

**WATERLOO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING – PHIL THOMASON - SEPTEMBER 25, 2006 – 5:00 P.M.
WATERLOO PUBLIC LIBRARY – MEETING ROOM A**

Chairperson Ottesen called the special meeting of the City of Waterloo Historic Preservation meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Those in attendance were Ottesen, Morgan, Glenda and Patrick Berry, Matt Boyd, Don and Elaine Ernst, Marjorie Morehouse, Mary Potter and Phil Thomason. Also present was staff members, Tim Andera, Chris Western and Noel Anderson.

Discussion Items

1. Thomason and Associates Historic Preservation Plan Minutes.

Phil began the meeting explaining the purpose behind the Historic Preservation Plan. With this, he gave a brief explanation what the City needs to do to work on preserving the past. He made it an important point that Historical Preservation has been very strong over the last 20 years in terms of economic development, job creation, property value increase and has encouraged tourism and neighborhood investment across the country. Phil noted that Waterloo has an excellent stock of historical properties and this would be an ideal route for the City to take in promoting its historical past.

He went on to point out other historic studies done in other cities and states. He mentioned that some communities implemented conservation districts. He said these work by working to preserve and protect character of buildings, as well as the surrounding neighborhood. It was noted that conservation districts do get some noticeable public support for the purposes they serve.

The next topic addressed by Phil was describing the late 19th, early 20th century of the City. He explained how the Railroad and large manufacturing facilities such as Rath and John Deere played an important role to Waterloo's early growth. He said there was a lot of money and investment in Waterloo at the turn of the century. Phil said this is evident because the majority of Downtown has late 19th and early 20th century buildings. He noted that the rapid growth led to the development of planned neighborhoods such as Highland and Home Park. Many of these neighborhoods had their own architectural styles. Bungalows were typical of the Home Park area as an example and the neighborhood has kept its historical appearance over the years. He also made it aware that over 50 percent of the housing stock was built before 1960.

It was also brought up by Phil that the row houses on Oaklawn Avenue were very unique to the City. He noted that a person from the State Historical Society had never seen row houses like this anywhere else in Iowa. Other historic and very unique structures Waterloo has is the Lustron Houses. These homes were constructed after WWII for GI's returning home. Only 2500 were built in the country. He noted that Waterloo has 7 of them and most communities either don't have any or just one.

Phil discussed historic properties that lie within the Downtown area. Specific properties he mentioned were the Russell Lamson building, the YMCA building and the Riverplaza

building. He noted that the E 4th and Sycamore district holds an important stance in terms of revitalization. He saw this area someday being nominated as a historical district. He made it point to also say that with the development going on the west side of the river downtown that not to go in and demolish older buildings that may hold some historical significance. He saw these buildings as holding a lot of potential in the redevelopment of that area and that they can be integrated into the new development occurring. He noted this area is in the early stages of tourism.

Thomason then addressed some goals and objectives that need to be looked at for preserving and restoring historical properties. Firstly abandonment needs to be addressed. He then gave some examples of some programs that can be used. The Urban Homesteading Program was one example. If the owner of an abandoned home cannot be located, the property can be confiscated. From that point, restoration of the building can begin. Next, he briefly touched on the Revolving Fund. The purpose of this program is funds are set aside to loan out to property owners to restore a property. The owner than pays the money back into the revolving fund, and that money is then loaned back out to other developers. Also mentioned by Phil was infill development. This type of development can be done by terms of overlay districts. With this type of district, there would be design review board for new construction, additions, demolition, etc. The developer also needs to come up with a design that is compatible with surrounding properties in the overlay district. He sees this as a good approach for Waterloo to take.

Next, Phil made mention that more areas of the City need to be looked at as being nominated as historic districts. Specific areas he noted were the Kingbard-Prospect Neighborhood, Church Row Neighborhood and the Home Park Neighborhoods. He made it point that historic districts create the opportunity to obtain tax credits. He noted that getting tax credits could be used for rehabilitating or restoring historic properties. He said this has worked well in other cities around the country. Along with nominating city neighborhoods to be historic districts, he said there are other neighborhoods throughout the city that are approaching close to 50 years of age. Such neighborhoods are the Gates Park Neighborhood and Maples Neighborhood. He said in the next 5 to 10 years, these neighborhoods should have a survey and National Register eligibility assessment done.

Phil next touched on the Rath Administration Building. He made the suggestion to the City to continue mothballing the structure for another 5 years or so. He believes someone will come up with a good use for it. He noted the structural component of the building is still very well intact. If the building was a safety hazard and was falling down, he would suggest it be torn down. Since he doesn't see that, he does not want to see it demolished.

Noted as well that local residents and business individuals need to be more educated on historical properties. He talked about having home tours of historic neighborhoods and homes to gain more public interest and involvement. He also noted it was important to give awards and recognition to people who restore and fix up a historic structure. This tends to gain public interest and attention. He also made it a point that realtors as well as contractors need to be educated on understanding how important historic properties are to the real estate market and how to restore historical buildings correctly.

Phil mentioned that there are many programs in the area that can be utilized to promote and recognize historical properties in Waterloo. The Silos and Smokestacks program,

The Grout Museum and the African American Museum were some notable suggestions. He said UNI offers a Public History program that could be utilized for to study historical preservation but also obtain interns as well.

Phil made quick mention of Waterloo cemeteries holding bountiful amounts of historic architecture in terms of statues and burial vaults. He said there are many Heritage tourists throughout the country who travel and tour cemeteries. He saw it as a great idea that there be tours of Waterloo's cemeteries.

Before Phil closed his presentation, he noted that Waterloo is in competition with other Iowa cities that are working as well on restoring historic buildings and trying to bring new jobs, business and residents to those properties. Judging by Waterloo plentiful amount of historical buildings, the City needs to work hard on creating positive economic development from what they already have.

Phil then opened up the floor for questions.

Question 1 - A participant noted that Phil pointed out in his presentation that renting properties should be looked at as an option to restoring historic homes. He said this is a way one can obtain tax credits. The person asking the questions noted that rental properties are hurting historic structures. In Phil's presentation, individual property owners are not allowed to obtain tax credits. Those who are allowed are ones who are conducting business purposes, such as renting. Phil noted earlier in his presentation that we could work with developers in renting a property out, getting tax credits, fixing it up, and then after some time, turning the home back into single family. Phil said he sees a lot of potential in Waterloo for this happening. He also mentioned it should be looked into to possibly downzoning some properties to allow for just single family to get away from problematic renting.

Question 2 – Glenda Berry wanted to know what was the advantage of having the Church Row Neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places? Phil mentioned that by having Church Row on the National Register makes its makes its chances of property owners receiving grants for restoration greater. Phil also mentioned again briefly about tax credits. Glenda then commented if tax credits are for landlords, what good does it do for the neighborhood if the owners will not fix up the homes. Both Phil and Ed Ottesen stated that an overlay could be established in order for a design review committee to be set and govern what type of development can occur.

Question 3 – Lana Morgan made mention that she heard that the Kistner Building, located 300 West 3rd St is on the verge of being torn down due to the Riverfront Renaissance Project. At that time, no one had heard anything about that happening and it would be looked into. She also wanted to know why the City Council was not at the meeting? Chris Western responded to her stating this was the open time Phil had and that the City Council wanted to be at the meeting. He said the Council had been provided with the plan and will be provided with Phil's presentation as well.

After there were no more questions, Phil did a quick recap of what he had discussed.

After that, Chris handed out a sign up sheet for those in attendance who wanted to be involved with the Historic Preservation Commission.

The meeting then adjourned at 6:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Andera
Associate Planner
Staff to the Commission