

**CITY OF BELVIDERE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
A G E N D A  
Tuesday, January 24, 2023  
City Hall Council Chambers  
401 Whitney Boulevard  
5:30 pm**

**ROLL CALL**

**Members:**

Sonya Dobberfuhr, Chair  
Claudia Colla, Vice-Chair  
Alexandra Omiotek  
David Larson  
Dawn Brooks  
Vacant  
Vacant

**Staff:**

Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner

**Ex-Officio:**

Clint Morris, Mayor

**MINUTES: October 25, 2022**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**NEW BUSINESS: None.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Work Plan**

2023 Awards Program: None.

Promotional/Fundraising Events: Potential 2023 Fundraisers

Maintenance Small Grant: Letters sent

10 Year Plan: Sections One and Two

Expenditures: None.

Friends of Preservation: None.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Images of America Belvidere and Boone County**

Royalties- No update.

Book Sales- Sold out of Images of America Book.

**DISCUSSION:**

**COMMUNICATIONS/PLANNING REPORTS:**

**Staff Report:**

**Next Meeting Date: February 28, 2023**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**CITY OF BELVIDERE**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**October 25, 2022**  
**5:30 pm**  
**City Hall, 401 Whitney Boulevard**

**ROLL CALL**

**Members Present:**

Sonya Dobberfuhl, Chair  
Claudia Colla, Vice-Chair  
Alexandra Omiotek  
David Larson  
Dawn Brooks

**Staff Present:**

Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner

**Members Absent:**

None.

Sonya Dobberfuhl called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm.

**MINUTES:** It was moved and seconded (Omiotek/Larson) to approve the minutes of the July 26, 2022 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Certificate of Appropriateness, 424 N. Main Street -**

Gina DelRose explained the request to have solar panels mounted on the roof of the residence at 424 N. Main Street.

Dan Snow questioned why the request need a certificate of appropriateness.

Gina DelRose stated that since they are affixing a structure not original to the house a certificate of appropriateness is needed. Gina DelRose stated that many communities are torn on the appropriateness of solar panels since they are not a permanent change to the structure's integrity but rather a large change to the aesthetics of the property. Ms. DelRose stated that the National Park Service recommends that solar panels that are visible from the right-of-way be denied and those hidden from view be allowed.

Sonya Dobberfuhl stated that the solar panels are becoming more prevalent and have environmental impacts.

Dawn Brooks stated that she agrees with the National Park Service's recommendation.

Sonya Dobberfuhl stated that she approved of the panels being placed on the 1-story addition because it is not original to the residence to begin with.

David Larson questioned if approving the panels would be precedent setting or does the commission still get to review future solar panels on a case by case basis.

Gina DelRose stated that each future request would be reviewed on its own merits.

Dawn Brooks stated that since they are removable she is more favorable of the panels.

Sandie Omiotek agreed.

David Larson questioned what kind of damage the solar panels could cause the roof.

Gina DelRose stated that the building department requires proof of the roof's structural integrity and that it can adequately support the weight and installation of the solar panels.

Claudia Colla stated that she would prefer to adhere to the National Park Service's guidelines but due to the positioning of the residence, every side of the roof is visible from the right-of-way. Ms. Collar stated that she does not want to deter the use of solar energy but the decision is a complicated one.

Dan Snow questioned if the Commission can require a new Certificate of Appropriateness every time the panels get replaced.

Gina DelRose stated that they could.

Sonya Dobberfuhl stated that she prefers requiring a new Certificate of Appropriateness.

Claudia Colla questioned the meter boxes that connect to the existing ComEd meter.

David Larson stated that the property owner could construct a wooden box to conceal the utility meters.

Sonya Dobberfuhl stated that landscaping could also be used to conceal the meter boxes.

It was moved and seconded (Larson/Dobberfuhl) to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the following conditions:

1. The wall mounted panel boxes and utility meters shall be concealed with an aesthetically appropriate encasement and/or landscape approved by planning staff.
2. If any structural changes are made in the future such as a new roof or solar panels then a new Certificate of Appropriateness will be required.

Motion carried with a 5-0 voice vote.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

##### **Work Plan**

2022 Awards Program: Gina DelRose gave an update on the awards program and stated that approximately 50 RSVPs have been received.

Claudia Colla offered her assistance if any commissioners are still needed to reach out to their recipients.

**City of Belvidere  
Historic Preservation Commission  
October 25, 2022  
Page 3 of 4**

Promotional/Fundraising Events: Fall Fundraisers: Gina DelRose stated that \$320.00 was made in ticket sales. Ms. DelRose stated that the catering bill is still outstanding and may need to be paid out of ticket sales.

Gina DelRose stated that all the teams had a good time and several asked when the next one will be. Ms. DelRose stated that some commissioners suggested having a "Ghosts of Belvidere's Past" theme for the next scavenger hunt. The locations will be of places that no longer exists so people can see what history has been lost and hopefully it encourages them to preserve what is left for the future.

David Larson stated that the Commission could organize another stained-glass window tour with the four remaining churches. The one held on April 2022 was well received.

Sonya Dobberfuhl stated that the Commission could host another progressive dinner.

Gina DelRose stated that she would contact Maggio's Pizzeria about participating in a fundraiser night.

Maintenance Small Grant: 406 W. Hurlbut Avenue Reimbursement: Gina DelRose stated that the exterior painting has been completed and pictures and a paid invoice were provided.

It was moved and seconded (Colla/Dobberfuhl) to approve the reimbursement of \$1,000.00 for the work completed at 406 W. Hurlbut Avenue. Motion carried with a 5-0 voice vote.

10 Year Plan: Gina DelRose provided a summary of Chapter 1 of the 10 Year Plan.

David Larson stated that it seemed non-specific but was interested in their reference to 'placemaking'. Mr. Larson stated that he believes it is a function of the Commission to provide support to the City Council, especially in this new economy, to help facilitate 'placemaking' decisions.

Dawn Brooks left the meeting at 6:45pm.

David Larson requested that the Downtown Strategic Plan be sent to him.

Gina DelRose stated that she will include Chapter 2 of the 10 Year Plan in the next packet for the Commission to review.

Expenditures: No updates.

Friends of Preservation: No updates.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

**Images of American Belvidere and Boone County**

Royalties: No updates.

Book Sales: No updates.

**DISCUSSION:**

**City of Belvidere  
Historic Preservation Commission  
October 25, 2022  
Page 4 of 4**

**Staff Report:** None.

**NEXT MEETING DATE: December 6, 2022**

**ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Recorded by

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Gina DelRose  
Community Development Planner



# **City of Belvidere 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan**

**Belvidere, Illinois**  
January 16, 2018







# City of Belvidere 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan

## Acknowledgments

This document was developed with the input and advice from many smart, thoughtful, and committed individuals in the Belvidere community. A special thanks to all those who contributed to the development of this 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan.

### Historic Preservation Commission

Becky Tobin, Chair  
Kris Bryan, Vice-Chair  
Anna Pivoras  
David Kummerow  
Lisa Kummerow  
Fillitsa Platopoulos  
Alexandra Omiotek

### City Council

Michael Chamberlain, Mayor  
Shauna Arco, City Clerk  
Cory Thornton, Treasurer  
Clayton Stevens, Ward 1  
Tom Porter, Ward 1  
Daniel Snow, Ward 2  
Michael Borowicz, Ward 2  
Wendy Frank, Ward 3  
Thomas F. Ratcliffe, Ward 3  
Ronald Brooks, Ward 4  
George Crawford, Ward 4  
Mark Sanderson, Ward 5  
Marsha Freeman, Ward 5

### City Staff

Gina DelRose, Community Development Planner  
Ben Rohr, Land Use Planner  
Becky Tobin, Finance/Budget Officer  
Brent Anderson, Public Works Director  
Lesa Morelock, Building Director  
Al Hyser, Fire Chief  
Jan Noble, Police Chief

### Produced By:

**THE  
LAKOTA  
GROUP.**

## Funding

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended. The U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to:

Office for Equal Opportunity  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Or

Equal Employment Opportunity Officer  
Illinois State Historic Preservation Office  
Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
1 Natural Resources Way  
Springfield, IL 62702-1271



**HISTORIC**  
*Preservation*  
**DIVISION**



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	8
<b>Section 1:</b> Introduction .....	14
<b>Section 2:</b> Historic Preservation Plan .....	26
<b>Section 3:</b> Implementation .....	64
<b>Section 4:</b> Belvidere Historic Resources .....	82
<b>Section 5:</b> City Planning and Program Administration .....	134
<b>Section 6:</b> The Community Speaks .....	150
<b>Section 7:</b> Appendices .....	158



# **Executive Summary**

# Executive Summary

In 2017, the City of Belvidere and its Historic Preservation Commission prepared a *10-Year Historic Preservation Plan* to guide local policy and decision-making related to key historic preservation issues, and to strengthen and enhance the community's historic preservation program. Developed with active participation by various preservation stakeholder groups, including property and business owners, non-profit organizations and preservation advocates, and other governmental agencies and entities, the Plan provides a compelling vision for how historic preservation can play impactful roles in maintaining community character, revitalizing Downtown and nearby traditional neighborhoods, safeguarding Belvidere's unique architecture and heritage for future generations, and promoting a quality of life that attracts new investment into the community.

## Plan Approach

To create the Plan, the City and its stakeholder partners completed a comprehensive analysis of community preservation program strengths and weaknesses, resulting in the determination of key preservation issues and observations (summarized on page 10). Current preservation planning activities, focused primarily on the City's Historic Preservation Commission, were assessed and evaluated, including survey, documentation, and landmarking activities; education and outreach efforts; and economic development and community revitalization initiatives concerning the Downtown commercial district and Belvidere's older neighborhoods. Potential partnerships with private sector entities were also explored and considered during the planning process. In terms of community engagement, two community open houses and a series of focus group sessions were conducted with a cross-section of Belvidere stakeholders to gain insight and perspective on key preservation issues and priorities. Such insight proved valuable in the development of the Plan's preservation goals, policies and recommendations.

## Relationship to the Boone County Comprehensive Plan

This 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan will serve as the primary policy document for historic preservation planning in Belvidere going forward, and as a standing element or chapter to the 1999 *Boone County Comprehensive Plan*, Belvidere's primary land use planning policy document. The County's Comprehensive Plan recognizes that "*sound historic preservation policies...*" *should be established in communities "... throughout the County."* (Boone County Comprehensive Plan, Belvidere-Boone County Regional Planning Commission, 1999, p. 33). Preservation planning goals, policies and recommendations incorporated within the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan align with the general land use goals and strategies presented in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

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***This Plan provides a compelling vision for how historic preservation can play impactful roles in maintaining community character, revitalizing Downtown and nearby traditional neighborhoods, safeguarding Belvidere's unique architecture and heritage for future generations, and promoting a quality of life that attracts new investment into the community.***



Photos courtesy of *The Lakota Group*



## Key Plan Recommendations

Presented below are key preservation planning recommendations included in the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan, organized around four critical elements to an effective community preservation program – survey and documentation, program administration, community development, and education and advocacy.

- **Survey and Documentation.** In recent years, the City and the Historic Preservation Commission have completed several survey initiatives encompassing the Downtown district and adjacent neighborhoods, resulting in the designation of two districts in the National Register of Historic Places. One Local Historic District and several Local Landmarks have also been designated. An effective community preservation program should implement on-going efforts to survey, document and inventory significant historic resources for future preservation and protection. Going forward, the City should focus future survey initiatives in the remaining historic residential neighborhoods that have not been subject to previous documentation; landmarking efforts for individual properties and districts should also concentrate on eligible resources identified in prior surveys. Other future documentation and designation activities could include efforts to understand the nature of archaeological resources within the community, expand the existing Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District, and advance the understanding and context of Belvidere's important architectural and historical resources through oral history projects.
- **Program Administration and Management.** Program administration and management concerns the operations and functions of the City's Historic Preservation Commission, especially the procedures for landmark and district designation and design review. The Plan proposes a series of recommendations that update and "fine-tune" the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance in order to bring clarity and efficiency to Commission operations, as well as strengthen its role in preserving and protecting significant historic resources. For example, a new demolition delay provision within the Ordinance can provide the Commission a new mechanism for working with property owners on feasible alternatives to demolition. Other recommendations focus on the need for adequate commissioner training, addressing property maintenance and building code administration needs, and reconstituting the Downtown Overlay District as a new Local Historic District.
- **Community Development.** Historic preservation should always receive equal consideration in all City or community-driven economic development initiatives, especially efforts that revitalize traditional commercial districts and historic residential neighborhoods. To facilitate community development, the Plan proposes the establishment of new incentives that spur investments in building façade and storefront improvements, as well as residential rehabilitation activities. Re-forming a new revitalization organization can also help in advancing the community's vision for a thriving Downtown commercial district – a district that represents community's most important collection of historic resources. This Plan also reaffirms the community's commitment to preserving and reusing the National Sewing Machine Company Complex as a catalyst for further investment activity in Belvidere's Downtown and adjacent residential districts. New financing tools and intervention approaches may also be needed to accomplish key rehabilitation and adaptive use projects.
- **Education and Advocacy.** A comprehensive program of education and advocacy initiatives can help to promote the benefits of historic preservation. Several initiatives are suggested in this Plan to bolster the preservation message, including the use of internet-based technologies to expand access to historic preservation information, and enhancing partnerships with the Boone County Museum of History and other entities on a variety of outreach and education efforts.

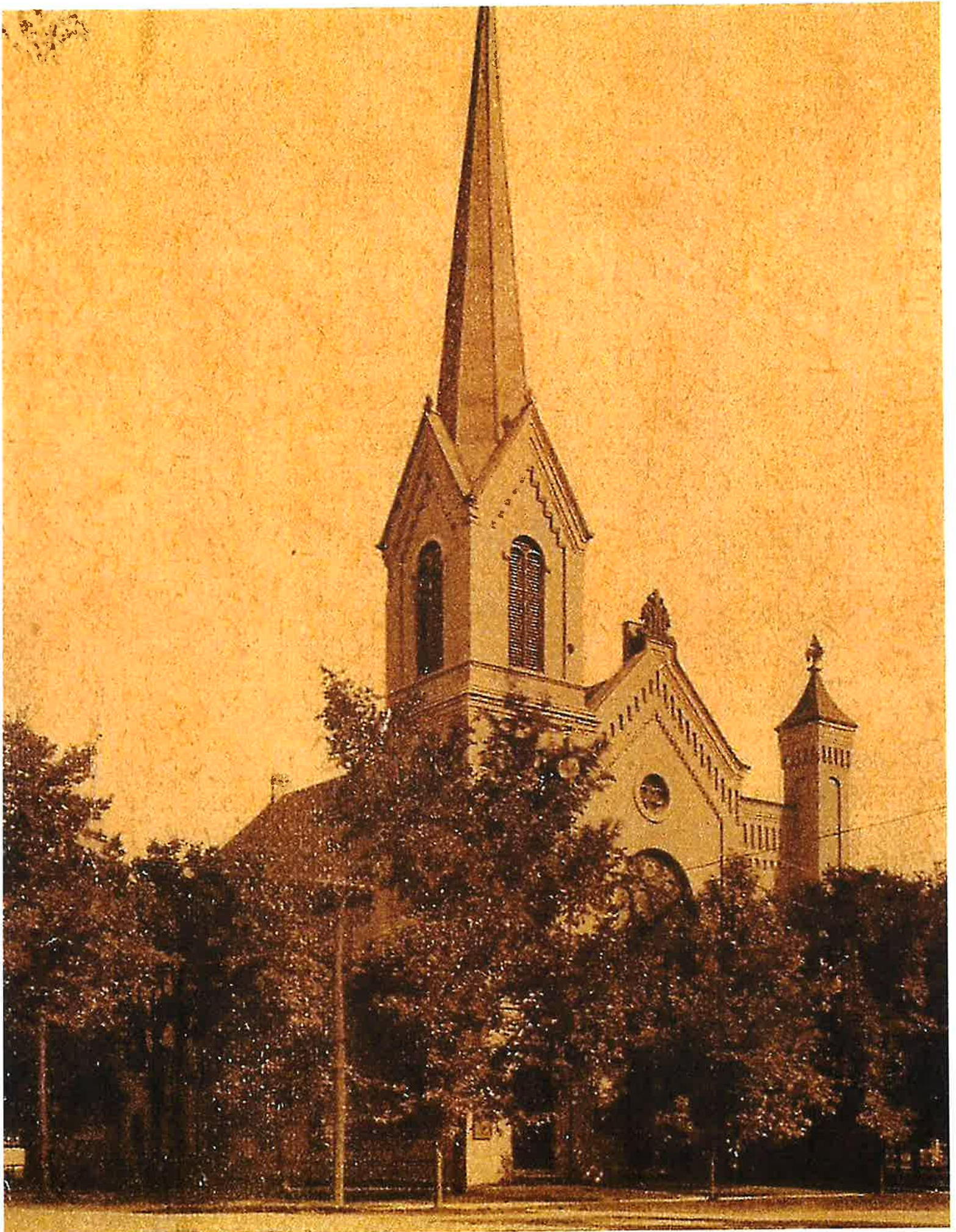
# Issues and Observations Summary

The following is a summary of observations of key preservation planning issues determined through the preservation planning process.

- **Past Registration and Survey Activities.** Since the establishment of the Belvidere's Historic Preservation Commission in 1987, the City's Preservation Commission has been active in survey and documentation initiatives resulting in two National Register Districts, one Local District and thirty-three (33) properties designated individually as Local Landmarks; four buildings are also listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, various surveys have been completed documenting over 500 properties in the community. These activities and accomplishments have demonstrated a strong interest and commitment to documenting Belvidere's historic resources.
- **Future Designation and Registration Efforts.** Past survey work in the Courthouse Square neighborhood area has identified a National Register District and two Local Districts as the basis for future district designation efforts. Other properties would also be candidates for individual City landmark designation. Going forward, the City's Historic Preservation Commission should work with the Illinois SHPO in formally determining the eligibility of the Courthouse Square neighborhood as a National Register Historic District as a precursor for considering Local Districts in the area, especially for the Lincoln Avenue blocks east of State Street.
- **Local District Boundary Adjustments.** The West Hurlbut Avenue Historic District remains the only locally-designated Historic District in Belvidere, its boundaries encompassing the residential half-blocks along West Hurlbut Avenue between Goodrich and Kishwaukee Streets. The Historic District's architectural resources include early 20th century Colonial Revivals along with other vernacular Gable-Fronts and Foursquares building types. This District's boundaries should be evaluated and possibly expanded to capture other historic residential resources of similar age and integrity on adjacent blocks.
- **Future Survey Activities.** Residential neighborhoods to the south of the Kishwaukee River, as well as to the north and west of State Street and the Courthouse Square area are candidates for future survey and documentation activities, given their age and diversity of architectural resources in these locations. Although some neighborhoods may have integrity issues, with many homes altered with vinyl and other artificial siding, survey efforts would help to identify significant resources worthy of National Register listing or local landmarking. Such neighborhoods could also qualify for alternative forms of protection and management, including conservation districts.
- **Survey Access.** Public access to survey reports and information is available through the City's website as downloadable Portable Digital Format (PDF) documents. However, it is difficult to readily locate survey data on individual properties without having to search the survey reports themselves. The City could employ Internet and other digital and GIS technologies to store and archive survey data, and provide a more convenient internet portal to for accessing local information on Belvidere's historic resources.
- **Mid-Century Resources.** Neighborhoods beyond Belvidere's older historic core, built mostly between the end of World War II and the late 1960s, contain an interesting collection of Cape Cods, Minimal Traditionals and Ranch homes. These areas should be given priority for future survey and documentation.

- **Prefabricated Residential and Automobile-Related Resources.** Post-World War II Quonset hut and Lustron homes are representative examples of prefabricated housing types built for returning servicemen. The examples found in Belvidere retain a high level of integrity and should be given consideration and designation as Local Landmarks. There are also several historic gas station buildings from the 1940s and 50s that are worthy of preservation and reuse.
- **National Sewing Machine Company complex.** Efforts are ongoing to find and secure suitable new uses, developers and financing for the National Sewing Machine complex along the Kishwaukee River. The City has sought a determination from the Illinois SHPO on whether the complex can be listed as a National Register District as the building themselves are not eligible individually. Regardless, the two buildings remaining in the complex still provide tangible links to the City's industrial past and should be high priorities for Local Landmark designation and adaptive use.
- **Downtown Belvidere.** Downtown retains a significant collection of historic commercial buildings – buildings that comprise two National Register Historic Districts – and serves as one of the community's main commercial centers. The *Downtown Strategic Plan* provided historic preservation-based economic development strategies related to the National Sewing Machine complex, streetscape and public spaces, building rehabilitation and business development efforts. There was also a recommendation regarding the establishment of downtown management organization, although the community has funded a Main Street revitalization program in the past. While there is a palpable storefront vacancy rate, and visible building maintenance and rehabilitation needs throughout the Downtown, re-establishing a new revitalization organization may be needed to advance and maintain a revitalization agenda focused on building preservation, adaptive use and business development. Local stakeholders consider Downtown revitalization as a high priority.
- **Downtown Overlay District.** The City's current design overlay regulations for the Downtown district largely focuses on new development, with several provisions for building rehabilitation. Given that two portions of the Downtown are listed in the National Register, it is unclear why Downtown's design management would not be under the purview of the Historic Preservation Commission through a Local District designation. In addition, the design overlay district is not co-terminus with the National Register district boundaries.
- **Design Review.** Design review standards for Local Landmarks and Districts are currently specified within the Belvidere Historic Preservation Ordinance and are used by the Preservation Commission for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) reviews. It may be helpful to create and adopt an illustrated set of design guidelines that can serve as a resource for historic building owners when they plan a rehabilitation project, as well as serve as extra guidance in COA decisions.
- **Neighborhood Stability.** Like many communities, Belvidere has faced challenges in recent years in dealing with vacant and deteriorating properties, foreclosures, and absentee land owners, especially in the community's older residential neighborhood areas. While there have been efforts by the City to address such issues through code enforcement, the issue of addressing distressed historic properties in organized, structured fashion has remained elusive. The absence of local housing development organizations that can play pivotal roles in facilitating housing rehabilitation is also an obstacle.
- **Preservation Advocacy.** Education and preservation advocacy efforts are largely led by the City and its Historic Preservation Commission. In recent years, the Commission has developed and distributed a periodic information newsletter, established a historic preservation awards program, and initiated an annual "Neighbors Night" to highlight local preservation success stories. Beyond the Commission, the Boone County Museum of History also offers a range of educational resources and outreach activities that promote and inform Belvidere residents on local heritage. While community stakeholders have recognized the importance of these efforts, they also understand that new forms of outreach, education and advocacy initiatives are needed to engage new audiences in Belvidere's preservation program and to build a strong historic preservation ethic.







Section One >>

## **Introduction**

# Introduction

In 2017, the City of Belvidere, Illinois in collaboration with Belvidere citizens and stakeholders, initiated a process to create a *10-Year Historic Preservation Plan* – a plan that will guide local decision-making on the identification, conservation, and stewardship of Belvidere’s architecturally and historically significant buildings and places. Like many similarly-sized Midwestern communities, the City of Belvidere is seeking ways in which to encourage growth and economic development while preserving and maintaining the assets that make their communities distinct from others – assets that include traditional neighborhoods and downtown commercial districts, historic churches, schools, industrial buildings, and other heritage resources that contribute to a community’s sense of place, identity and quality of life.

This 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan was created to provide a strategic direction for historic preservation in Belvidere – one that builds on past preservation successes, strengthens public-private partnerships, and promotes more certainty and predictability in the roles historic preservation will play going forward in shaping Belvidere’s built environment and economic vitality. The process for preparing the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan represents a unique opportunity for the Belvidere community to assess the effectiveness of the current preservation program, understand current issues and constraints to local preservation efforts, and consider a set of planning strategies and initiatives that address critical preservation planning priorities.



Photo courtesy of Boone County Then and Now

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***A locally-adopted historic preservation plan can help to strengthen and integrate historic preservation into broader public policy and land use decision-making. Historic preservation planning also provides opportunities for the public to participate in the future planning and stewardship of significant local architectural and historical resources.***

This 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan for Belvidere seeks to address the following critical preservation planning issues:

- Review and assess historic resource survey, inventory and documentation efforts, and prioritize future historic district and landmark designation activities.
- Explore historic contexts for understanding historical forces that shaped, growth and development and important architectural and cultural resources related to these historical forces.
- Assess the effectiveness of the Belvidere Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 58 of the Belvidere Municipal Code) in the protection of Belvidere's historic resources, and ensure clarity on City preservation procedures, design review and the composition and operations of the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission.
- Explore opportunities for historic preservation as a means for revitalizing Downtown Belvidere, and for stabilizing and promoting the community's older residential neighborhoods as attractive places to live.
- Determine barriers to preservation and encourage the use of existing historic preservation incentives, and the creation of new financial programs that facilitate property maintenance, rehabilitation, and adaptive use.
- Propose a program of ongoing outreach, education and advocacy that increases awareness of Belvidere's heritage resources and promotes long-term stewardship.
- Identify opportunities for advancing heritage tourism in Belvidere and for improving various historic sites, neighborhoods, and districts as compelling places to visit.
- Integrate historic preservation planning goals and policies within the City's varied planning and community development initiatives.
- Create a 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan implementation strategy that prioritizes specific actions that strengthen the community's historic preservation program.

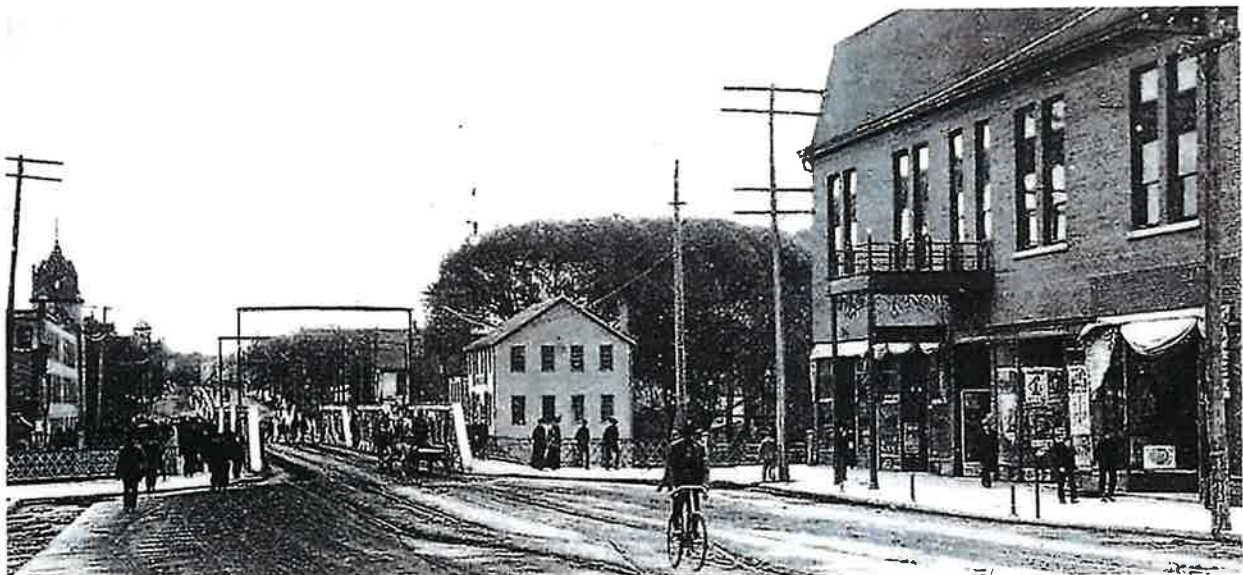


Photo courtesy of Boone County Then and Now - Looking south on State Street

## Preservation Background

Belvidere's early historic preservation efforts can be traced to the formation of the Boone County Historical Society in 1937. In 1967, the Society's Museum of History was established in Downtown Belvidere. The City of Belvidere would formally initiate its historic preservation program with the adoption of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and establishment of its Historic Preservation Commission in 1989. That same year the Historic Preservation Division (Illinois State Historic Preservation Office - Illinois SHPO) of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, recognized Belvidere as a Certified Local Government (CLG). Other Illinois communities, including Rockford, Belvidere, Mt Carroll, Jacksonville, Highland Park, Kane County, Galesburg, Aurora, and Bloomington would also initiate local preservation programs during the 1980s, making Belvidere one of the earliest communities in the state to pass a preservation ordinance. The formation of the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission comes 23 years after the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act by the U.S. Congress. The National Historic Preservation Act established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), this nation's official list of buildings, sites, and structures worthy of preservation. The Pettit Memorial Chapel, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and located in the Belvidere Cemetery, would become the first building in the community to be listed in the National Register in 1978.

Since 1989, Belvidere has implemented an active program of historic resource identification and documentation, as well as landmark and district designation. In 2004, the Belvidere City Council designated the West Hurlburt Historic District, located in north central Belvidere and comprised of early 20th century residential resources, a Local Historic District (LHD); in 2012, the City completed a comprehensive survey of the Downtown district documenting 100 properties for their significance and eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. The survey resulted in the designation of the South and North State Street National Register Districts in 2012. In addition, there are four properties individually listed in the National Register and another 30 designated as Belvidere City Landmarks (CL) by the City's Historic Preservation Commission, affording such properties protection against demolition. The responsibilities of administering the Belvidere historic preservation program continues to rest with the Historic Preservation Commission, which oversees landmarks designation proceedings, design review, survey and registration, and various educational and outreach activities.

Despite the progress the Belvidere community has made in its preservation efforts over the decades, it has not adopted a comprehensive historic preservation plan. The *Boone County Comprehensive Plan*, which was adopted in 1999 and addressed planning and land use issues for Boone County communities including Belvidere, does not include any extensive set of preservation-planning policies for local communities. However, the *Downtown Belvidere Strategic Plan* completed in 2012 takes a "Main Street" revitalization approach, stressing the rehabilitation and adaptive use of Downtown commercial buildings. Therefore, the process for preparing this 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan represents a unique opportunity for Belvidere to assess the effectiveness of its current historic preservation program, understand current issues and constraints, and consider a set of planning strategies that address critical preservation-planning concerns.

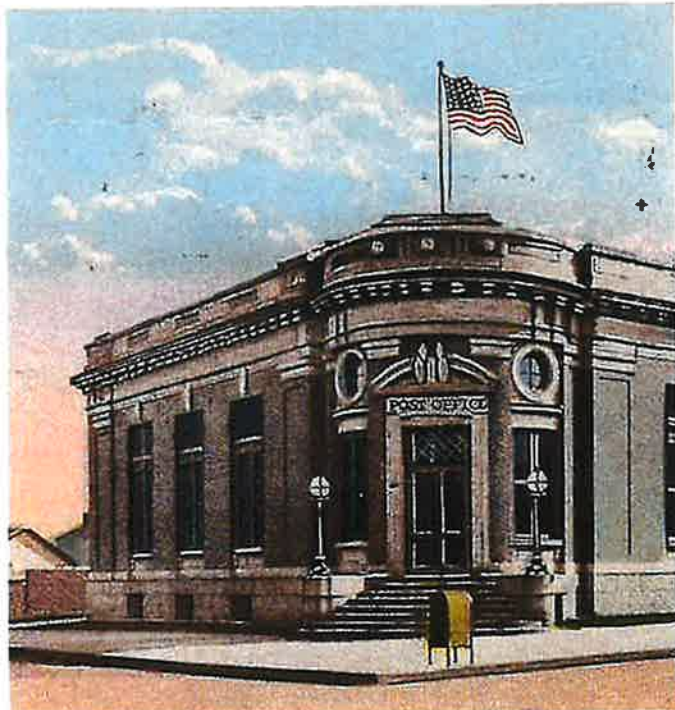


Photo courtesy of Boone County Then and Now



## Community Timeline and Preservation Chronology

The following is a general timeline of significant events and historic preservation efforts in the City of Belvidere since the mid-1830s.

<b>1833:</b>	Chicago Treaty signed, relocating the Pottawatomie, Chippewa and Ottawa tribes west of the Mississippi River
<b>1835-1836:</b>	First claims staked along the Kishwaukee River on what was known as Elysian Fields Formation of the 'Belvidere Company' First bridge constructed over the Kishwaukee River at today's State Street Early Hotel, the Belvidere House, constructed along original stage coach route
<b>1837:</b>	The Illinois legislature authorizes the formation of Boone County
<b>1838:</b>	Courthouse Square neighborhood initially platted Lampert-Wildflower House constructed.
<b>1843:</b>	First courthouse constructed near the current day courthouse
<b>1845:</b>	Stephen Augustus Hurlbut moves to Belvidere and opens a law practice
<b>1847:</b>	Belvidere incorporated as a town
<b>1851:</b>	Railroad Depot constructed south of the Kishwaukee River
<b>1852:</b>	Chicago Northwestern Railroad arrives one mile south of the Kishwaukee River
<b>1854:</b>	Existing Boone County Courthouse constructed
<b>1857:</b>	Town of Belvidere formally established with State of Illinois-issued charter
<b>1882:</b>	Belvidere incorporated as a City
<b>1886:</b>	National Sewing Machine Company locates along State Street and the Kishwaukee River
<b>1894:</b>	Expansion of the National Sewing Machine Complex when it purchases the Freeport Bicycle Manufacturing Company
<b>1907:</b>	Pettit Memorial Chapel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is constructed
<b>1910:</b>	Soldiers and Sailors Monument completed
<b>1911:</b>	Downtown U.S. Post Office constructed, listed in the National Register (2000).
<b>1912:</b>	Ida Public Library constructed
<b>1916:</b>	Old Belvidere High School constructed
<b>1924:</b>	Plaque honoring Chief Big Thunder placed in current day Big Thunder Park
<b>1937:</b>	Boone County Historical Society established
<b>1940:</b>	Big Thunder Park officially dedicated
<b>1953-1954:</b>	National Sewing Company merges with the Free Sewing Machine Company and leaves Belvidere
<b>1964-1965:</b>	Belvidere Assembly Plant constructed
<b>1966:</b>	National Historic Preservation Act passed by U.S. Congress National Register of Historic Places established
<b>1967:</b>	Tornado strikes Belvidere
<b>1968:</b>	Boone County Historical Museum opens to the public
<b>1972-1974:</b>	Illinois Historic Landmarks and Structures Surveys completed by the State of Illinois
<b>1978:</b>	Pettit Memorial Chapel becomes first Belvidere property listed in the National Register of Historic Places
<b>1987:</b>	Historic Preservation Ordinance adopted by the Belvidere City Council Belvidere becomes a Certified Local Government
<b>1989:</b>	Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission established by the Belvidere City Council
<b>1990:</b>	Illinois State Agency Historic Resources Preservation Act enacted
<b>1996:</b>	Belvidere accepted into the Illinois Main Street Program
<b>1997:</b>	Belvidere High School listed in the National Register of Historic Places
<b>2004:</b>	West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District established
<b>2005:</b>	Lampert-Wildflower House listed in the National Register of Historic Places
<b>2012:</b>	Downtown Belvidere Historic Resource Survey completed North and South State Street Historic Districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places
<b>2014:</b>	Courthouse Square Survey Phase 1 completed
<b>2016:</b>	Courthouse Square Survey Phase 2 completed

## Historic Resources and Historic Preservation Defined

Historic resources are buildings, sites, structures, and landscapes of architectural, historical, and cultural value. They are also places of economic activity, community identity, and collective memory - places that tell the story of Belvidere. Historic preservation is the process of conserving historic resources, and managing appropriate change so that their character-defining architectural and design features are maintained, finding means and methods for reusing and protecting such resources for the benefit of future generations. In the United States, historic preservation is undertaken through public efforts in landmarking and historic district designation at the federal, state, or local levels, and private actions that underwrite and facilitate the maintenance, rehabilitation, and preservation of historic buildings, structures, sites, and objects.

## Benefits of Historic Preservation

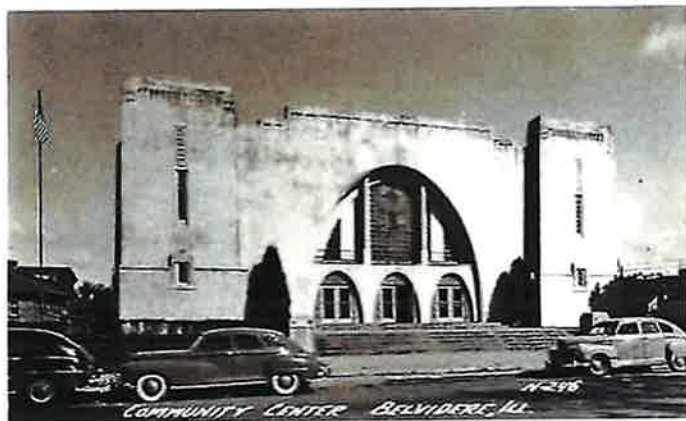
Belvidere's historic resources are key to the community's aesthetic and physical environment, economic diversity and sustainability, and overall quality of life. Historic preservation is also an effective tool for revitalizing downtowns, stabilizing older neighborhoods, attracting new businesses and homeowners, and encouraging reinvestment in a community's streets, sidewalks and other infrastructure. It is for these reasons that many municipalities in Illinois and around the country have created and maintained local preservation programs with preservation ordinances, landmarking and design review procedures, and incentives for property maintenance and adaptive use.

The benefits of preservation are substantial and contribute to the local economy in the following ways:

- New jobs created through rehabilitated buildings occupied by new businesses, especially in historic downtowns and traditional commercial districts.
- Stabilized and improved residential and commercial property values when historic districts are created and maintained.
- Increased housing choices through rehabilitated housing stock.
- Additional arts, cultural, and tourism activities generated in association with landmarks and historic districts.
- Conserved building resources that reduce the environmental impact of new development.



Photos courtesy of The Lakota Group and Boone County Then and Now



*Belvidere's historic resources are key to the community's aesthetics and physical environment, economic diversity and sustainability, and overall quality of life.*

## Revitalizing Downtown

Historic downtown districts are the most prominent places of shared memory – they are where the community shops at long-time family businesses, works at established companies and institutions, and plays in its plazas and parks. Historic downtowns have always represented the community's economic and social center. Today, historic downtown buildings provide affordable, flexible ground-floor spaces for new businesses and reusable upper stories for offices and apartments. Downtown residential units allow people to walk to downtown shopping, dining, and entertainment and recreation options.

Many communities in Illinois and around the country have established and maintained Main Street revitalization programs that have fostered substantial reinvestment in buildings, businesses, and public infrastructure. In 2016 alone, Main Street programs across the country have generated, with contributions from both the public and private sectors, \$4.65 billion of downtown investment, including a net gain of 27,000 jobs and 8,000 building rehabilitations. Since 1980, Main Street programs have generated \$70 billion in downtown reinvestment. In Illinois, a total of \$33.8 million in reinvestment was leveraged in 2013 by Illinois Main Street communities (*Main Street as a Downtown Revitalization Strategy in Illinois*, Center for Governmental Studies, Northern Illinois University, 2014, p. 10). Currently, there are 36 communities in Illinois with fully functioning Main Street programs.

## Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Historic homes contribute to a neighborhood's identity and sense of place – an identity that is often quite distinct from newly-developed places in other parts of the community, by its diversity of housing types and architectural styles. The diversity in the housing stock in turn provides opportunities for households of different income levels to live in more established neighborhoods close to schools, parks, downtowns, churches, and other community services and amenities. Landmark and district designations also have positive impacts on neighborhoods, often increasing property values significantly. (*The Impact of Historic District Designation*, City of Rockford, December 2008, p. 19.)

Even in neighborhoods that have experienced population and economic decline, local landmarks, historic districts and conservation areas have played key roles in attracting new residents, facilitating housing rehabilitation, prioritizing capital improvement investments and encouraging infill development. For instance, in Philadelphia, the city's population increase of 8,400 people from the year 2000 to 2010 occurred in its historic districts (Bertron, Cara, *Right Size, Right Place: A New Role for Preservation, Gray Area Preservation and Provocateur Conference Series*, February 12, 2014). Neighborhood historic districts also promote greater ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity than most other neighborhoods and places.

## Heritage Tourism

Heritage travelers visit historic downtowns, neighborhoods, sites and attractions to experience authentic places. Heritage resources also serve as the "backdrops on the stage" – allowing the stories of the people and cultures that settled, developed and lived in the place to be told. Heritage tourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry; heritage travelers often stay longer and spend more on trips than other tourists. According to the U.S. Cultural and Heritage Traveler Study, 78 percent of all U.S. travelers visit a historic site, spending on average \$900 per trip and contributing more than \$192 billion annually to the U.S. economy. In addition, more than two-thirds of heritage tourists visit a historic site while traveling; 30 percent often visit a historic neighborhood. In general, tourism is increasing in Illinois with over 110 million visitors to the State of Illinois in 2016, an increase of over 1 million from 2015 (*Economic Impact of Domestic Tourism*, Illinois Office of Tourism, 2016, Retrieved from [http://illinoistourism.org/content/pdfs/j006823%20economic%20impact%20card\\_lr.pdf](http://illinoistourism.org/content/pdfs/j006823%20economic%20impact%20card_lr.pdf)).

## Building Rehabilitation

Several statewide economic impact studies have demonstrated that the number of jobs created through the rehabilitation of historic buildings compares favorably with the number of jobs created with new construction. For instance, a new construction project can expect to spend about 50 percent in labor and 50 percent in materials; in contrast, some rehabilitation projects may spend up to 70 percent in labor costs - locally hired labor, which helps keep dollars within the local community (*The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*, Washington DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2014, p. 88).

With the federal and various state historic preservation tax credit programs, building rehabilitation projects created an estimated 108,500 jobs in 2016 with 57 percent of the projects associated with new housing units, 13 percent for office use and another 30 percent for a variety of other commercial purposes. Since 1976, the Federal Tax Credit program alone has generated more than \$84 billion in the rehabilitation and adaptive use of income-producing properties. In Illinois, the private sector spent \$272 million in qualified rehabilitation expenditures in Federal historic preservation tax credit projects. (*Federal Tax Incentives for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings Statistical Report and Analysis for Fiscal Year 2016*, National Park Service, 2017, p. 9.)

Locally, the River Edge Redevelopment Zone program offered by the State of Illinois provides a 25 percent state income tax credit for rehabilitating historic income-producing properties located in Aurora, East St. Louis, Peoria, Elgin and Rockford. The state tax credit that can be coupled with the Federal Historic Tax Credit (HTC). The program has had a demonstrable impact in the City of Rockford, resulting in \$104 million in private sector investment and the creation of 480 direct jobs created. (*Economic Impact of the River Edge Redevelopment Zone State Historic Tax Credit in Rockford, Illinois, Landmarks Illinois, 2015, p. 2.*)

## Sustainability and Environmental Benefits

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has estimated that more than a third of landfill space is occupied by debris from building demolition, and that it can take between 10 to 80 years for a new energy-efficient building to overcome the climate change impacts created by new construction. Furthermore, buildings constructed before World War II are generally more energy efficient due to higher quality construction materials and construction methods. For instance, wood harvested from old growth forests and stone taken from local quarries were used mainly in the construction of the first and second-generation homes and commercial buildings in most communities – materials that have proven to be more durable than most others being used today. Sensitive preservation and stewardship of historic buildings also maintains the “embodied energy” of the materials – the energy used to harvest, fabricate, transport, and install the materials on the building rather than replacing them. If these materials are lost, the materials' embodied energy is also lost, generating significant new energy consumption in the material's replacement. Therefore, rehabilitating a historic building promotes sustainable, environmentally conscious community development.

## Placemaking and the New Economy

Many cities recognize today that historic downtowns and neighborhoods are “placemaking” assets that define a community's identity, which can attract jobs and workers, especially in today's emerging creative industries. Such industries are mainly concerned with the use of information in the production of goods and services, including the architecture and design fields, fashion and film-making, publishing, the performing arts, arts and crafts, and technology and software development. With the advent of the internet and other technologies, creative industries and their workers can locate almost anywhere but most often select places with exceptional livability factors, including walkability and character-rich environments. These qualities and environments are often present in historic places. Therefore, maintaining historic neighborhoods and commercial districts – the places that attract the creatives – will be important to cities and communities going forward as they attempt to re-position themselves in the new economy.



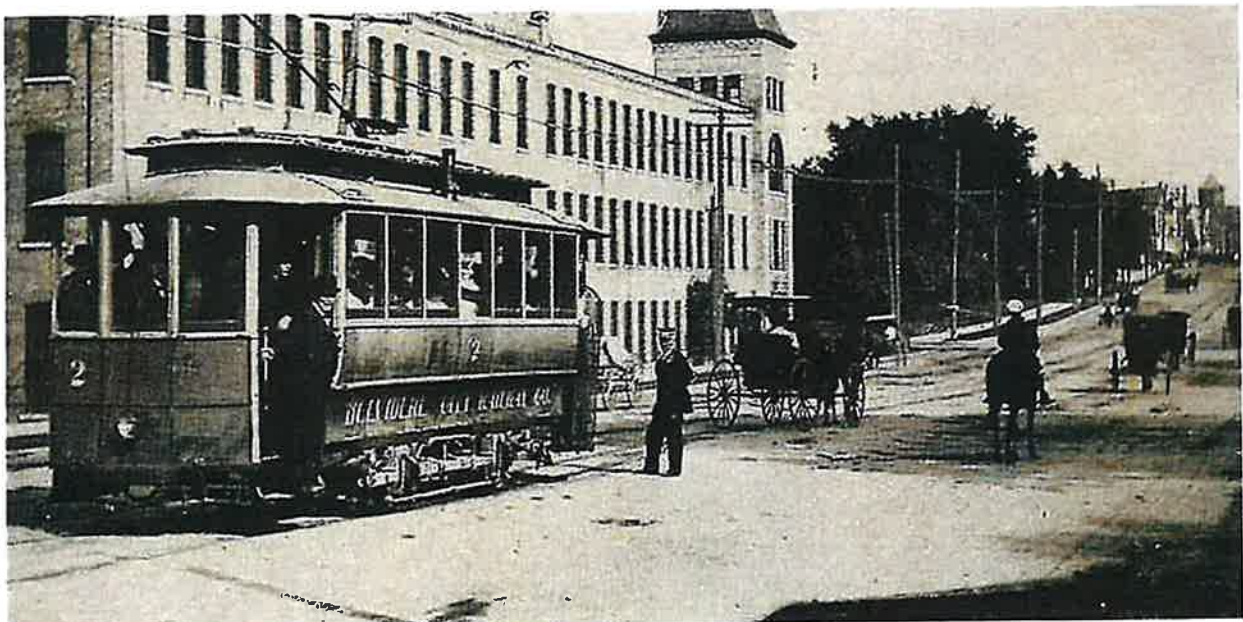
Beyond the jobs-generating aspects, placemaking also capitalizes on historic environments by making them important backdrops for vibrant public spaces, and community gatherings and cultural activities. Communities around the country have integrated art and urban design enhancements in historic downtowns and neighborhoods to promote safe and comfortable pedestrian environments, and social interaction and community engagement.

### **Livability and Quality of Life**

Historic buildings provide a sense of scale, comfort, familiarity and beauty that cannot often be duplicated in new construction. They also frame the neighborhood and the downtown block, promoting pedestrian activity, neighborhood interaction, and community pride of place. Architectural and decorative elements that define certain historic buildings also define a community's visual character. Ultimately, it is the community's visual character that builds its sense of livability that helps attract residents, investors and businesses.

## What is a 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan?

This *10-Year Historic Preservation Plan* is the principal policy document regarding the advancement of the City of Belvidere's historic preservation program, as well as the protection, stewardship, and rehabilitation of historic buildings and districts. While the most recent Boone County Comprehensive Plan includes a historic preservation chapter, this Plan will serve as the principal policy regarding historic preservation planning in the City of Belvidere. Downtown Belvidere and the West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District, among others, are three of the historic areas that define Belvidere's historic character and identity. However, other resources neither landmarked nor within historic districts but contributing to Belvidere's character are always under threat from improper alterations and treatment, neglect, natural disasters, or demolitions. To preserve these resources but accommodate the City's growth, economic development and revitalization needs, a clearer understanding of Belvidere's preservation priorities needs to be identified. This Plan outlines specific priorities, and strategies for Belvidere to follow to achieve short and long-term community historic preservation goals.



Photos courtesy of Boone County Then and Now - Looking south on State Street

## How To Use This 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan

The City, preservation advocates and other public and private sector entities will use this Plan to direct future preservation planning efforts focused on survey and landmark designations, preservation incentives, education and outreach activities, Downtown and neighborhood revitalization, and other historic preservation-based economic development initiatives. The Plan should also be used to monitor short and long-term preservation initiatives, adjust preservation policy when needed and warranted, and integrate preservation goals and policies into other plans and studies the City government may undertake in the future. Overall, this Plan seeks to balance the community's broader planning and community-development objectives, while also seeking to advance the mission of preservation and its benefits.

## The Planning Process

To facilitate the preparation of the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan, the City of Belvidere engaged the Lakota Group, a multi-disciplinary planning firm based in Chicago, Illinois. A Plan Steering Committee, representing a broad-based segment of community stakeholders, including Historic Preservation Board members, local preservation advocates, civic institutions, City leaders and officials, private business owners, the Boone County Museum of History and other organizations and entities, was formed to help guide the Plan's development. The Plan's creation was underwritten by a CLG grant provided by the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office. The planning process involves two distinct phases: a "State of the City" review and assessment of the existing community preservation planning program and activities, and a "plan-making" phase in which preservation planning goals and policies, strategies, and implementation action steps will be prepared in collaboration with the community, and accepted and adopted by the City. The entire planning process was completed in December 2017.

Planning activities to date have included the following:

### Phase 1: State of the City

The first phase, initiated in February 2017, assessed Belvidere's existing preservation program, interviewed key stakeholders and focus groups, conducted steering committee meetings, field work, and organized a community workshop to gain public input regarding critical preservation planning issues. Relevant planning documents, including Boone County's Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Strategic Plan for Belvidere, were also reviewed.

The planning process included the following activities:

- **Project Start Meeting (February 2, 2017).** City planning staff conducted a project start meeting with the Lakota Group to discuss preservation planning goals and objectives, local preservation issues, and project schedule and timeline.
- **Reconnaissance Tour (March 16, 2017).** The Lakota Group and city staff toured existing and potential historic districts, including the North and South State Street National Register Historic Districts, the West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District, and the Courthouse Square residential area.
- **Stakeholder Listening Sessions (April 11-12, 2017).** Stakeholder listening sessions were conducted with various City departments, including Community Development, Fire and Police Departments, Public Works and Finance, and the Mayor's office. Additional interviews were conducted with the Boone County Museum of History, Downtown property and business owners, and other stakeholders, including local developers, realtor's, citizens and preservation advocates.
- **Field Work (May 15, 2017).** During the month of May, Lakota photographed and documented historic resources that were not included in the March Reconnaissance Tour.

- **Community Speak Out #1 (May 25, 2017).** A community speak-out session was held with approximately 20 residents, business and property owners, and preservation leaders providing input on preservation issues through a paper questionnaire and a series of interactive exercises. Display boards on Belvidere's historic architecture and "voting boxes" on preservation planning priorities were also incorporated. Results of the Community Speak-Out are summarized in Section 6, The Community Speaks, page 150.
- **Online Questionnaire (June 2017).** Portions of exhibits and the questionnaire from the Community Speak Out were re-formatted as an online survey and questionnaire to gauge Belvidere resident understanding of important preservation issues. Results of the online questionnaire are summarized in Section 6, The Community Speaks, page 151.
- **Steering Committee Meeting (September 25, 2017).** Lakota met with the Plan Steering Committee to review the State of the City Report and to discuss and determine key preservation planning concepts and strategies to be considered in the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan.
- **Final State of the City Report (October 1, 2017).** After a review of the State of the City Report by the Steering Committee and City staff, a Final Draft version of the State of the City Report was prepared and delivered to the City.

## Phase 2: Preservation Plan

The second phase of the planning process, the development of the *10-Year Historic Preservation Plan*, commenced after delivery of the State of the City Report. A second community open house was held on October 26, 2017 to gain community stakeholder feedback on initial Plan recommendations. A Draft Plan document was delivered to the City on November 7, 2017. A revised Draft Plan was subsequently delivered to the City on January 4, 2018. The final Plan was adopted by the Belvidere City Council on January 18, 2018.

Photo by The Lakota Group - Looking west on Buchanan Street



***Overall, this Plan seeks to balance the community's broader planning and community development objectives while seeking to strengthen and advance the mission of preservation and its benefits to the Belvidere community.***







Section Two >>

# **10-Year Historic Preservation Plan**

## Overview

This 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan represents the results of a collaborative planning process between the City of Belvidere, its Historic Preservation Commission and different stakeholder groups to create a compelling planning vision and policy framework that advances the local historic preservation program. The Preservation Plan also organizes local preservation activities and initiatives in logical program areas and implementation sequence that achieves long-term preservation goals and builds a more comprehensive and effective community preservation effort. Furthermore, this Plan should also serve as a work program not just for the Historic Preservation Commission but also for partner stakeholders and entities, including other City departments, the Boone County Museum of History, economic development groups, and other preservation advocates. While the City and the Historic Preservation Commission will take the lead on many initiatives presented in this document, partnerships with other public agencies and private sector entities to implement other aspects of the Preservation Plan, especially in relation to community development, and educational and advocacy efforts, will also be needed.

Outlined in Section 2 of this 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan are specific preservation planning goals, initiatives, and implementation actions. Discussed in Section 3: Implementation, are the respective roles and responsibilities among key implementation partners. The section below presents the community's guiding vision for historic preservation along with six value statements that reflect Belvidere's core historic preservation beliefs.

## Belvidere Historic Preservation Vision

Belvidere's aspirations for its future historic preservation program are captured in the following vision statement.

***In 2028, Belvidere is a vibrant community within the northern Illinois and Rockford metropolitan region – a community comprised of a vibrant traditional downtown commercial district, and vital and attractive historic neighborhoods. Historic preservation in Belvidere has enhanced the City's economic vitality, its visual environment, and civic pride through increased awareness of historic preservation's benefits; through ongoing identification and protection of significant historic resources; and, through meaningful involvement of the City of Belvidere and private-sector partners in important preservation initiatives. Historic preservation has improved property values in and around historic areas, fostered civic beauty, and preserved and promoted the appreciation of Belvidere's historic buildings, structures, sites and districts for the education and welfare of the Belvidere citizens and stakeholders.***

## Belvidere Historic Preservation Value Statements

In addition to the Belvidere Vision Statement, a series of value statements have been prepared describing the community's core preservation beliefs. Belvidere's core beliefs were determined through local stakeholder engagement and feedback regarding key preservation concerns, priorities and aspirations.

### **Value Statement #1: Belvidere's heritage resources are tangible links to the community's past.**

Belvidere's historic resources and architecture are visual reminders of the community's past – a past inexorably linked to its first New England settlers, the coming of the railroads, the Civil War, and its commercial and industrial development at the turn of the 20th century in and near the Kishwaukee River and its traditional downtown core. Historic resources and sites are "places of memory" that provide opportunities for telling the stories of Belvidere's rich history, even the stories that have yet to be told. Preserving historic resources also helps to build a broader historical and cultural understanding of the community.

**Value Statement #2: Historic preservation is a critical tool for revitalizing downtown Belvidere.**

The Belvidere community recognizes its Downtown building stock as a valuable and significant collection of representative Victorian-era and early 20th century architecture, a collection incorporated as part of two National Register Historic Districts. The community also recognizes that historic preservation plays a fundamental role in revitalizing traditional downtown districts – historic buildings can serve as incubator spaces for independent businesses while upper floors could be converted to offices and residential units, potentially making Downtown Belvidere a true mixed-use center. The community will adopt new policies and sustain new initiatives that advance historic preservation-based approaches to revitalizing and maintain Downtown Belvidere as the community's centerpiece commercial district.

**Value Statement #3: Preserving the National Sewing Machine Company complex is key to understanding Belvidere's industrial heritage.**

The National Sewing Machine Company complex is a significant, sole reminder of Belvidere's industrial past. Its presence accounted for the growth of Belvidere's neighborhoods and the long-time prosperity of the Downtown commercial district; its presence also provides opportunities for learning stories of the people who worked there and the captains of industry who built and managed the complex. Belvidere stakeholders are committed to finding the ways and means for rehabilitating and adapting the complex so that they remain visible reminders of Belvidere's heritage.

**Value Statement #4: An effective and well-managed local preservation program will facilitate positive historic preservation outcomes.**

Successful preservation efforts at the local level are largely dependent on the effectiveness of the municipal Historic Preservation Ordinance, the operations of the Historic Preservation Commission, and the implementation of planning and economic development policies that support preservation activities. Local preservation efforts are also dependent on private sector engagement that builds awareness of preservation's benefits and participation in initiatives that encourage the adaptation and protection of historic resources. Belvidere stakeholders are committed to forging and strengthening public-private partnerships, and to building and maintaining the municipal historic preservation program.

**Value Statement #5: Preservation enhances residential neighborhoods and community quality of life.**

Like the Downtown district, Belvidere's neighborhoods are comprised of a rich diversity of historic residential resources dating from the community's early years and the Civil War, to the turn of the 20th century and post-World War II. Efforts have been fledging in recent years in encouraging the rehabilitation and restoration of Belvidere's historic homes – stakeholders understand that historic preservation promotes neighborhood stability, increases property values and enhances quality of life. Additional efforts, policies and partnerships will be pursued and implemented to facilitate preservation-based neighborhood revitalization efforts.



Photo by The Lakota Group

**Value Statement #6: Preservation promotes community sustainability.**

Belvidere residents desire a future where all areas, commercial districts and neighborhoods are thriving and healthy. Belvidere's older areas contain a diverse building stock in good condition with an underlying system of roads and infrastructure already paid for by preceding generations of Belvidere citizens. Investing in and revitalizing these areas will lead to new investment in businesses and buildings, enhance property values and an improved rate of return on previous infrastructure investments. Historic resources also contain inherent and durable energy efficient construction materials not used in today's buildings and structures. Belvidere citizens recognize that historic preservation is a sound community sustainability strategy.

The specific goals and initiatives presented in the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan are organized around four key elements of an effective community historic preservation program:

- Survey and Documentation,
- Program Administration and Management,
- Community Development, and,
- Education and Advocacy

The four elements are described as follows:

### **Survey and Documentation**

An active and ongoing survey and documentation program provides the basis for understanding and identifying the community's historic resources – what resources are of high value and significance and should be preserved, whether as designated landmarks or historic districts, as part of the community's future built environment. Apart from the Illinois Historic Structures and Landmarks Surveys conducted by the State of Illinois during the 1970s, Belvidere has been quite active over the last 10 years in conducting survey projects, resulting in the listing of two downtown National Register Historic Districts and in the identification of one potentially eligible National Register and two local districts in the Courthouse Square neighborhood north of the Kishwaukee River. In addition, 32 properties were considered locally significant and eligible for local landmark designation (see Section 4: Belvidere Historic Resources for additional information).

Going forward, future survey and documentation initiatives could continue to focus on residential areas both north and south of the Kishwaukee River where Victorian-era (1880-1900) residential housing predominate and in several post-World War II subdivisions characterized by Ranch and Cape Cod homes. Future surveys in these areas should also focus attention on vernacular housing types south of the Kishwaukee River given the preponderance of worker cottages, shot guns, and smaller masonry and wood frame single family homes. Such housing types are reflective of the Irish and German workers who settled in Belvidere during this time period and especially after the establishment of the June Manufacturing Company (later the National Sewing Machine Company) in 1886. Survey efforts can also be broadened to incorporate other types of documentation, such as oral histories, video projects and crowdsourced websites where historic photos and other material could be provided by community residents for public access. Such activities can inform and enrich the understanding of Belvidere's historic contexts.

### **Program Administration and Management**

This element concerns the operations and management of the community preservation program at the municipal level, including the mechanisms for designating Local Landmarks and Districts and conducting design review for projects seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) – mechanisms administered both by the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission and City staff. Two key aspects of program administration include an effective historic preservation ordinance and regulatory framework that protects historic resources and manages change to such resources over time, and an adequate and well-trained staff that can effectively manage Historic Preservation Commission operations and serve as resources to the community at large on preservation issues. As a current mechanism for designating buildings, sites and structures as Local Landmarks or Districts, Belvidere's Historic Preservation Ordinance needs refinements to ensure clarity to designation and design review processes; in other cases, new tools, such as a demolition delay provision, could be incorporated to enhance the effectiveness of the Ordinance. A comprehensive set of design guidelines should also be developed to assist the Commission in design review decisions and in informing the public on good building rehabilitation and preservation practices.



## Community Development

Historic preservation is more than just designating landmarks and districts, it also concerns ways and means in which to use preservation as a method for adapting historic buildings to new uses, revitalizing downtown commercial districts, and stabilizing older residential neighborhoods. At the local level, community development initiatives should integrate preservation goals and policies as preservation activities have been proven to attract private investment, generate jobs, and enhance property values. In recent years, the Belvidere community had adopted a Downtown Strategic Plan in 2012 and initiated a Main Street revitalization program to spur reinvestment in the Downtown commercial district. While the Strategic Plan and the Main Street program had resulted in several successes – such as the completion of various streetscape improvements and the establishment of a public art and mural program – the City and community stakeholders did not sustain efforts in Strategic Plan implementation nor in maintaining operating support for the Main Street program. The Downtown continues to see many vacant and underutilized storefronts and upper-floors, and buildings in need of rehabilitation. Beyond Downtown, Belvidere stakeholders have expressed concern about the stability of adjacent neighborhoods and the necessity for innovative programs and tools that support residential rehabilitation.

## Education and Advocacy

For any community preservation program, local stakeholders – homeowners, downtown merchants, and investors and developers – need to know the significance of Belvidere's heritage, preservation's benefits, and the tools and resources available to help them adapt, rehabilitate and preserve the community's historic resources. Elected leaders also need to understand the economic impact and rate of return on its investment and participation in various City-supported preservation initiatives. Therefore, informing and educating local stakeholders through various efforts and initiatives is critical to building strong support for preservation in Belvidere. In addition, there is a clear need to enhance the community's capacity to advocate on important preservation issues when they come to the forefront. Other than the Boone County Museum of History which serves as an educational resource to the community, and the Belvidere Arts Council which maintains the city's mural program, there are no other partner entities and organizations in Belvidere that can raise the community's preservation awareness.



## Plan Organization

The Belvidere Historic Preservation Vision and Value Statements serve as the framework for specific planning goals, policies and initiatives that build and sustain an effective community preservation program. In succeeding sections, a series of preservation planning goals, policy statements and initiatives are presented and organized around the four key elements of an effective local historic preservation program. All goals, policies and recommendations are also focused on facilitating public and private sector participation in local historic preservation, recognizing that each sector has important roles to play in advancing the Belvidere historic preservation vision.

- **Goals Statement:**  
An overarching statement of intent that guides program decisions over the short and long-term.
- **Policy Statement for Decision-Makers:**  
A more specific statement that guides policy decision-makers, including the Belvidere City Council, the Historic Preservation Commission, other boards and commissions, and City staff.
- **Recommendation:**  
An initiative that identifies the actions and programs needed to achieve the preservation vision set forth in this 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan.



Photo by The Lakota Group

# Goals and Policies

The following is a summary chart of the 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan's Goal and Policy Statements:

GOAL STATEMENTS	POLICY STATEMENTS
<p><b>Goal #1:</b> Continue active efforts in identifying, documenting and protecting Belvidere heritage and historic resources.</p>	<p><b>1.1:</b> Support, fund and implement initiatives that document Belvidere's heritage resources, including buildings, sites, structures and objects throughout the community.</p> <p><b>1.2:</b> Register and designate significant architectural and historical resources</p>
<p><b>Goal #2:</b> Review and enhance preservation program administration.</p>	<p><b>2.1:</b> Review and update the Historic Preservation Ordinance and other regulatory tools to advance community preservation planning goals.</p> <p><b>2.2:</b> Consider and adopt new tools that support and achieve community preservation planning objectives.</p> <p><b>2.3:</b> Improve Historic Preservation Commission operations and develop local preservation leadership.</p>
<p><b>Goal #3:</b> Facilitate reinvestment and revitalization of Belvidere's historic buildings and neighborhoods.</p>	<p><b>3.1:</b> Establish incentive programs to address a range of community preservation needs.</p> <p><b>3.2:</b> Support and build the community's capacity to implement preservation-based revitalization and development initiatives.</p> <p><b>3.3:</b> Integrate historic preservation within future community planning and development initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Goal #4:</b> Promote the awareness and increased public understanding of historic preservation benefits through ongoing education and advocacy efforts.</p>	<p><b>4.1:</b> Invest in technologies to enhance accessibility to information regarding Belvidere's heritage.</p> <p><b>4.2:</b> Support and invest in ongoing outreach and preservation education activities.</p>

# Survey, Documentation and Registration

Survey and documentation concerns the identification of significant historic resources whether they be buildings, sites, structures or objects for future preservation considerations. These considerations may include listing as an individual property or as part of a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places or designation locally by the Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission (see Section 4: Historic Resources for more information). Documentation activities are conducted principally through field survey and inventory work and the preparation of National Register and local landmark and district nominations. Survey and documentation work is the foundation of effective local preservation planning. Registration is the act of designating or listing properties, sites, structures and objects as landmarks or historic districts.

## **Goal #1: Continue active efforts in identifying, documenting and protecting Belvidere's heritage and historic resources.**

### **1.1 Policy for Decision-Makers: Support, fund and implement initiatives that document Belvidere's heritage resources, including buildings, sites, structures and objects throughout the community.**

**Recommendation #1.1: Prioritize new areas in Belvidere for future survey and inventory activities.** Past survey efforts have concentrated in two areas: the traditional Downtown district along State Street from Madison Street on the north to 1st Street and Logan Avenue to the south, and the Courthouse Square neighborhoods mainly bounded by State Street on the west, the Kishwaukee River to the south, north toward Menomonie Street, and east to the former Chicago and Northwestern Railroad spur line. (see figure 1.0 on the following page) A total of 516 historic resources were inventoried, including buildings, sites and objects – resources dating from the 1880s to 1940s and comprising one-quarter of the City's total land area. (see Section 4: Historic Resources, page 116).

Future survey work should now focus in neighborhoods to the north and west of the Courthouse Square, and to the south of Kishwaukee River, areas that contain residential resources similar in age and building types found in the Courthouse Square neighborhood. However, one potential survey area includes residential building types constructed after World War II – Ranch homes, Cape Cods and Minimal Traditionals – and others that are approaching 50 years of age and should be evaluated for their significance. Future survey efforts should be conducted at an intensive level, which allows for a careful, detailed documentation of historic resources, their condition, integrity and potential architectural and historical significance. Future survey areas include (see figure 1.2 on page 35):

- **Survey Area 1 - North Courthouse Square**

This survey area, roughly bounded by Jackson Street on the south, State Street on the west, the Belvidere Cemetery on the north, and Blaine Street to the east, is a logical extension of previous Courthouse Square survey work. The area contains resources of similar age and housing types to the Courthouse Square neighborhoods to the east and south – Queen Anne's, Gable-Fronts, Foursquares and other vernacular forms – with post-World War II Ranch and Minimal Traditionals becoming more prevalent in the northern blocks towards the Belvidere Cemetery. It is unlikely that the entire area would be eligible to the National Register given the high number of properties that have been altered over time with artificial exterior siding. However, a survey may identify high integrity resources of significance to the community, including Frame Vernaculars, Queen Anne cottages, Craftsman homes, and Colonial and Tudor Revivals. Many high integrity examples are located along State Street.





**FIGURE 1.0: BELVIDERE EXISTING SURVEY AREAS**

- **Survey Area 2 - Northwest Kishwaukee Street - West Lincoln Avenue Neighborhood**  
 The residential blocks west of State Street, north of the Kishwaukee River and west to King and Whitman Streets contain resources ranging in dates from the 1880s to the late 1960s with Queen Anne's, Craftsman Bungalows, Ranch and other vernacular types predominating. The West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District, consisting principally of Gable-Fronts, Foursquares and Colonial Revivals, is also located in this suggested survey area. An intensive level survey is recommended given its higher level of integrity than Survey Area 1 and the potential for identifying other landmarks and districts, as well an expansion of the West Hurlbut Local Historic District. Blocks immediately to the west of State Street may have sufficient integrity to warrant possible inclusion in a Courthouse Square National Register Historic District to the east of State Street, as identified in the 2014 Phase 1 Courthouse Square Survey (*Intensive Level Historical and Architectural Survey of the Courthouse Square Area of Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois, City of Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission, 2014, page 67*). Additional local districts and landmarks may also be possible. This area also includes several notable property types including World War II-era pre-fabricated homes, the Romanesque Revival Perry Elementary School and the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- **Survey Area 3 - Allen Street - 5th Street Neighborhood**  
 Unlike Survey Area 1 and 2, the Allen Street - 5th Street neighborhood south of the Kishwaukee River, and west and south of the Washington Elementary School, comprises post-World War II housing construction, including Minimal Traditionals, Cape Cods, Ranch, and Split-Level homes. Late 19th and early 20th century vernacular housing types are found toward the eastern end of the survey area along 5th Avenue. The Mid-Century Ranch and Minimal Traditional building types exhibit a high level of integrity and should be subject to a future survey effort. Portions of this survey area could potentially be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; however, a Local District designation may be possible.
- **Survey Area 4 - Pearl Street - East Avenue Neighborhood**  
 Bounded by 5th Avenue on the west, East Avenue to the east, Grant Highway to the south and Pleasant Street on the north, this survey area contains architectural resources similar to Survey Area 1 and 2 - Gable-Fronts, Upright and Wings, Queen Anne's, Craftsman bungalows, Foursquares, Revivals and Ranch and Minimal Traditional homes. Representative examples of Queen Anne, Revival, and other vernacular housing types exist in this neighborhood and may be eligible for future local landmarking; therefore, a reconnaissance level survey would be beneficial. Given the extensive use of artificial siding and the loss of ornamentation and architectural features on most homes, it is unlikely that the entire neighborhood would be eligible for the National Register, but possibilities exist for future Local Districts.
- **Survey Area 5 - Logan Boulevard - Pleasant Street Neighborhood**  
 Running along Logan Avenue from State to Andrews Streets and north to Meadow Street just south of the Kishwaukee River, this neighborhood consists of late 19th and early 20th century residential resources, including a substantial number of Queen Anne homes and vernacular types in varying states of integrity. Several commercial building resources dating from the 1930s and 40s are also located in the neighborhood along Logan Avenue. An intensive level survey of this area could identify architecturally and historically significant resources eligible for local landmarking.
- **Survey Area 6 - Pearl Street - 6th Street Neighborhood**  
 Like Survey Area 3, the Pearl Street - 6th Street neighborhood consists mainly of high integrity Ranch and Cape Cod homes constructed during the 1960s to the early 1970s. This neighborhood should be the subject of a survey at some point in the future.
- **Survey Area 7 - Andrews Drive - Channing Avenue Neighborhood**  
 Located along north and south of Logan Avenue, and east to west from Andrews Drive to Channing Avenue, this neighborhood has a distinctive landscape and noted for its large lot, high integrity Ranch homes constructed from the 1950s to the 1970s. This neighborhood should also be subject to a survey at some point in the future.

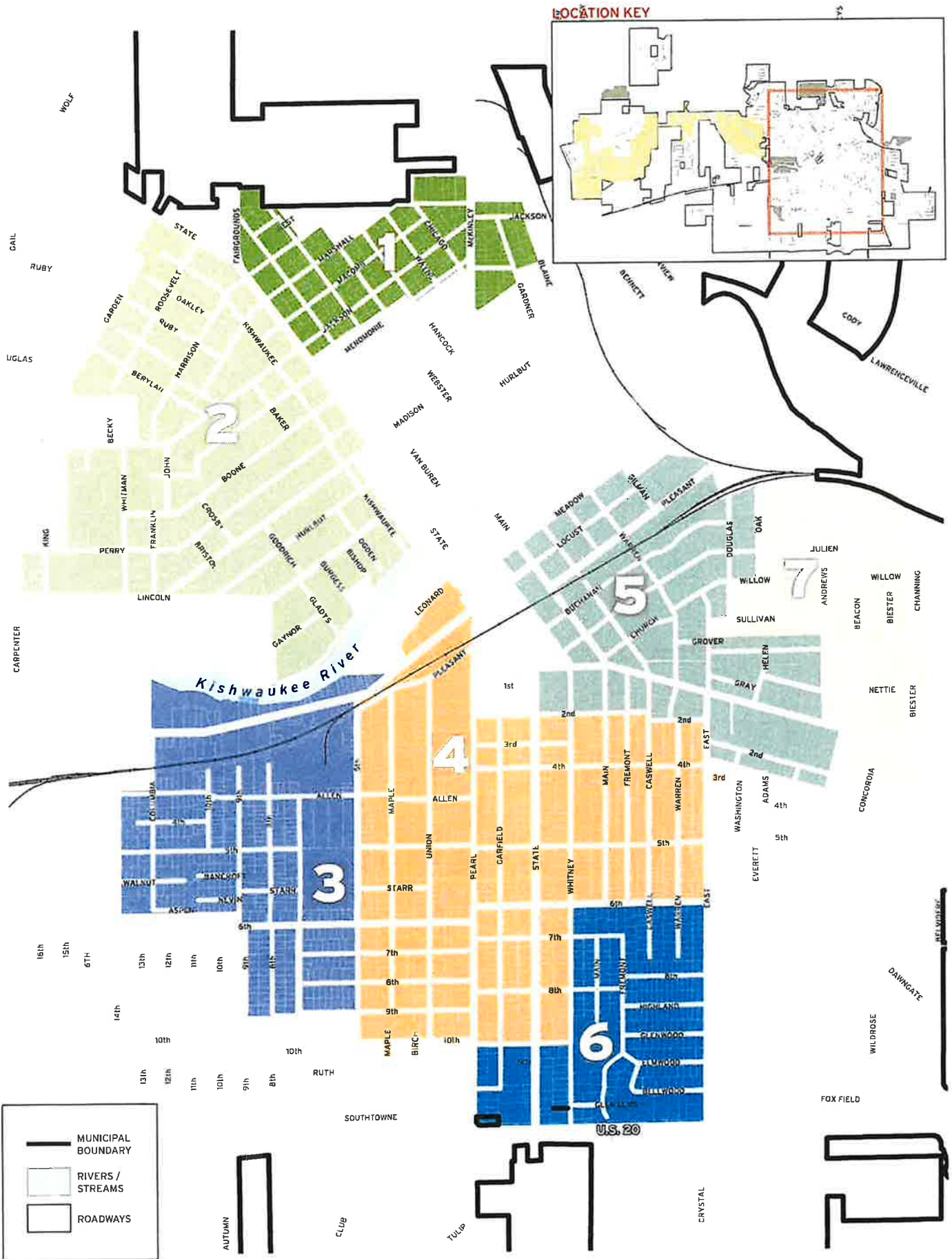


FIGURE 1.2: BELVIDERE FUTURE SURVEY AREAS



### **Recommendation #1.2: Use internet and Geographic Information-System-based technologies for future survey activities.**

Internet and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software technologies have become customary tools today for documentation and survey projects. Such software allows field surveyors to record and transmit survey information using iPads or other tablet hardware to an Internet database that is accessible to both surveyors and municipal preservation planners for editing and administration at later dates. Survey databases can also be made available to the public through various internet portals, such as the City and Boone County websites; such technologies also allow for the easy integration of survey data with other GIS and property information.

### **Recommendation #1.3: Create new GIS layers that include all levels of historic significance determined through survey projects.**

Boone County's GIS system currently lacks data layers identifying Belvidere's historic districts and landmarks. Creating such layers would incorporate Belvidere's historic districts and landmarks, as well as "high" significance properties and resources – historic resources eligible for the National Register or local landmarking – determined through survey and documentation work. A PDF map version of the high significance properties should also be prepared and made accessible by the County or the City on their respective websites.

### **Recommendation #1.4: Conduct oral history projects for the National Sewing Machine Company complex and other important aspects of Belvidere's historical development.**

Oral histories can provide important insights into a community's history – they can capture new stories and perspectives that shed light on the important people, events, and historical forces that shaped a community's development. The National Sewing Machine Company complex played a pivotal role in Belvidere's growth, employing hundreds over the decades during the 19th and 20th centuries, and spurring the expansion of Belvidere's Downtown district and adjacent neighborhoods. Given the complex's closure in the late 1950s, the opportunity to augment the Company's existing historical record by interviewing past and former employees will diminish going forward. The Historic Preservation Commission, in possible partnership with the Boone County Museum of History, should identify and locate former National Sewing Machine Company employees that are willing to participate in an oral history interview. Today's recording and video technologies should make it relatively inexpensive to conduct and archive oral interviews for public access at the Museum of History and over the internet. Beyond the National Sewing Machine Company complex, other facets of Belvidere's history can also be documented through oral histories, such as local religious institutions and parishes, past and current Downtown business owners, the design and construction of the Pettit Memorial Chapel by Frank Lloyd Wright, and development of the Belvidere Assembly Plant in the late 1960s.

### **Recommendation #1.5: Conduct or sponsor a community archaeological assessment.**

Belvidere's early history may be defined by possible Native-American activity and settlements along the Kishwaukee River and the Boone County Fairgrounds, as well as with Chief Big Thunder, thought to be an area Potawatomie leader during the mid-1800s and once buried in Big Thunder Park to the west of the County Courthouse. The 2014 Courthouse Square Survey recommends that archaeological investigations be conducted to determine the existence of the Big Thunder gravesite and any Native American encampments (*Intensive Level Historical and Architectural Survey of the Courthouse Square Area of Belvidere, Boone County, Illinois, City of Belvidere Historic Preservation Commission, 2014, page 27*). However, before any formal investigations are undertaken, it may be more beneficial to complete an initial assessment – a review of primary documents, maps and previous research – that can serve as a predictive model and indicator for possible archaeological evidence before an intensive investigation requiring excavations is pursued. An assessment would not impose any new or additional requirements on property owners, but it does provide a basis for understanding where there may be sensitive areas in Belvidere where future development should be carefully managed. The assessment may also identify areas that may warrant future investigations.

**Recommendation #1.6: Conduct additional context research related to Belvidere’s vernacular architecture types and ethnic groups.**

Previous residential surveys have focused its research on Belvidere’s high-style architecture – buildings that feature definitive elements and ornamentation of a distinct architectural style, rather than vernacular prototypes that reflect local building traditions and preferences. Much of Belvidere’s older residential neighborhoods contain vernacular housing types – Gable-Fronts, Upright and Wings, and Foursquares, among others – representing the buildings constructed by the mostly German, Irish and English groups that settled in Belvidere during the latter half of the 19th century, a time of expansive growth for the community. Future surveys should explore such housing types and their relationships to Belvidere’s early settlers and ethnic groups. An understanding of this context can aid in determining the architectural and historical significance of such resources.

**1.2 Policy for Decision-Makers: Register and designate significant architectural and historical resources and districts as identified through survey and documentation activities.**

**Recommendation #1.7: Prepare an annual study list of potential landmarks and districts.**

Prepare and update annually a study list of potential landmarks and districts comprised of properties and other historic resources that may meet the eligibility requirements for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or designation as a local landmark or district. Study list properties are those identified as potentially eligible through past and future survey and documentation work. Subsequently, the list would allow the Historic Preservation Commission to review survey and other collected information regarding an eligible property or district, and determine whether additional research and documentation is needed to make the case for listing or designation. Priority registration and landmarking efforts should focus on historic resources that meet the City’s and the National Register’s designation criteria. The study list – serving as a short list of worthy historic resources – promotes a better community understanding on what resources are worthy of protection.

**Recommendation #1.8: Pursue a National Register nomination for the Belvidere Old Town neighborhood.**

The recent intensive level surveys of the Courthouse Square neighborhood determined that the Boone County Courthouse and several blocks to the west, south and north would be eligible as a district to the National Register of Historic Places. This should be a priority historic district designation project. The Commission should consult with the Illinois SHPO to determine formal eligibility and district boundaries. There may be possibilities of considering blocks to the west of State Street as part of an Old Town Belvidere National Register District, but they have yet to be surveyed and inventoried. Consultation with the Illinois SHPO should also include a discussion of these blocks and their potential eligibility as part of the Old Town District.



910 East Lincoln Avenue - Photo by The Lakota Group

### **Recommendation #1.9: Designate the Courthouse Square and East Lincoln Avenue as Local Historic Districts.**

In addition to the National Register, the Courthouse Square neighborhood surveys also concluded that two smaller sections of the Courthouse Square area could also be designated potentially as Local Districts. These sections would include the blocks north of Big Thunder Park and the Boone County Courthouse, and the homes along East Lincoln Avenue just north of the Kishwaukee River. These sections contain some of Belvidere's most architecturally significant residential resources, many of which date to Belvidere's earliest residential settlement. These areas should receive priority for local designation. As the Historic Preservation Commission considers these district designations, it should study the possibility of creating one Local District that encompasses the entire boundaries of the proposed Old Town Belvidere National Register Historic District. The Old Town Belvidere Historic District would include much of the Courthouse Square neighborhood survey area.

### **Recommendation #1.10: Expand the West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District.**

The boundaries of the West Hurlbut Avenue Local Historic District, the only locally-designated historic district, should be re-evaluated for a boundary expansion given the existence of similar architectural resources on adjacent blocks and the existing boundaries disjointed nature with two properties located just west of State Street separated from the remaining houses in the district to the west. An architectural and historical survey of this neighborhood can help to confirm whether a boundary expansion is feasible.

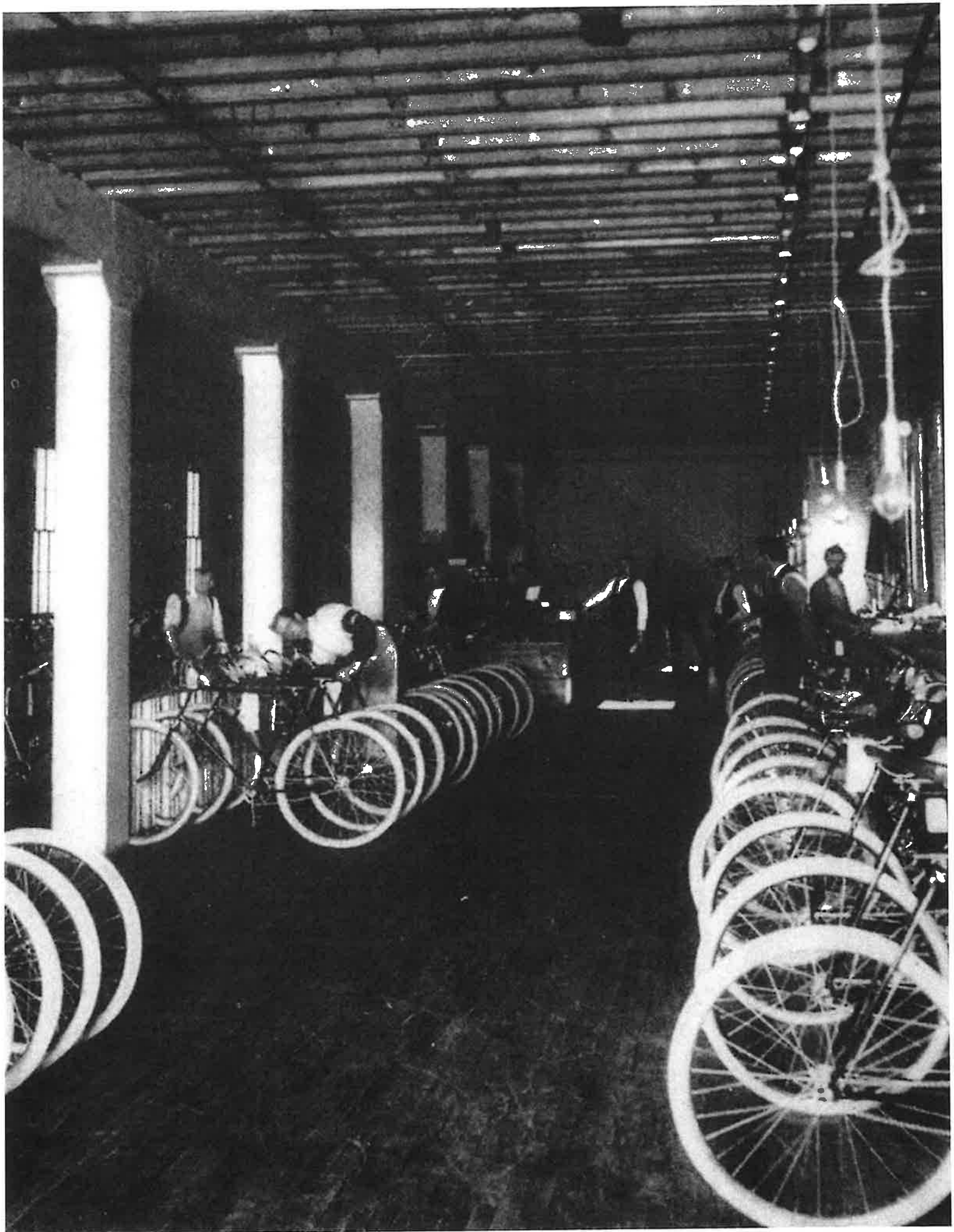
### **Recommendation #1.11: Document and landmark Belvidere's pre-fabricated housing types and historic gas stations.**

A future study list of potential landmarks and districts should include Belvidere's unique pre-fabricated Quonset and Lustron housing types. Such homes were a form of affordable post-World War II housing; in the case of Quonset homes, they were meant to serve as temporary housing for returning soldiers. Given their high integrity, Lustron and Quonset homes should be high priorities for local landmarking, subject to additional research and documentation to determine their exact number and to better understand the context for their construction. Several historic gas stations also exist in Belvidere, documented in prior surveys, other are worth investigation as potential landmarks and as reuse candidates.

### **Recommendation #1.12: Register important publicly-owned historic buildings, structures, and objects.**

Belvidere has several significant publicly-owned historic resources, including the Downtown Fire Department Building, Perry Elementary School, and Belvidere Municipal Park, which also includes the 1845 Baltic Mill. The Downtown Fire Department Building has already been documented as part of the 2012 Historic Resources Survey but it is not included in either the North and South Street National Register Districts. Several publicly-owned monuments, memorials, and structures, such as the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, the Civil War Memorial, and the Bandstand, all located in Big Thunder Park, have also been inventoried as part of the Courthouse Square survey but have yet to be landmarked. Publicly-owned historic resources not previously surveyed and inventoried should be subject to future documentation efforts, whether as part of a neighborhood survey or separate investigation initiative. Resources already documented should be placed in the Study List by the Historic Preservation Commission for high priority designation. The Commission should consult and provide technical assistance with City departments and other outside agencies on potential landmarking.





# Program Administration *and* Management

A key element in any community preservation program is the management of processes related to landmark and district designation and Certificate of Appropriateness design review – both administered by the City and the Historic Preservation Commission. The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Downtown Overlay Code currently govern designation and design review processes. Some refinement to the Ordinance and Overlay Code are recommended to provide clarity to processes and to integrate preservation best practices. New tools and programs are also proposed to meet different community historic preservation needs.

## **Goal #2: Review and enhance preservation program administration.**

### **2.1 Policy for Decision-Makers:** Review and update the historic preservation ordinance and other regulatory tools to advance community preservation planning goals.

#### **Recommendation #2.1: Update the Belvidere Historic Preservation Ordinance.**

Outlined in Chapter 58 of the Belvidere Municipal Code is the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance outlining the operations of the Historic Preservation Commission, landmark and district designation procedures, and the design review process for Certificate of Appropriateness applications. From time to time, a review and evaluation of the Historic Preservation Ordinance is necessary to ensure it is advancing community preservation goals and objectives and incorporates best practices in historic preservation planning. An assessment of the Belvidere Historic Preservation Ordinance, using the Illinois Model Historic Landmark Ordinance and other Illinois community preservation ordinances as comparisons, has been undertaken as part of this 10-Year Historic Preservation Plan and a summary of key recommendations is made below. Included in Appendix 3 is the complete Belvidere Historic Preservation Ordinance with evaluation notes.

An update to the Historic Preservation Ordinance should consider:

- A revision to Commission composition provisions to allow only Belvidere residents to sit as commissioners. Current requirements permit Boone County residents to participate on the Commission, which may lead to non-Belvidere residents having an outsized voice in Commission decision-making.
- City employees and officials serving on the Historic Preservation Commission should do so as non-voting, advisory or ex-officio members. It is unusual for municipal staff to participate in voting decisions and could potentially subject the Commission to conflict of interest claims by the community.
- Require representatives of the Boone County Museum of History and landmark property owners or residents within established historic districts as eligible participants on the Historic Preservation Commission.
- Consolidate or eliminate duplicate landmark and district designation criteria provisions within the Ordinance to promote clarity and consistency.
- Consider developing separate designation criteria for landmarks and districts to reduce confusion on how the existing criteria applies in separate landmark and district designation cases.

- Add a minimum age requirement for resources considered for local landmarking or district designation. Typically, buildings, sites, structures and objects must be 50 years and older, reflecting the National Register eligibility requirements. Additionally, incorporate a provision that considers the designation of properties and resources younger than 50 years but may meet other designation criteria and be exceptionally significant architecturally and historically.
- Eliminate the requirement of 51 percent of property owners to consent to the submission of a local historic district designation application. Alternatively, the Commission may consider a waiting period for district property owners to reject the designation application before it is submitted to the City Council for review and adoption. The waiting period would reflect the listing requirements for National Register Historic Districts where 51 percent of property owners must say no to the designation.
- Require that a formal nomination or designation report be prepared for local landmark and district designations that outlines and includes how the landmark or district meets the designation criteria, context information, and key architectural, site and landscape features. In some communities, the nomination report mirrors the nomination application for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Create a separate section within the Historic Preservation Ordinance on standards and procedures for granting certificates of economic hardship. Economic considerations are listed as one of the first criteria in approving Certificates of Appropriateness, which by common and best historic preservation practices, should focus strictly on design-related issues.
- Add provisions for Historic Preservation Commission review, comment and report of any impacts to historic resources subject to subdivision or consolidation of parcels within a Local Landmark District.
- Consider requiring the Commission to review the potential landmark eligibility or disposition of any City-owned historic resources.

Other recommendations regarding Certificate of Appropriateness review procedures (Sections 58-93 to 58-95) may include:

- Precise definitions for what constitutes contributing and non-contributing properties within Local Historic Districts and how non-contributing resources are treated during design review.
- Reference to additional design guidelines that may be used by the Historic Preservation Commission for COA applications.
- Additional details on what exterior stylistic and architectural features – windows, roofs, doors, decorative elements, porches, cladding and shingle patterns, chimneys, cornices, storefronts, for example – would be subject to design review.
- More guidance on what constitutes compatibility between existing buildings and new construction.
- Reassign the installation or change of storm doors, and storm windows and screens to COA administrative review given the potential impact they may have on a building's exterior appearance.
- Incorporate additional requirements for Certificates of Demolition, including photographic evidence, statements and estimates from qualified preservation architects/engineers, and descriptions and drawings of any planned new construction.
- Additional conditions or provisions for when COA would be granted for a property relocation.



Consider and incorporate the following best preservation practices into the Historic Preservation Ordinance:

### **Demolition Delay**

Many communities have adopted demolition delay provisions within their preservation codes to suspend pending demolitions of significant historic resources. A delay period could range between 60 to 180 days; a standard delay period is 90 days. The purpose of the delay is to work closely with property owners on potential options to demolition, including potential assistance on property rehabilitation or sale.

Specific historic resources would be subject to the delay:

- Future National Register-listed properties not designated as Local Landmarks.
- Properties evaluated as potentially eligible for the National Register or Local Landmark designation as determined through surveys or other documentation activities.

### **Demolition by Neglect**

In addition to demolition delay, demolition-by-neglect provisions enable a local community to initiate actions to prevent historic resources from falling into significant disrepair. Such actions may include issuing citations on any violations of minimum maintenance standards, requiring property owners to submit property stabilization plans, and referring such cases to legal action if a stabilization plan had not been implemented. Such provisions would apply to Local Landmarks and all properties located within a Local Landmark District. The Historic Preservation Commission, and Planning and Building Department staff would be responsible for its administration and management.

Minimum maintenance standards focus on any visible deterioration or neglect of a historic resource's architectural features – standards that would be incorporated into the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Such features and elements would include:

- Exterior walls, foundations and other vertical building structural supports with evidence of buckling, cracking, leaning and sagging.
- Chimneys and chimney stacks with evidence of deteriorating mortar joints, spalling, and cracks.
- Exterior wall mortar joints with evidence of deteriorating mortar joints, spalling, efflorescence and cracks.
- Exterior stairs and porches with evidence of decay, including their supports, handrails, flooring and balusters.
- Roofs with evidence of holes and rotting materials.
- Exterior wood cladding with lack of paint and other weather protective coverings.
- Windows, doors and other features that may be missing or in a significant state of decay.
- Cornices, entablatures, exterior building materials and commercial storefront elements that may be missing, falling, or in a condition that is unsafe.

## **Recommendation #2.2: Reconstitute the Downtown Design Overlay District as a Local Historic District.**

The City of Belvidere created the existing Downtown Overlay District before any formal historic resource surveys were undertaken, and National Register and Local Historic Districts were established. The Overlay District was recommended as a suitable Downtown design management tool in the 1999 Boone County Comprehensive Plan, given Downtown's relatively intact traditional commercial building stock. The Overlay District is administered by City planning staff and has had a level of effectiveness in managing design changes since its adoption in 2006. However, since that time, two National Register Historic Districts – the North and South State Street Districts – have been established, although they do not encompass all Downtown buildings as does the Overlay District. Given the existence of the National Register Districts, consideration should be given to reconstituting the Overlay District as a Local District to provide the Historic Preservation Commission design review oversight. This follows a common community preservation planning practice of designating National Register districts as local historic districts to manage design change and demolition in these architecturally and historically significant areas. The Overlay District does not protect historic commercial buildings from demolition as would the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Reconstituting the Overlay District would necessitate:

- Informing and working with Downtown property owners on the design review changes and other implications between the Overlay and Local Landmark Districts.
- Expanding the existing boundaries of the Overlay District for a new Local District. The new boundaries should include the Old Belvidere High School, Community Building, Buchanan Street between Whitney Boulevard and State Street, and Whitney Boulevard from Logan Avenue north to Meadow Street incorporating the National Sewing Machine Complex.
- Preparing a Local District Landmark nomination report and submitting a Local District application for Historic Preservation Commission review and City Council adoption.
- Using and incorporating the definitions and design review standards within the Overlay District for COA design review conducted by the Commission.
- Rescinding the Downtown Overlay District from the Code of Ordinances.



Apollo Theater (left) 508-520 S. State (right)  
Photos by The Lakota Group



***Consideration should be given to reconstituting the Downtown Overlay District as a Local District to provide the Historic Preservation Commission design review oversight.***

## **2.2 Policy for Decision-Makers: Consider and adopt new tools that support and encourage preservation of important historic resources.**

### **Recommendation #2.3: Develop a comprehensive design guideline manual.**

Both the Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Downtown Design Overlay District include design standards that guide the Historic Preservation Commission and City staff in their design review decisions. The standards are mostly suitable for current design review purposes apart from some needed updates and modifications as suggested above in Recommendation #1. However, as a supplement to these standards, a separate design guidelines manual should be prepared providing information and guidance on the best preservation practices related to historic building maintenance and rehabilitation. A design guidelines manual would include text, photos, line drawings, and other material that illustrates and describes key historic building elements and features, proper preservation procedures for historic homes and commercial buildings, and key aspects to compatible new construction design. This would help inform City staff and members of the Historic Preservation Commission on how a project would meet COA design review standards.

Beyond its design review function, a design guidelines manual can serve as an educational resource to owners of historic resources planning a rehabilitation project. The manual could be uploaded and made available on the City's website, distributed to the Belvidere Public Library and the Boone County Museum of History, and presented and discussed during community preservation workshops.

Design guidelines should be nicely formatted with ample pictures and images that adequately illustrate and describe proper preservation procedures.

A typical design guidelines publication would include the following elements:

- Background on Belvidere historic architecture, including characteristic features of architectural styles.
- Maintenance procedures for common building materials and key architectural features.
- Appropriate replacement or replacement-in-kind materials.
- Storefront rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- Roofs and cornices.
- Residential and commercial building additions
- Garages and accessory buildings.
- Site design and landscape features.
- Energy efficiency and alternative energy systems.
- Design issues related to architectural styles and properties of Mid-Century vintage, including Ranch and Cape Cod building types.
- Explanation of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* – the baseline set of preservation rehabilitation standards.



## Recommendation #2.4: Establish a Neighborhood Conservation District program.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) are commonly used as an alternative tool to historic districts by communities in other states, including Texas, Tennessee, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and others. An NCD is employed in neighborhoods where the building and architectural fabric lacks sufficient integrity to be eligible as a National Register or Local Historic District but warrants some level of design management to protect key individual historic resources and overall neighborhood character, as well as to guide future development design. As future survey and inventory work progresses in Belvidere's neighborhoods going forward, conservation districts might become a useful tool in promoting neighborhood preservation and good design if they are not determined to be eligible as historic districts.

Key aspects of Neighborhood Conservation Districts:

- Neighborhoods or areas not considered eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or Local Historic District designation due to integrity issues; however, existing National Register Districts may also be eligible for Conservation District designation as an alternative to a Local Historic District.
- A NCD must have a cohesive land use pattern and identifiable physical characteristics and features, including its buildings, lot sizes, parks and natural areas, and streetscape. They can be as small as one or two blocks, contain buildings that may be less than 50 years of age, represent a distinguishable entity of local historic, cultural or architectural importance, or possess distinctive exterior facade elements such as porches and steps, cornices and trim, and doors and windows.
- Design review focuses on maintaining key architectural and character features and new construction related to building height, setback and other site characteristics, and less on materials. Design guidelines are often prepared in consultation with neighborhood residents.
- A neighborhood plan may also be developed along with design guidelines to address land use issues, engage residents on key preservation and design issues, and guide future capital improvements in neighborhood streets and infrastructure.
- Conservation districts are often established as a zoning overlay, which may be administered by the Historic Preservation Commission.
- Local Landmarks within NCDs would still be subject to the COA design review provision stipulated within the Historic Preservation Ordinance.



Example page (left) from the DeKalb Downtown Design Guidelines Manual. Courtesy of The Lakota Group.

## **2.3 Policy for Decision-Makers: Improve Historic Preservation Commission operations and develop local preservation leadership.**

### **Recommendation #2.5: Adopt internal rules and procedures for Historic Preservation Commission operations.**

Historic preservation commissions often adopt a rules and procedures document to help provide guidance to commissioners on the various commission responsibilities, including the landmark and district designations, COA design review, and management of public hearings. A rules and procedures document may also outline other responsibilities and issues regarding meeting attendance, commissioner qualifications, training requirements, conflict of interest, and participation on subcommittees.

### **Recommendation #2.6: Actively recruit new members to the Historic Preservation Commission.**

Smaller communities often find it challenging to find people to participate in municipal boards and commissions, especially a historic preservation commission where the historic preservation ordinance outlines specific qualification requirements. Proactive commissioner recruitment efforts could focus on the following:

- Establishing a Historic Preservation Commission subcommittee that meets periodically to identify potential commissioner candidates.
- Conducting public outreach and advertising activities.
- Considering past members of other City and non-profit boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission and the Boone County Museum of History.
- Considering other skill sets not currently represented on the Commission, including local history teachers, contractors, realtors, and Downtown building owners.

### **Recommendation #2.7: Orient incoming Historic Preservation Commission members to commission operations.**

City staff should provide expanded orientation services to new and incoming Historic Preservation Commission members. As part of the orientation, the City should prepare a manual or binder that includes copies of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, a meeting calendar, survey reports, maps of the Local Landmarks and Local and National Register Districts, and other important and relevant materials.

### **Recommendation #2.8: Provide opportunities for the ongoing training and education of Historic Preservation Commission members.**

As part of Belvidere's Certified Local Government requirements, Historic Preservation Commission members should participate in at least one educational training session per year. A well-trained historic preservation commission on current trends and best preservation practices can help commissioners make well-informed decisions regarding design review and other preservation planning matters. However, an inadequate training budget for travel and registration often pushes the burden of the cost to the volunteer commissioner. An adequate budget should allow at least half the Historic Preservation Commission to travel and attend an educational session within Illinois or Wisconsin from year to year.

Available training, conference and other educational opportunities are offered at:

- National organizations, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Alliance of Historic Preservation Commissions, the National Main Street Center, and the Association of Preservation Technology.
- State agencies and organizations, including the Illinois and Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Offices, Landmarks Illinois, the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation, the Illinois Association of Historic Preservation Commissions, and the Illinois and Wisconsin Chapters of the American Planning Association.
- Local or regional entities may offer education opportunities, including the Boone County Museum of History and the Rockford Historical Society.

### **Recommendation #2.9: Maintain the City of Belvidere's Certified Local Government status.**

Annually, the Historic Preservation Commission should review its operations to ensure it is meeting its Certified Local Government participation requirements with the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office. Maintaining its participation, allows the Commission to apply for grants and other resources to conduct local preservation planning, survey and documentation, registration, and educational initiatives. Participation requirements include:

- Enforcing state or local legislation that protects historic properties.
- Maintaining a historic preservation commission composed of professional and lay members that meets regularly.
- Maintain an ongoing survey program.
- Provide for public participation in the historic preservation process, including recommending properties to the National Register of Historic Places.



522 South State Street - Photo by The Lakota Group



### **Recommendation #2.10: Establish a budget for publications and community outreach.**

As is the custom today, City publications are available online for public access; however, there still needs to be resources and capacity to provide printed materials for those who may not have internet service. Printed versions of architecture, landmark and district brochures, walking tours, survey reports, meetings and educational opportunities, and local histories, could be made available at City Hall, the Ida Public Library, and the Boone County Museum of History. A dedicated budget for printing, as well for other outreach and educational events, would help to rely less on future CLG grant monies for these initiatives. Preferably, target future CLG grants for survey and registration activities over the next few years.

### **Recommendation #2.11: Benchmark Historical Preservation Commission operations and accomplishments.**

Yearly, the Historic Preservation Commission prepares a strategic plan of activities; at the end of the year, the Commission should review its strategic plan, collect statistics, and establish benchmarks to measure the success of Belvidere's historic preservation program.

Benchmarks or performance indicators that could be tracked, may include:

- Number of COAs reviewed
- Number of Local Landmarks designated.
- Neighborhoods or districts surveyed and inventoried.
- Private capital leveraged in building rehabilitation and adaptive projects partially financed through local incentives and Historic Preservation Tax Credits.
- Number of participants in locally-organized historic preservation-related events and activities.
- Educational conferences and workshops attended by members of the Historic Preservation Commission.

### **Recommendation #2.12: Designate a preservation specialist among City building inspectors.**

The City should assign one of its building inspectors as a preservation specialist who can receive more intensive training on interpreting building codes for historic buildings. The specialist can work closely with the Historic Preservation Commission on addressing code enforcement issues and Certificates of Appropriateness decisions.

### **Recommendation #2.13: Utilize GIS technologies to track vacant and deteriorating historic properties.**

Today's availability of specialized Geographic Information System software that tracks code violations, and vacant and deteriorating properties, can help the City target and fine-tune its code enforcement and preservation efforts. Such technologies can also allow local residents to report code violations anonymously online or through a smartphone.



ELECTRIC BRIDGE  
BELVIDERE RAIL