



# PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

“The Past Has A Future”

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Number 1

## CHAMPAIGN IN-TOWN ZONING STUDY

Over the past several months, PACA has been in contact with the Champaign Planning Department concerning the rezoning issue in the central city area. An historic district overlay zone has been suggested as one means of helping to preserve the character of certain areas and several significant or unusual sites have been indicated as being worthy of more detailed study. PACA has also been in contact with two active neighborhood groups who have been instrumental in keeping the City Council focused on the rezoning issue.

The Washington-Hill Street Area has been largely successful in their effort to have their neighborhood rezoned to R1 and R2; however, they are continuing their efforts to have the 500 blocks included in the rezoning. The “Save the Old Town” group is more centrally located within the study area, along the Springfield, Green and John street corridors. Since their neighborhood is larger and more diversified than the Washington-Hill street area, their efforts are more intense at the moment and are tied together with the Springfield Avenue widening and the reopening of South Side School issues. PACA has asked these groups to summarize their efforts. In the next newsletter, PACA will present the initial recommendations for the area as presented by Robert Freilich, a planning consultant retained by the City Council to help with this issue.

## WASHINGTON-HILL STREET AREA

This neighborhood is in the area north of Church Street and east of Prospect Avenue. These two heavily traveled streets carry the bulk of the auto traffic around our relatively calm area thus contributing to its appeal.

Our other saving factor is that the two blocks (800 and 700) east of Prospect Ave-

nue, on Washington Street northward, have always been zoned 1- or 2-family. Thus through the years of urban renewal, starting in the 1950's when the bulk of our area was rezoned to multi-family to encourage “growth,” the 1- and 2-family zoned section has provided a sense of stability. As a result, the majority of the houses survive although many were divided into apartments.

Our area's housing stock is very typical of many American cities, not unique individually, but appealing when taken as a whole. Part of this appeal is how the growth of the city is reflected in our neighborhood. Washington Street, for example, changes block by block: 500 block (platted 1855 as West Urbana with Victorian, Colonialized Victorian, and Post Victorian with Basic Homestead and American Foursquare styles), the 600 block (platted 1902, styles similar to the 500), 700 through 800 blocks (platted 1923, with Georgian Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, and Bungalow styles).

Our neighborhood preservation efforts are represented by an ad hoc group from the area which encompasses the 800 through 400 blocks of Hill, Washington, Columbia, and the cross streets of New, Harris, Lynn, and Elm.

A brief neighborhood revitalization history is as follows:

- mid-1984: we have our first neighborhood 4th of July parade/picnic
- early-1985: petition (149 signatures) the City Council for more appropriate zoning for our area
- mid-1985: start Crime Watch group (52 homes), and first new single-family home in 30 years built on a lot zoned for multi-family
- early-1986: City provides low-interest loans for repairs/weatherization
- mid-1986: 600 block of West Washington (9 homes) receives award for Excellence in Site Redevelopment from CCDC

- late-1986: second new single-family home built
- mid-1987: have 12 home House Walk with PACA (400+ paying visitors)
- October 1987: Champaign Planning Commission holds a neighborhood meeting for our area to discuss more appropriate zoning

For further information contact Steve Tyner-Wilson, 351-4100.

We are grateful to the many neighbors who have contributed their time and efforts, and our appreciation goes to the Mayor and City Council along with the Planning and Zoning and Police Departments for their advice and patience. Additionally we wish to thank PACA, and Jill Block of the *News-Gazette* for all their gracious support of our humble homes.

— Steve Tyner-Wilson

## “SAVE THE OLD TOWN”

I can think of no greater force that decides the fate of a neighborhood than its quality of life. And I can think of no greater legislable influence on quality of life in an older neighborhood than its density, the history and condition of its facilities, its traffic, and its school. Yet, it is the negative aspects of these influences that our neighborhood must contend with on a continuing basis.

Several years ago, a group of us spoke before the City Council to express our concerns about the state of our neighborhood. It had become increasingly apparent to us that the pre-World War II zoning ordinance currently in effect in Champaign and the rezoning of our neighborhood in the early Sixties that allowed apartment construction to occur continued to be the underlying cause for blight. It had also become apparent to us that for some time, City government had little room for aesthetics, history, or quality of life in the older sections of town. Contrasting exam-

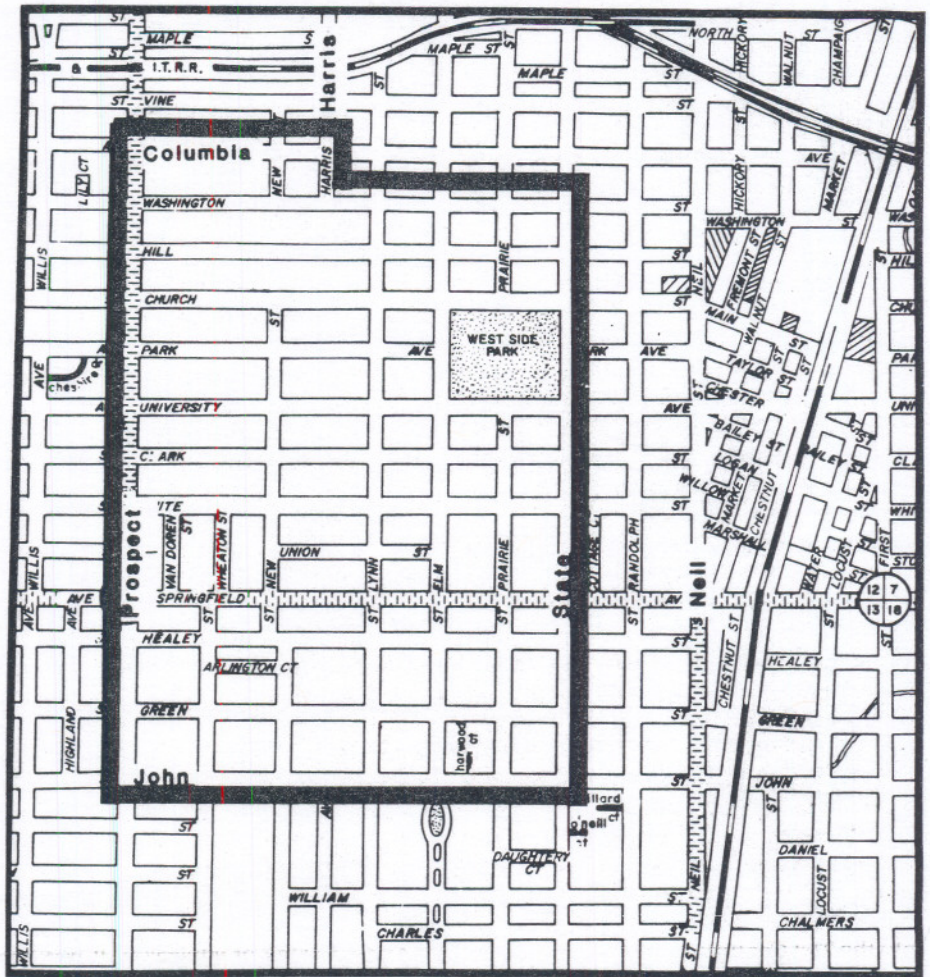
ples of our neighborhood as it was built around the turn-of-the-century versus the neighborhood as it was re-built during "Urban Renewal" can be seen on Healey Street between Prospect Avenue and State Street.

Our neighborhood had its beginnings over 100 years ago when it was annexed and initially surveyed by then City Surveyor, J. M. Healey on April 24, 1872, as W. G. Barrett's Addition. Few, if any lots in the area were intended for high density use when Healey said, "... did by my said Deputy at The request of The said Barrett plant and fix at the several points designated on said Map or Plat good and sufficient Stones of suitable size and dimension for Corners from which to make future Surveys." The "future Surveys" to which Healey alluded generally resulted in lots that were one chain wide by two chains deep (one surveyor's chain equals 66 feet, and at the time, the going rate for undeveloped property in Champaign was about \$47.78 per square chain, or \$95.56 per typical lot).

Both Healey and Barrett would turn in their graves if they could see some of the current land use in our neighborhood, as would the late Dr. Howard, a prominent physician and philanthropist during the early history of Champaign.

Dr. Howard's magnificent home has gone the way of many fine homes in our neighborhood. It was demolished a couple of years ago by apartment building co-developers, one of whom was a grandchild of Dr. Howard's caretakers, to whom he left the home. The structure was typically complete and replete with hardwood trim and floors (first and second stories, and in the attic, too), beautiful mantles, back stair cases, parlors, etc. Along the alley behind the house were a carriage house, the only remaining chicken coop in Champaign, and a 300 year old oak tree. They are gone now, and I remember when the house was being gutted prior to demolition, the tastefully delicate and eloquent words spoken slowly, deliberately, and knowingly to me by a relative of one of the co-developers, which typify the attitude of some developers in this area: "Ugly ole thang, ain't it, heh, heh."

Ugly, indeed! In place of Dr. Howard's "ugly" home stands a beautiful parking facility; in place of the decrepid 300 year old oak tree sits a small, concrete slab with a pressure treated picnic table on top of it; and in the place of the nearly half-acre of worthless open space ("true" open space with grass, trees, shrubs, etc., as contrasted with open space defined by the current zoning ordinance, as patios, partitions, and roof overhangs) stands what will surely be considered the pinnacle of architectural



accomplishment in Champaign in the last half of the 20th Century: the low-rise apartment building! The proliferation of these priceless little gems adds congestion, inadequate parking, increased noise levels, and an ever-increasing bedroom community-like atmosphere.

Let me say that we don't oppose apartments per se. Indeed, we wouldn't have moved into our neighborhood if we did. We oppose the building of *more* apartments in our neighborhood and the senseless destruction of historic homes. The City adopted an ordinance to preserve brick streets. Why can't it adopt an ordinance to preserve the fine old homes that line those streets?

Many families are moving back into this part of town and investing *private* funds to rehabilitate and restore its homes to their original condition. This phenomenon of preserving historic areas is not unique to Champaign, viz., Decatur, Quincy, Aurora, and Oak Park. In fact, over the past 50 years, all 50 states and over 500 municipalities have enacted laws to encourage or require the preservation of buildings and areas with historic or aesthetic importance. The Illinois Historic Area Act states that municipalities are authorized to regulate demolition within their boundaries.

We don't pretend to be of national historic significance, and generally speaking, the homes in our neighborhood were not occupied by Champaign's wealthy citizens, but rather its middle class citizens. But our neighborhood represents the history of Champaign with its turn-of-the-century homes, brick streets, and sidewalks that were laid and date stamped in 1916.

We have formed a group called the Old Town Neighborhood Association and have written and offered to City officials a new zoning ordinance that incorporates density limits and historic preservation. We have surveyed our area and found that over 70% of the structures are still of an external single-family character. In a quick response, limited petition of our neighborhood, we gathered over 150 signatures from owners of single-family homes and residents of multi-family dwellings who wish to see a halt to further multi-family construction in our area. A more sensible and comprehensive master plan is needed to preserve this part of Champaign. And it looks like City Government is taking steps in the right direction. However, we have no idea how much of our neighborhood will be left between now and the 15-plus months scheduled to put together a comprehensive plan. Last year there was an apartment

construction boom before the new, more stringent parking ordinance was passed. We fear that a similar situation will occur in our neighborhood and that the state of affairs the City is pouring over in their In Town Zoning Study will be drastically different from the state of affairs at the end of the time frame projected for completion of the study.

Since the Study began nearly two years ago, we have seen the demolition of three homes and the construction of an additional 62 apartments in the already congested area bordered by Green Street on the South, New Street on the West, Healey Street on the North, and Prairie Street on the East. It looks as though for the next two construction seasons, and perhaps forever beyond that, we must continue to suffer the battle fatigue caused by a potential assault on our neighborhood by those few in the development community who persist in playing their monopoly game with Champaign's history and our quality of life. And the sad fact of the matter is that there is no need for the proliferation of apartment development. There are some 80 square blocks in the In Town Zoning area zoned for multi-family construction. According to land use consultant, Robert Freilich, "That's enough to handle the growth of a city the size of Cincinnati well into the 21st Century."

The City is leery of putting its legal foot down immediately on the matter, fearing a lawsuit from property owners who would claim to be the victim of a governmental taking. While the courts have looked unfavorably upon cases where *all* use of an owner's property has somehow been denied through governmental action, the Law does not guarantee property owners the most profitable use of their land. So even if density in our neighborhood is limited,

rental property owners can continue to make a profit on what they already have.

In the mean time, the Old Town Neighborhood Association continues to grow and become stronger. We have ordered our second batch of banners, and residents of surrounding, more stable, neighborhoods have expressed support for our efforts, since they too feel the effects of overcrowding in our area. But we need legislative protection in the form of an ordinance that limits density and preserves the historical character of our neighborhood.

As for traffic in our neighborhood and the widening of Springfield Avenue, it seems that somewhere in the Illinois Department of Transportation there is a pot of construction money burning a hole in someone's pocket. This must be the case since existing traffic flow doesn't warrant the widening of Springfield and the destruction of its trees. And since population growth tends to be to the West-Southwest in Champaign, why run a highway through its midsection? Why not redesignate a more southern artery as the State road, such as Kirby Avenue, and widen it? Or, if City officials are really serious about traffic and growth, build a circumvential highway around the city. Better still, don't build any highway and reprogram the money to education.

And speaking of education, it was less than a year after we moved into our house that our neighborhood school was shut down. One of the primary reasons we moved into the area was its central location: The Public Library, the grocery store, hardware stores, West Side Park, and Downtown are all within easy walking distance. As for the school system, South Side Elementary School is only three blocks from our house; Edison Middle School is two blocks away; and Central High School

is an easy five-block walk.

Some elementary schools in the area (Westview and Dr. Howard) are bursting at the seams, while enrollment at Bottenfield School is declining. Thus, the School Board is considering the reopening of South Side School. After its closing, South Side became occupied by the Champaign Park District. Included in the programs offered by the Park District at South Side is the Friendship Club, an after-school day care program for children of working parents. It is many of these parents that oppose the reopening of South Side School because of the inconvenience it will cause them. But there are other day care facilities in Champaign, and while it is true that the bread-winning structure of today's family necessitates adequate day care, we feel that an elementary school has far more value to a neighborhood than a single day care facility has to the community as a whole. Here again, our neighborhood is being asked to serve as a convenience point by people who don't live in it.

So here we are, fighting for our existence as a viable neighborhood on every quality-of-life front. Champaign City Government is addressing density and physical facilities in its In Town Zoning Study; but it is treating the widening of Springfield Avenue as a separate and unrelated issue. And the School Board is addressing the reopening of South Side School. I hope at some point in time, the School and City Government talk to each other with a neighborhood perspective in mind. We urge the power that be to do this old neighborhood some good for a change: Limit Density, Preserve Its History and Character, Don't Ramrod a Highway Through It, and Re-Open Its School.

— Patrick Tanner

For further information contact: Patrick Tanner, 351-7038.

## Membership Application P.A.C.A.

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

#### INDIVIDUAL

- Adult ..... \$10.00  
 Student (1/2 time or more) ..... \$ 5.00  
 Senior Citizen ..... \$ 5.00  
 Family (includes all members of a household with no more than two members being over age 21) ..... \$15.00

Additional Contribution \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
Street State Zip

#### CIVIC

- Over 100 members ..... \$100.00  
 50-100 members ..... \$ 75.00  
 Up to 50 members ..... \$ 50.00

#### CORPORATE

..... \$ 50.00

RENEWAL

NEW MEMBERSHIP



Make check payable to: PACA, Box 2555, Station A, Champaign, Illinois 61820

## FOURTH ANNUAL HERITAGE AWARDS PRESENTED

Presentation of the fourth annual Heritage Awards was made at the Annual Membership Meeting. The purpose of the Awards is to increase awareness of the important buildings and sites in the community, to promote the interests of preservation and conservation, and to acknowledge all of the special efforts and hard work that the owners expended in the renovation of their buildings.

This year's recipients are:

**Outstanding Heritage Contribution Award:** Greek Revival Cottage, Leal Park, Urbana

**Landmark Heritage Award:** Wabash Railroad Depot, Monticello; Mahomet Graded School, Mahomet

**Landscape Heritage Award:** Trevitt-Finch Park, Prospect and University Avenues, Champaign

**Residential Heritage Award:** Jones-Lipton House, 712 West University Avenue, Champaign

**Honorable Mention:** Hunter-Straka House, Savoy area

**Institutional/Commercial Heritage Award:** The Gallery, 112 West Church Street, Champaign; Rick Orr Florist, 122 North Walnut Street, Champaign; Jean Pierre's Restaurant, 105 North Market, Champaign

**Honorable Mention:** Metropolitan Building, 119-223 North Neil, Champaign; Art Theater, 126 West Church Street, Champaign

**Environmental Heritage Award:** "Save the Old Town" Rezoning Effort, Champaign

**Honorable Mention:** World Heritage Museum, Lincoln Hall, University of Illinois

**Special Heritage Award:** Karen Kummer

## NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Mary Altenbernd  
Susan Appel  
Linda Bastyr  
Steve & Sandy Burgener  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Espeseth  
David Finet  
Mr. & Mrs. John Garth  
Caroline Hibbard  
Mr. & Mrs. Harold Jensen  
Carol Marlin  
Dan McCollum  
Mr. & Mrs. George Miley  
Roger Prillaman  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Rogers  
Gregory Sekula  
Clareta Walker  
Mrs. William M. Youngerman

## PACA ANNUAL MEETING

The seventh Annual Membership Meeting was held February 21 at the Greek Revival Cottage in Leal Park, Urbana. Over forty members and guests attended and heard the preservation highlights of 1987.

The membership elected three directors to serve on the Board through 1990: James Dobrovolny (re-elected), Wanda Bengoechea, and Barbara Rogowski-Kent. Currently serving are Hermania Kruidenier (88), Marylee MacDonald (88), Joan Severns (88), Patricia Jensen (89), Keddy Hutson (89), and Hank Kaczmarski (89). Retiring Board members are Kevin Cullen and Norman Baxley.

The Fourth Annual Heritage Awards were presented and a short slide presentation detailing the renovation of the Greek Revival Cottage was given. Tours of the renovated building concluded the meeting.

## V.I.P.'s

Hank Kaczmarski  
Jo Kaczmarski  
Mark Replogle  
Keddy Hutson  
Cliff Carey  
Shauna Carey  
Margaret DeCardy  
David Garner

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### PACA Newsletter

Published by the Preservation and  
Conservation Association

**President:** Joan Severns  
**Vice President:** Kennedy Hutson  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** Patricia Jensen  
**Exec. Director:** Karen Lang Kummer  
359-0114

Please submit material for publication in the  
next newsletter before 15th of month.

