

# LANDMARK LINK

*The newsletter of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission.*

Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture

## Expansion of local historic boundaries approved

The boundaries of the *Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District* were officially expanded following final approval by the Village Board of Trustees on February 21, 2012. The recent approval of this expansion means these properties are now part of an internationally-acclaimed historic district that was designated over 40 years ago and serves as a model for other historic districts throughout the country. It is precisely because Oak Park enjoys such an amazing collection of historic homes that this historic district was recognized as one of the "Great Neighborhoods in America" by the American Planning Association.

Beginning in November 2005 the Historic Preservation Commission supervised an architectural survey of the historic district, including proposed expansion areas on the east, west and south. The survey was started by volunteers, and completed by consultants Thomason & Associates. The boundary expansion was officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 22, 2009. The Historic Preservation Commission hosted a series of public meetings in 2011 to discuss the proposal with property owners within the proposed new boundaries before forwarding a recommendation for approval to the Village Board. The new boundaries are bounded by Ridgeland on the east, Lake and Ontario on the south, Harlem on the west, and Division on the north.

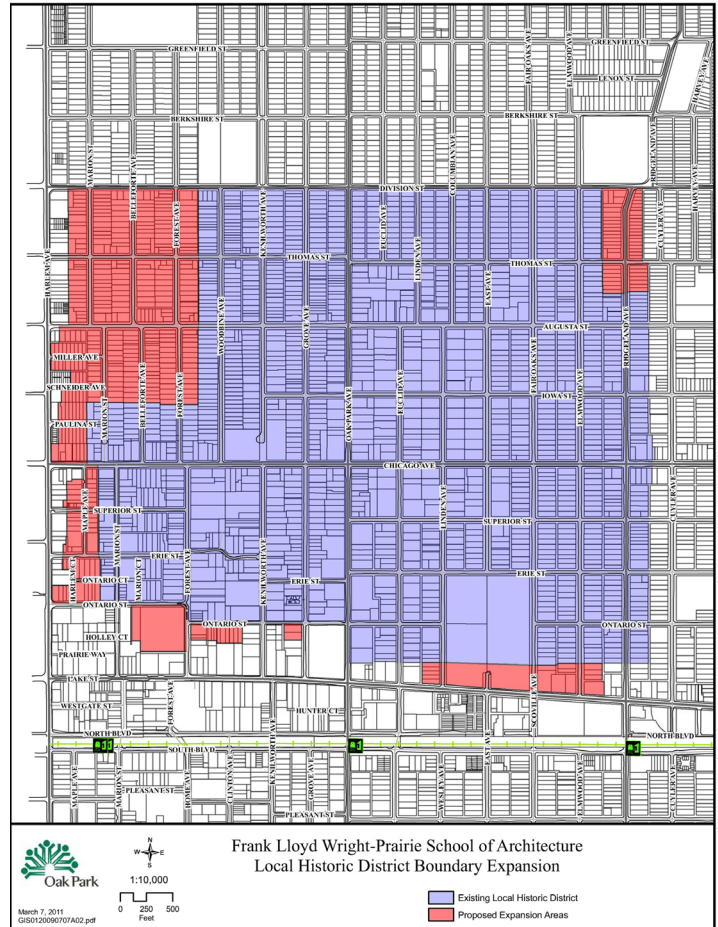
Properties located within a locally designated historic district are required to work with Planning staff and submit their proposed exterior projects visible from the street to the Historic Preservation Commission for review. Typically less than 15 percent of all permits are reviewed by the Commission, with the majority getting approval from Commission staff. Projects will be asked to comply with the Preservation Commission's Architectural Review Guidelines, which are available at [www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation](http://www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation).

### Benefits

Adding these areas to the local historic district will help maintain and protect the unique character of the *Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District* over the long term. The district's unique architecture and sense of place makes it a wonderful place to live. To help support rehabilitation projects in the district, contributing structures may be eligible for various tax incentives.

The following information is available about the proposed expansion of the district boundaries:

- A map showing the existing local historic district (in blue)



and the proposed expanded local historic district (in red)

- An Information sheet with Frequently Asked Questions about the proposed district expansion
- Web site link for the Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program: [www.illinoishistory.gov/PS/taxfreeze.htm](http://www.illinoishistory.gov/PS/taxfreeze.htm)
- Web site link for the Cook County Class L designation: [www.cookcountyassessor.com/forms](http://www.cookcountyassessor.com/forms)
- Web site link for the Historic Preservation Tax Credit: [www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/index.htm)
- Web site link for the Preservation Easement: [www.landmarks.org/easement\\_overview.htm](http://www.landmarks.org/easement_overview.htm)

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Doug Kaarre at [historicpreservation@oak-park.us](mailto:historicpreservation@oak-park.us) or 708.358.5417.

# Tax incentives available in historic districts

**Historic Tax Credit Program** provides federal income tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic income-producing properties. A 20 percent tax credit is available for commercial, industrial or rental residential buildings with more than six units located in one of Oak Park's three Historic Districts, or individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A 10 percent tax credit is available for buildings more than 50 years old not located within a Historic District. To qualify, the rehab work, including wiring, plumbing, floors, painting and storefront restoration, must be appropriate to the architectural or historic qualities of the structure. In addition, rehab costs must exceed 50 percent of the building's current depreciated value not including the land, and work must be completed within a two-year period.

**Illinois Property Tax Assessment Freeze Program** is available to single-family owner-occupied homes and owner-occupied multi-family buildings of six or fewer units, located in one of Oak Park's three Historic Districts or individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated as an Oak Park Historic landmark. After rehab work is completed, tax assessments are frozen at their pre-rehab level for the next eight years, increasing by 25% for each year 9-12. To qualify, the rehab work, including wiring, plumbing, painting, floors, porches and roofs, must be appropriate to the architectural or historic qualities of the structure. In addition, rehab costs must equal or exceed 25% of the property's market value as set by the Cook County Assessor. Exact restoration is not required.

**Cook County Class 'L' Tax Assessment Classification Program** is a Cook County program that reduces the property tax classification for commercial and industrial buildings to encourage their rehabilitation. The building must be designated an Oak Park Landmark or a Contributing structure in a Historic District and the rehab costs must amount to at least 50 percent of the property's market value as set by the Cook County Assessor. Properties with Class L designation will be assessed at 10% of fair market value for the first 10 years, 15% in the 11th year, and 20% in the 12th year. This program can be combined with the Historic Tax Credit Program.

**Preservation Easements** provide a Federal income tax deduction to owners of historic properties. Qualified owners are those with structures that contribute to historic districts or individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A historic property Preservation Easement is the legal mechanism by which owners of historic property can avail themselves of the tax benefits offered by the Tax Reform Act of 1976 and the Tax Treatment Extension Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-541). Together, these Acts form the basis of the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program. This Federal IRS

INCOME TAX program encourages qualifying property owners to directly participate in the process of preserving America's architectural history. Easements are held by non-profit organizations, such as Landmarks Illinois or the Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest.

## Permit Review Process for Historic Properties

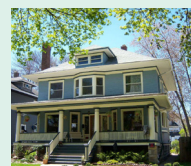
The Historic Preservation Commission reviews building permit applications for exterior alterations, additions, new construction and full or partial demolition of properties designated as Historic Landmarks and properties located within historic districts. There are two types of review conducted by the Commission: 1) Certificate of Advisory Review for properties located within one of the Village's historic districts or for any property whose owner is seeking advice; and 2) Certificate of Appropriateness review for Historic Landmarks, projects that propose full or partial demolition of historic district properties, or properties being altered with Village funding. The Commission does not review ordinary maintenance and repairs that do not require a building permit, such as exterior painting.

The Commission bases its reviews on the Village of Oak Park's Architectural Review Guidelines in making a determination to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of Advisory Review. These guidelines follow the review criteria set forth in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Check with Commission staff at (708-358-5417), the Building & Property Standards Department, or visit the Village's web site at [www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation](http://www.oak-park.us/historicpreservation) for a copy of the guidelines.

## New Landmarks



**700 S. LOMBARD AVE.:** The Freeman Landon House was designed by architect J. J. Cerny in 1922 in the Eclectic style with Colonial Revival and Prairie style influences. Designated on September 19, 2011



**217 S. HUMPHREY AVE.:** The George and Mary Sheppard House was constructed by F. A. Hill & Company in 1904 in the American Foursquare style. Designated on October 3, 2011



**639 N. OAK PARK AVE.:** The George Hemingway House was designed by architect E. E. Roberts in 1896 in the Queen Anne style. Designated on November 28, 2011

## Historic Preservation Commission Members

*Christina Morris, Chair*

*Joerg Albrecht  
Greg Baltoglia  
Garret Eakin  
Frank Heitzman  
Bob Lempera*

*Rosanne McGrath  
Regina Nally  
Drew Niermann  
Gary Palese  
Tony Quinn*

The Historic Preservation Commission is an 11-member body of citizen volunteers appointed by the Village President to implement the Village's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Its mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the distinctive historic and

architectural heritage of Oak Park. The Commission strives to preserve the historic integrity of the Village by reviewing alterations of the exteriors of historic properties to ensure that the historic character of the building exteriors is preserved. The Commis-

sion also identifies landmark buildings and historic districts, and seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the Village by educating property owners and citizens about the importance of preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of properties.