Suburbs are of growing interest to preservation advocates who see them as important parts of our heritage. Scholars of the American landscape and built environment recognize in suburbs the synthesis of several aspects of design, including community planning and development, architecture, and landscape architecture.”*

Kenilworth’s planning and development was imagined by some of the preeminent practitioners in these fields. The Village was carefully planned with attention to detail, and provided early residents with the finest modern amenities like sidewalks, paved roads and buried utilities, no alleys, necessary cultural and educational institutions, and high quality, individually designed homes. Subsequent additions to the Village were planned using the same concepts. Because of our resulting quality and community character, Kenilworth was just listed as one of Illinois’ “150 Best Places”, by the American Institute of Architects (see related article in this newsletter), and was approved by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to be nominated as a whole to the National Register of Historic Places.

### Benefits of being on the National Register

Because the National Register is the country’s official list of historically significant properties, listing carries considerable prestige. It recognizes the historic value of a property or neighborhood, may inspire community pride, and may encourage present and future owners to value and modernize their historic homes. In addition, owners of registered properties may donate historic preservation easements on their property, nominate a qualified renovation project for the State property tax assessment freeze program, and receive technical assistance for maintenance and rehabilitation projects. Through the nomination process, we also hope to gain more knowledge of village history for both current and future residents.

### Steps for National Register Designation in Illinois

The National Register of Historic Places is a Federal program, and applicants in all states must go through similar procedures for consideration. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, and is administered in each state by a State Historic Preservation Office\*.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency evaluates applications and sends applications that warrant further consideration to the Illinois Historic

Sites Advisory Council, which meets quarterly. Kenilworth plans to submit our nomination in June, 2008 for review at the September, 2008 Council meeting. If the Council concurs that the nominated district meets the criteria, the nomination is sent to the State Historic Preservation Officer for official nomination and then to the Keeper of the Register at the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. for final approval and placement on the National Register.

There will be opportunities for public input at regular Community Affairs Committee meetings, when the nomination will be presented to the community in June, and during the time the proposed nomination is reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Please support this important project by providing the Village with any information you may have about your home and/or its past owners. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

***For more information, please plan to attend the Community Affairs Committee meeting January 23<sup>rd</sup> at 7 pm at the Kenilworth Assembly Hall.***

\* For information about the national program, see [www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/index.htm), for Illinois information go to [www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/index.htm](http://www.illinoishistory.gov/ps/index.htm)

## **Please Plan to Attend**

### **Community Affairs Committee**

### **National Register Historic District Nomination Process Kick-Off Meeting**

**January 23, 2008 at 7:30 P.M.**

**at the Kenilworth Assembly Hall**

**At this Meeting You will Learn More Information on the National Register District Nomination Process for the Village of Kenilworth**