

IN THE DISTRICTS

A newsletter published by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission

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■ PROFILE

Financial Benefits of Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is more than a lofty ideal: it can be economically beneficial. There are several financial tools available to property owners who restore or rehabilitate historic structures.

Designation as a **local landmark** recognizes properties that are significant for historic, architectural, archaeological, or cultural reasons. Historic landmark status protects a property through a design review process for exterior changes, and private property owners benefit from a 50% city and county property tax deferral. Raleigh Historic Landmarks (RHLs) are designated by the Raleigh City Council through local ordinance and administered by RHDC. The City of Raleigh currently has 137 RHLs. You can view them on its website (www.rhdc.org).

Federal and state **tax credits** for rehabilitation may be available for properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as contributing structures located within a National Register Historic District. For a non-income-producing property (generally a residence), an owner may qualify for state income tax credits that equal 30% of qualified rehabilitation costs. An income-producing property may be eligible for income tax credits that total 40% (20% state and 20% federal) of qualified costs. The North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) adminis-

ters the state and federal tax credit programs, which require rehabilitation projects to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. In March, RHDC is sponsoring a Community Conversation on tax credits (*see sidebar, page 2*).

Preservation easements are legal agreements between a property owner and a preservation organization (usually a nonprofit or public entity). Easements are tailored to protect the significant elements of a property, but they typically prevent demolition of the historic structure, subdivision of the property, and incompatible alterations or addi-

tions. These restrictions on future development of the property usually result in a reduction in property value, which can benefit the owner in the form of reduced property and estate taxes and an income tax deduction. IRS regulations must be followed if the owner wishes to take a federal

income tax deduction for the donation of the easement. Preservation North Carolina (PNC) and Capital Area Preservation (CAP) are local nonprofits who manage historic preservation easement programs. ■

Photo: Property owner utilized federal and state tax credits for the rehabilitation of this East Raleigh-South Park home.



Winter newsletter distribution expanded to include National Register Historic Districts



Photos Left: 304 Pell Street;
Right: its twin, 306 Pell Street.

■ CHALLENGES

No Pell-Mell Addition

Property owners Noah & Ashley Morris faced a challenge when they sought to add square footage to their Pell Street home in Oakwood. Research into the house's history allowed the Morrises to expand the attic into usable space while preserving the special character of the house and surrounding district.

To create an appropriate design, the couple sought to understand the house's context, or how the house fit into its setting. Examining the streetscape, the Morrises noticed a series of "twin houses." Their roof, when compared to its neighboring twin's, seemed out of place; consequent discussion with neighbors

suggested that the roof was a replacement. A closer look revealed that the chimney's brickwork had a shadow line indicating original roof height.

In the planning stages, and during the COA process, the Morrises consulted DRAC (see "Free Advice"). The twin's roofline informed the new design, a gable-end roof with discreet dormer windows on the side elevations of the house. Based on the evidence that the existing roof had been replaced with a lower roof, the Commission approved a plan that increased the house's square footage without substantially changing the house's character. Additional information, including pictures, is available on our website at www.rhdc.org. ■

■ TECH

CORNER



Why should I want a tree protection plan for my construction project?



Raleigh, the City of Oaks, is known for its well-developed tree canopy. Because trees can be harmed in a variety of ways, any work that takes place adjacent to a tree requires the submittal of a tree protection plan as part of the COA application.

When planning a project, consider the landscape. Each mature tree is estimated to add \$2,000 to the market value of a residential property. Deciduous trees can also provide shade in summer and exposure in winter, potentially lowering heating and cooling costs. In the case of trees, damage can be caused by building a foundation too close to tree roots, which can stunt growth or kill a tree. During construction, vehicles and construction debris can smother or crush roots for long-term ill effects to a tree. Implementing a few safety measures can protect the district's tree canopy.

More information, including a sample tree protection plan, is available on the RHDC website. ■

■ IN THE WORKS

Upcoming Community Conversations

In April of 2008 RHDC invited City of Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. to speak about his city's widely-lauded historic preservation efforts. Thus began RHDC's event series Community Conversations, an opportunity for the public to converse about local historic preservation issues. The Community Conversations series will continue throughout 2010, so mark your calendars and join us!

On **March 8th**, 7pm at Broughton High School, RHDC will host "A Property Owner's Guide to Tax Credits." Back by popular demand, this event will provide information on how property owners of eligible historic properties may receive federal and state tax credits for rehabilitation projects. Please see page 1 of this newsletter for more information on the tax credit program. For mor information on the event, visit www.rhdc.org.

On **June 10th**, RHDC will sponsor a Community Conversation that will discuss the practicalities of addressing the need for sustainability while honoring the special character of historic properties. Join us in discussing a variety of opportunities for increasing the energy efficiency of historic structures.

RHDC is interested in hearing about what historic preservation-related topics the community is interested in. Please email suggestions to the commission at rhdc@rhdc.org. More information on the Community Conversations series is available at the RHDC website.

Enter To Win

Do you feel like you're heating and cooling the entire neighborhood? Don't know how to begin making your historic home more energy efficient? Tell us your story and you may win a free home energy audit.

Contest co-sponsored by Preservation North Carolina and RHDC. For complete rules and to enter, visit www.PreservationNC.org/EnergyAudit. ■



■ GUIDELINES

What's Happening?

Within a local historic district, any project that changes the exterior of a property, with the exception of routine maintenance, requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) prior to the start of work. There are several ways for the community to check out what's happening in the Districts:

The most effective way to learn about upcoming major COA applications is to check the RHDC website, where the COA Committee meeting agenda is posted prior to each meeting. The agenda lists which properties will be reviewed along with a brief summary of the proposed changes.

Once the agenda is set, a copy is mailed to property owners within 100 feet, those most affected by the proposed change. The property is

also physically identified with a bright blue sign providing notice of a public hearing. RHDC's phone number is listed on the sign.

The public hearing is the community's opportunity to learn in detail about each application. This is also the community's chance to provide input as to whether or not a project is congruous with the special character of the property and the local historic district.

Following the issuance of a COA, the applicant posts a blue placard on the property, which notifies the community that the project has been approved by the committee.

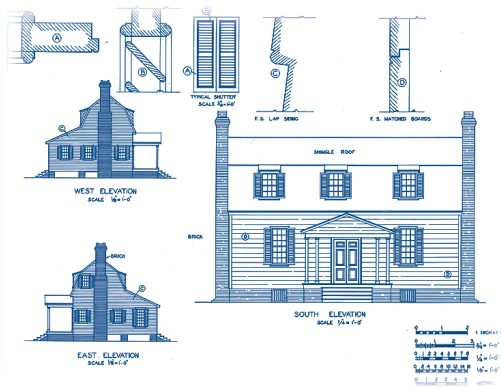
Throughout this process RHDC staff is available by phone (832-7238) and email (rhdc@rhdc.org) to provide more information. ■

■ AT YOUR SERVICE

Free Advice

The COA process may seem daunting, especially if an applicant is proposing a large project. RHDC staff is available to answer questions and provide guidance on COA applications and the review process. In addition, RHDC offers assistance through its Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC), which is made up of former COA Committee members who also have design expertise.

In an informal meeting with DRAC, applicants may gain insight on how the COA Committee may view a project according to the standards set in RHDC's *Design Guidelines for Raleigh Historic Districts*. DRAC members often provide suggestions on how an applicant might amend or support their



application in order to meet the *Guidelines*. Because DRAC acts as an advisory body to the applicants, not the COA Committee, applicants may feel free to take or leave DRAC suggestions.

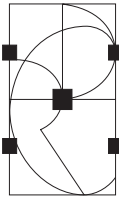
DRAC meets the Wednesday evening prior to the monthly COA Committee meeting on an as-needed basis. Please contact RHDC staff for more information. ■

Committee Action

RHDC divides itself into committees with specific roles to play in the city's historic preservation efforts. The Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Committee reviews COA applications and issues COAs. The Research Committee facilitates studies that lead to the designation of properties as Raleigh Historic Landmarks (RHL) and neighborhoods as Raleigh Historic Districts; proposes the nomination of properties and districts to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); and releases preservation-related surveys and reports. The Community Awareness Committee produces this newsletter, the Community Conversations series, the RHDC website, and various community forums. The Nominations Committee proposes a slate of officers and researches and recommends new RHDC members for City Council consideration. Here is what's happening in the RHDC:

2009 Projects: The COA Committee reviewed 59 applications for COAs. The Research Committee managed an archaeological survey of the Latta House and University Site; published *Common Ground* (nicknamed the Moore Square report); facilitated the designation of 6 RHLs and the nomination of 1 property to NRHP; and began the process of nominating 4 post-WWII historic districts to the NRHP. The Community Awareness Committee launched the RHDC's new website; held a Community Conversation; covered a community forum to discuss the possible designation of the NRHP Depot District as a local historic district; and reinstated the RHDC newsletter.

2010 Projects: In addition to COA review and issuance, the COA Committee will begin the process of updating the *Design Guidelines for Raleigh Historic Districts* (see website for future updates). The Research Committee will continue the 4 post-WWII NRHP nominations process and support RHL designations. The Community Awareness Committee will continue its Community Conversations series and produce the RHDC newsletter. ■



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Community Conversation March 8:

A Property Owner's Guide to Tax Credits

■ A B R O A D E R

V I E W An application for a major COA can sometimes be controversial. The COA Committee is charged with making a ruling based solely on whether or not the application is in accordance with RHDC's *Design Guidelines*. As part

of this process, major COA applications are presented at a quasi-judicial public hearing that allows interested parties the opportunity to present evidence in favor of or opposed to an application's conformance with the Guidelines. Effective January 1st, **NC Session Law 2009-421 (Senate Bill 44)** provides clarification on what is considered "competent evidence,"

which is defined as fact rather than opinion. When testifying in support or opposition to a COA application, please remember that the Committee may only consider the facts as presented in testimony. More information may be obtained through the University of North Carolina's School of Government at www.sog.unc.edu. ■

■ A R O U N D T H E R H D C

RHDC Meetings

RHDC Business meetings: 3/16, 4/20, 5/18, 6/15. 7:30 AM, Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Gov't. Complex

Certificate of Appropriateness Comm.: (Application deadline & meeting date) 2/15 for 3/1; 3/19 for 4/5; 4/19 for 5/3; 5/21 for 6/7. 4:00 PM, Rm. 305, Avery C. Upchurch Gov't. Complex

Community Awareness Committee: 3/2, 4/6, 5/4, 6/1. 4:00 PM, Rm. 213, One Exchange Plaza

Research Committee: 3/4, 4/1, 5/6, 6/3. 7:30 AM, Rm. 213, One Exchange Plaza

Commission Members

Curtis Kasefang (Chair), Jane Forde (Vice-Chair), Marni Vinton (Sec'y./Treas.), Fred Belledin, John Branch, Matthew Brown, Jannette Coleridge-Taylor, Stephen Cruse, Nick Fountain, Esther Hall, Robert Runyans, Barbara Wishy

Staff support for the RHDC is provided by the Raleigh Department of City Planning, www.raleighnc.gov.

COA Tally

Major work
(comm. review):

Approved
as submitted

Approved
w/ conditions

Approved in part/
denied in part

Denied

Deferred

Minor work
(staff approved):

	Oct. '09	Nov. '09	Dec. '09	Jan. '10
Approved as submitted		2		
Approved w/ conditions	5	6	2	4
Approved in part/denied in part				
Denied				
Deferred				
Minor work (staff approved)	11	11	9	6

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Historic Boylan Heights: www.boylanheights.org
Downtown Raleigh Alliance: www.godowntownraleigh.com
NC SHPO: www.hpo.ncdvr.gov

■ C I T Y G O V E R N M E N T

Developing Raleigh

In October 2009 the City of Raleigh adopted the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, a long-range policy document that envisions the city's future. The plan's goal is to provide guidance for growth and development that promote sustainability, protect natural and architectural resources, and increase quality of life for the city's residents. The new plan includes a Historic Preservation Element designed to promote the preservation of Raleigh's heritage. For more information on the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, visit the City of Raleigh's website at www.planningraleigh2030.com. In order to support the goals and policies of the new Comprehensive Plan, the City launched a new project in October: designing a new development code that will modernize regulations related to development, zoning, and subdivision practices that is easily understood and applied by administrators, the public, and the development community. The Raleigh Department of City Planning is working with a consultant to draft the new code, a process that is expected to take 18-24 months. Learn more by visiting the City's website at www.newraleighcode.com. ■