

# IN THE DISTRICTS

*A newsletter published by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission*

*Volume III, Issue 2 • Summer 1997*

## ■ IN THE NEWS

### **New Preservation Tax Credits Signed Into Law**

**H**istoric preservation in North Carolina received a powerful boost in May, when the legislature dramatically increased the state tax credits available for historic rehabilitation projects. The governor signed the bill into law in June.

Under the new act, owners of historic properties will be able to obtain state credits of up to 20% for work on income-producing properties, and up to 30% for non-income producing properties. The state credits are intended to piggy-back with existing federal tax credits of up to 20%. The net effect is that North Carolina now offers one of the most attractive preservation tax credit packages in the country.

Tax credits have proven to be among the most effective preservation incentive programs devised, often proving the key to making rehab projects financially feasible. Since 1978, nearly 25,000 projects have been approved on the federal level, representing more than \$17 billion in historic preservation investment.

Increasingly, the states have provided credit programs of their own. In 1994, North Carolina adopted a 5% credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties. The new law, however, does more than significantly increase the percentage of credit available for income-producing properties. Now, for the first time in North Carolina, renovation of non-income producing properties (including private residences) will also be eligible.

To qualify, non-income producing properties must be listed individually in the National Register, be certified by the state as contributing to a National Register Historic District, or as contributing to a local historic district certified by the National Park Service. Work must receive prior approval by the state, and meet established federal standards. Expenditures must exceed \$25,000 during a 24-month period. The law provides that the entire credit cannot be taken in a single year, but must be taken in five equal annual installments beginning in the year the property is placed in service. Any unused portion can be carried over for the succeeding five years.

The law will become effective on January 1,  
*(Con't on p.3)*



*Federal tax credits are helping to rehab the 1879 Dodd-Hinsdale House (right) and are proposed for work on the 1872 Prairie Building (above).*

■ PROFILE

## Oakwood: from "Problem" to Partnership

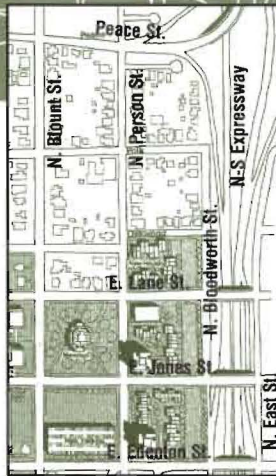
Imagine a four-lane highway paving over the heart of Oakwood.

In the early 1970s, demolition was being eyed as a viable solution to the "Oakwood problem." Much of the neighborhood had fallen on hard times. Many once well-kept nineteenth-century cottages were run down; larger homes had been carved into boarding houses.

Yet the area remained the oldest intact neighborhood in the city. By the '70s, appreciation for that status was growing; a wave of rehabbing had begun. When news of the proposed North-South Expressway began circulating, alternative plans arose.

A neighborhood association was

*The 1970s North-South Expressway would have razed most of Oakwood.*



formed. Tours were organized. An in-depth neighborhood study was undertaken. Finally, in 1975, through a combination of grassroots effort, municipal action, and state enabling legislation, Oakwood became Raleigh's first locally-designated historic district.

Today, the effects of those groundbreaking measures are readily apparent. The pairing of private initiative and public design review has led, step by step, to a neighborhood that today is one of the most desirable residential locations in the center city. ■

Private initiative and public action led to the city's first historic district.

■ TECH

CORNER



The outside of my clapboard house needs a good scrubbing. Any tips?



Cleaning's cardinal rule is *use the gentlest means possible.*

Water and a natural bristle brush can remove most dirt. For stubborn stains (especially those which are oil-based), a mild detergent can help; for mold and mildew, mix 1 part bleach, 1/2 part detergent and 2/3 part borax with 3 parts warm water. (In applying any cleaning agent, be sure to try it on a test patch first.) Rinse affected sur-

faces thoroughly afterwards.

Pressure-washing may seem to be an attractive alternative to elbow grease. But it can also drive holes into brick. Usually, a garden hose is fully up to the cleaning task. If you feel you must pressure-wash, be sure the flow is at a very low setting, and use only a broad spray nozzle. Aim clear of the underside of clapboards and other gaps to keep water from penetrating the interior. (For the same reason, never use pressure-washers to remove paint.)



Be kind

■ GUIDELINES

## Spare That Tree!

A "canopy" of trees is a characteristic feature of the city's historic districts. Accordingly, the district *Guidelines* offer specific criteria for reviewing proposals for tree removals.

As the largest landscaping elements in the districts, trees define space as much as any buildings. Their aesthetic contribution is thus a major consideration. Another concern is more seasonal; traditionally, trees were often placed where they might offer maximum cooling.

Guided by these principles, the commission by-laws establish procedures for reviewing tree removals. Trees less than 8" in diameter can be cut without review and approval. Diseased or hazardous trees of any size can be removed with the approval of staff. The proposed removal of large, healthy trees, however, must go to public hearing. While the Certificate of Appropriateness Committee cannot deny demolition, it can impose up to a 365-day delay if the tree is found to contribute to district aesthetics, cooling, and character.

With any removal, planting a comparable replacement is a wise move. Hurricane Fran underscored both the prominence and fragility of larger trees; the losses sustained make saving those remaining that much more important.

If you have questions regarding tree preservation or pruning, contact the commission staff or a certified arborist. A free brochure on tree maintenance is available from the city Planning Department.

to your masonry as well. Some cleaning agents can cause brick or stone to stain (or worse); be sure to test first. Avoid wall washing during colder weather; water can penetrate porous brick, freeze, and cause spalling.

Always remember that your goal is simply removing dirt. Cleaning walls can certainly be cheaper than painting, but not if it results in additional problems. ■

■ CITY GOVERNMENT

## Serving Notice on COAs

Major alterations to a historic district property can affect more than just the project location. For that reason, the commission takes special care to inform nearby property owners of a pending major change.

The City Code provides that “a reasonable attempt” be made “to identify and notify by mail the owners of property within one hundred (100) feet on all sides of the property which is the subject of the pending application.” For the commission, this translates into mailing each owner a copy of the upcoming agenda and a letter outlining the hearing procedure.

Mailing labels are generated from the Wake County property files. Packets are mailed at least seven working days before the hearing.



Recently, the commission instituted a broader means of notification.

Prior to the hearing date, a metal-framed blue and white sign is posted in front of the property in question, bearing the words “Historic District C.O.A.” (for Certificate of Appropriateness, the official approval granted for exterior

changes) and a phone number for further information.

Only major changes – those subject to committee review through public hearing – involve mailings and sign postings. Minor Work applications, which are subject to staff review, do not.

Copies of all pending major work applications are available for public examination prior to the hearing date.

Contact the commission office to inspect them. ■

**City Code  
requires public  
notification for major  
changes in the districts.**

## Who's Who in the RHDC (Part II)

Commission members Frank Branan, Ella Clarke, Bruce Markey and Holmes Harden each count more than four years of service to the RHDC. The breadth of their preservation expertise, however, extends much farther.

The work of retired architect Frank Branan is part of Raleigh's architectural legacy. A former associate of William H. Dietrick, he later served as a consultant to the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office. In addition to chairing the RHDC's Research Committee, he is an alternate for the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Committee. He also serves on the Wake County Historic Preservation Commission.

Ella Clarke grew up in Raleigh's Idlewild community and graduated from St. Augustine's College. Now retired and returned to the neighborhood, her years as a reference librarian serve her in good stead as a member of the commission's Research Committee.

Bruce Markey specializes in rehabilitation construction. He is responsible for the renovation of several houses in the Boylan Heights Historic District, where he resides. He applies his construction knowledge to the work of the COA Committee.

Attorney Holmes Harden's major renovation project has been a 1790s farmhouse, his grandmother's childhood home. A long-time preservation enthusiast, he serves on the COA Committee.

As specified by the city code, members of the commission are appointed for two-year terms, and are eligible

for reappointment at the discretion of City Council. Terms are staggered; up to half of the membership is appointed or reappointed each year.

(con't from p.1) 1998. Administration of the program will be carried out by the North Carolina Historic Preservation Office.

Copies of the act are available from the “Printed Bills” office of the state legislature, or from the RHDC office. ■

### SOURCES/FURTHER READING

(available from the commission library):

“The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.” Special Issue of *Cultural Resources Management*; National Park Service, Vol. 20, No. 6, 1997.

Beaumont, Constance. *Smart States, Better Communities*. Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1996.



RHDC members Holmes Harden, Ella Clarke, Bruce Markey, and Frank Branan.

■ AROUND THE RHDC

**RHDC Meetings**

**RHDC Business meetings:**

7/15; 8/19; 9/16; 10/21; 7:30 AM,  
Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

**Certificate of Appropriateness Comm.:**

Application deadline & meeting date:  
7/21 for 8/4; 8/15 for 9/2;  
9/22 for 10/6; 4:00 PM, Rm. 305,  
Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

**Public Relations/Education Comm.:**

Dates and times to be announced, Avery C.  
Upchurch Govt. Complex

**Research Committee:**

7/3; 8/7; 9/4; 10/2; 12:00 Noon,  
Rm. 317, Avery C. Upchurch Govt. Complex

**Contacts**

RHDC:	919/832-7238
RHDC staff:	
Dan Becker	890-3678
Doug Hill	890-3666
Historic Oakwood:	
Jean Earp, Pres.	834-0887
Boylan Heights Association:	
Rhonda Maurer, Pres.	834-6991
Downtown Raleigh Alliance	
Errol Frailey, Pres.	832-1231

■ IN THE WORKS

**Historic Guidesheets to Debut**

Ever since Raleigh designated its first historic landmarks in 1969, periodic attempts had been made to profile them in one inclusive publication. Each time a new property was designated, however, the existing publication was instantly out of date. While supplements worked for a time, with 11 historic districts, 110-plus landmarks, and new designations being made each year, a different method was clearly needed.

The new approach is a collection of detailed guidesheets. The loose-leaf, computer-based system will not only easily accommodate new designations, but offer custom information access.

Properties are grouped per sheet both chronologically and by property

type (commercial/industrial, etc). Thus, someone only wanting information on late 19th-century city residences, or all historic commercial buildings, can simply request just those sheets.

To illustrate the guidesheets, new photos were taken of each designated property, bringing the RHDC's archive fully up to date. The images were then digitally scanned for transfer to the guidesheet format.

The guidesheets will be available free of charge by late summer. ■



■ A B R O A D E R

V I E W

There's more than one type of "historic district." The difference lies in who does the designating, and what each means to a property owner.

A National Register district is recognized on the federal level. Qualifying nominations are forward-

ed by each state to the National Park Service for final approval. National Register status offers no obligation or restriction to the property owner; however, the impacts of federally-funded projects (e.g., housing or highways) are reviewed by the state.

Locally-designated historic districts exist as a local zoning classification. While the existing "underlying" zoning use (e.g., resi-

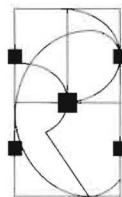
dential or office) remains in place, designating a historic "overlay" zone establishes a process of design review for exterior changes. Designations of local districts occur the same way as any local zoning change.

Owners of property in either type of district may obtain federal and/or state tax credits for certified rehabilitation work.

**COA Tally**

Major work (comm. review):	Jan. 97	Feb. 97	Mar. 97	Apr. 97
Approved as submitted	2	1		1
Approved w/conditions	1	2	3	2
Withdrawn			1	
Minor work (staff apprvd.):	3	16	20	18

Staff support for the RHDC is provided by the City of Raleigh Planning Department.



**RALEIGH HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION**

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The mission of the RHDC is to serve as City Council's official historic preservation advisory body to identify, preserve, protect and educate the public about Raleigh's historic resources.