Historic Preservation Recommendations
Village of Elk Rapids, Michigan

Michigan Historic Preservation Network
Community Historic Preservation Assessment
July 2013
Overview

This report summarizes the results of your community’s responses to the Michigan Historic Preservation Network’s “Community Historic Preservation Assessment” survey.

The following recommendations are concrete ways your community can advance its historic preservation ethic.

For additional ideas and resources, please contact the Michigan Historic Preservation Network.
Overall Placement

Based on your community’s survey responses, your overall placement on the Community Historic Preservation Continuum is: 3.3 (Preservation ethic is developing).
Identification, Documentation and Evaluation

Which best describes your community’s efforts to identify, document and evaluate historic resources?

Response: A community-wide reconnaissance survey has been completed within the past 10 years, and one or more comprehensive surveys (including intensive research and evaluation) have been conducted. (4)

Recommendation: Gather all the survey documentation you have amassed over the years. Organize it and confirm that it is still current. Update your survey(s) as needed. Apply the National Register of Historic Places criteria to evaluate the places you survey. The State Historic Preservation Office has free survey manuals and they can be helpful in evaluating historic resources. Identify the resources or areas where intensive research is recommended and conduct research (perhaps with the help of a hired consultant). Determine whether any identified historic areas or areas where intensive survey has already occurred are eligible to be National Register or local historic districts.
Community Member Involvement

Which best describes the level of community member involvement in historic preservation?

Response: There is an existing, functioning group with identified leadership that meets regularly to promote preservation, take advantage of opportunities to safeguard historic resources, and anticipate problems. (4)

Recommendation: Help group conduct outreach to build their membership and/or Facebook or web presence. Encourage group to consider incorporating as a nonprofit organization if it has not taken this step. Help them institute a committee structure to allow some members to focus on specific activities such as local government collaboration, assisting prospective developers, community outreach, education, finance and fundraising, etc.
Historic Preservation Organizations

Which best describes the organizations working to promote historic preservation in your community?

Response: There is one or more established, ongoing historic preservation society or organization(s) that includes a diverse set of historic preservation activities in its programming (e.g., educational workshops, advocacy efforts, hands-on activities, etc). (4)

Recommendation: Encourage the organization to explore the educational sessions (such as Practical Preservation workshops) that MHPN offers and also the grant sources that the MHPN publicizes for workshops and capacity-building. If your community is a Certified Local Government (CLG), consider partnering with the preservation group for an educational or bricks-and-mortar project and seeking CLG funds for the project. Assist the group with funding to conduct feasibility and/or market studies to determine uses for vacant local landmarks.
Michigan Main Street Involvement

Which best describes your community's involvement in the Michigan Main Street program?

Response: My community’s downtown development authority or similar organization has policies that follow Main Street principles but we are not a current member community. (2)

Recommendation: Discover why your community opted not to participate in the Michigan Main Street program. Explore the Michigan Main Street program to see if it could be right for your community, even if it was not right for the community in the past. Consider presenting the concept to your local legislative body.
Preservation Planning

How prominent is historic preservation in your community's planning processes and documents?

Response: There is substantial attention to historic resources and preservation. (4)

Recommendation: Determine when the next visioning session or short-term or long-term planning session will be for your community and attend. Encourage others who care about historic places to attend as well. Determine whether any historic places were left out of the past plan and now deserve mention (places that have gained significance in the more recent past or areas of town that have revitalized since the last plan, for example). If an updated historic resources survey is needed, suggest that a new survey be mentioned in the planning documents. Consider advocating that a historic preservation plan should be included in your community’s planning documents. This could take the form of a chapter in your community’s comprehensive plan that would show with goals, objectives, and supporting action strategies how historic resources will be enhanced and protected and how those actions support the community’s overall goals.
Designating and Protecting Historic Resources

Which best describes your community's efforts to designate and protect historic resources?

Response: There are one or more state historical markers and/or National Register designations but no accompanying protection plan or local ordinance. (2)

Recommendation: Are there other places or sites that should be recognized with a state historical marker or a listing on the National Register? Is the time right to consider a local historic district or at least a local historic district ordinance? MHPN can help. Consider plaques on buildings and/or specially marked street signs indicating special districts or areas.
Public Education

Which best describes your community's efforts (both municipal and non-governmental) to educate the public and engage preservation-minded individuals on historic preservation issues?

Response: There are ongoing and consistent educational efforts, including at least one event per year. (4)

Recommendations: Identify a group of downtown property owners (perhaps 3-5) who are interested/able to rehab their building and ask a historic architect to the community to conduct site visits with them. Could also include a nonprofit group who is rehabbing a local landmark (i.e. museum building, theater, etc.). This effort will facilitate the preservation education process on a personal level and spur further revitalization efforts. Also, encourage public and city leaders to attend regional, state, and national preservation conferences to become more engaged.
Which best describes your community's efforts to link its historic preservation efforts to its ongoing economic development efforts?

Response: There are dedicated economic development staff and a pro-active DDA board who are pursuing additional economic development incentives for historic preservation activities. (4)

Recommendation: Create a task force to pursue National Register district designation for downtown and consider grant opportunities (possibly Certified Local Government?) or to enlist help of a volunteer group or students to conduct a survey of historic resources in potential NR district. Also, encourage city staff to work with local realtors and property owners to actively market vacant historic buildings.
Heritage Tourism

Which best describes your community's efforts to market its historic assets as heritage tourism opportunities?

Response:
There are both ad hoc efforts under way, such as signage, website, walking or driving tours, plus multiple coordinated efforts to market/promote local historic sites, objects, structures, buildings, and districts. (3)

Recommendation: Work jointly with multiple public, private, and non-profit sector partners to find creative and coordinated ways to promote local sites using various statewide and regional outlets (particularly web-based). Consider working with a web specialist to design a local heritage tourism page that could be incorporated in existing community websites (for all relevant groups). Include a map of historic resources, photos, and a heritage event calendar. Also, pursue state markers to promote significant local landmarks.
Which best describes the cultural festivals and events in your community?

Response: There are one or more cultural events or festivals each year that celebrate place but that are not explicitly linked to the community's historic resources or heritage. (3)

Recommendation: Work jointly with non-profits, government staff, and private sector firms to find creative and coordinated ways to promote a local cultural event identifying and incorporating historic resources that played a role in community development. Consider some events to be held in institutional buildings (i.e. library, courthouse, schools, hospitals, and churches). Work to tie existing events to historic resources.
Which best describes the involvement of local government officials (paid or elected) in your community's historic preservation efforts?

Response: Local government officials occasionally partner with existing historic preservation groups. (3)

Recommendation: Reach out to seasoned preservation communities to find out how they establish ongoing local preservation efforts with existing groups. Consider Main Street approach. Consider CLG status to attain grants for additional survey work and preservation educational programs.
Municipal Leadership (cont.)

Which local government officials are demonstrating commitment and leadership on historic preservation issues with tangible results?

Response:
- Mayor
- City Council/Commission
- City Manager
- Downtown Development Authority Director
- Economic Development Director
- Planning Commission
- Zoning Director
- Zoning Board
- Other: we have a Village President, not Mayor
In which historic preservation efforts are local government officials currently involved?

Response:

- Assembling packages of incentives and/or financing to attract developers to invest in historic buildings and actively marketing these properties.
- Inviting Michigan Historic Preservation Network or State Historic Preservation Office representatives to the community to assist in education and advocacy efforts related to protecting resources and promoting preservation and/or rehabilitation.
Rehabilitation Projects

In the past five years, have there been any major rehabilitation projects on historic properties (either city-owned or privately owned) in your community?

Response: Yes

_Township Hall restoration, Java Jones, Elk Rapids Historical Society Museum, Hughes House_
Road Blocks

What road blocks or issues make it difficult to incorporate historic preservation principles/programs in your community?

Response:

none known
Unique Assets

What unique assets or programs contribute to your community's historic preservation efforts?

Response:

Collaborative efforts of Historical Society, DDA committees, Planning Commision