

2.10 PLANNING ISSUES – HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Objectives:

1. To protect Kane County's heritage and historic character through the preservation of historic and cultural resources that contributes to the County's unique sense of place and quality of life.
2. To integrate the efforts of the Kane County Historic Preservation Program in all aspects of planning and development review.
3. To promote public awareness regarding the importance of architectural, natural, and historic resources within the County, emphasizing the linkages between preservation and sustainability.
4. To continue to enhance and expand preservation partnerships with municipalities as a means to share resources, further community historic preservation efforts, and for creating livable, sustainable and healthy communities.
5. To promote the Kane County Rustic Roads Program with municipalities and increase the number of incorporated and unincorporated rustic road corridors that are designated and protected in order to preserve and enhance the County's rural character.
6. To coordinate County preservation efforts with state and local preservation agencies and organizations.

Chapter Focus

Projected population growth along with the anticipated new development and changes in the rural landscape in the 1980's prompted the Kane County Board to adopt a Historic Preservation Program in 1988. Since then the County has designated 44 historic landmarks, 3 rustic road corridors, one historic district, and 5 intergovernmental agreements with municipalities. Today, the program's aim is to preserve the character of the County's unique communities and rural character as well as to protect its valuable historic resources. The components of the program – The Kane County 2040 Plan (2040 Plan), Rural Structures Survey, Historic Preservation Ordinance, Preservation Plan, Register of Historic Places, the Rustic Road Program, and intergovernmental agreements with municipalities – are all tools used by the Historic Preservation Commission and the Kane County Board to address preservation issues facing the County. The Historic Preservation Program addresses a variety of issues including; the preservation and redevelopment of older downtowns, protection of historic resources and landscapes to balance new development, the preservation and adaptive reuse of

agricultural buildings, and intergovernmental cooperation with municipalities to use historic preservation as one of their tools to create sustainable and livable communities.

This chapter examines:

- Role of Historic Preservation in Creating Livable, Sustainable and Healthy Communities
- Historic Character of the Conceptual Land Use Strategy Areas
- Historic Resource Protection
- Kane County Historic Preservation Program

Role of Historic Preservation in Creating Livable, Sustainable and Healthy Communities

The earliest goals of the historic preservation movement in the United States were limited in scope and purpose, often focusing on restoring specific historic buildings associated with people or events. The movement expanded in the 1980' and 90's to include collections of buildings, neighborhoods and landscapes, noting that preservation of the larger context was critical to preserving community character and a sense of place. In addition, the highly successful Main Street program matched historic preservation with economic development and tourism, bringing a whole new group of partners into the movement.

The latest new partners include the many individuals and organizations concerned about creating livable, sustainable and healthy communities. Traditional neighborhoods and mixed use commercial areas such as those found in historic downtowns and village centers have been found to have multiple benefits for healthy living and access to goods and services. Such areas reduce individual and family costs for transportation while reducing dependence on the automobile for transportation for the elderly, children and persons with disabilities.

Reuse of historic buildings, especially within downtown districts and neighborhoods, are great examples of sustainable development because they maximize the use of existing materials, infrastructure, and various types of public utilities and services needed to support them. Considerably fewer resources are needed to reuse or retrofit an existing building or area than are needed to construct new. The benefits can now be measured using the widely accepted LEED standards for individual buildings and for new developments. Historic buildings and districts provide development opportunities that not only increase the value of an area, but that are also efficient and sustainable.

The increased number and types of building products and technologies for making all types of existing buildings more energy efficient are easily applied to historic buildings, making rehabilitation an even more viable alternative than ever before. In many cases, historic buildings and homes were designed before the availability of air conditioning

and other modern features, so as a result already have features that take advantage of natural ventilation, natural lighting, solar gain and shading.

Another new partnership is found in local and regional efforts to preserve existing housing stock in general. Strategies for housing preservation and for historic preservation, such as compiled by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, cite the advantages of reduced building and transportation costs as well as the preservation of community character. While all existing housing is not historic, many houses contribute to the character of a historic or conservation district and support the long term viability of the continued use and protection of historic homes.

In summary, historic preservation and the creation of livable, sustainable and healthy communities have many common goals and overlapping strategies. Locally, the cities of Elgin and Aurora have recently launched green building and sustainability initiatives in addition to their extensive neighborhood, downtown and historic preservation programs. Initiatives such as these will be even more important for increasing public awareness and preserving our historic resources.

Historic Character of the Conceptual Land Use Strategy Areas

Kane County and many of its municipalities have an extensive, rich history of protecting historic resources that are found to be both highly valued by its residents and integral components of a county that is distinctive and truly exceptional. Given that Kane County has been one of the fastest growing counties in Illinois over the last fifty years, historic preservation planning has been critical towards maintaining the County's unique sense of place in the face of mounting development pressures. Historic resources in Kane County are diverse, including residential, commercial and industrial buildings, farmsteads and agricultural outbuildings, large cities, small towns, scenic vistas, road corridors, geological features and landscapes. It is imperative that these resources are not only protected, but that they are acknowledged as being valuable assets that can be successfully integrated into new development and redevelopment initiatives throughout the County.

Over time, development has had varying effects on the historic character of the **Sustainable Urban Area**, the **Critical Growth Area**, and the **Agriculture: Food and Farm Area** of the County. These three distinct areas have different types of historic resources and different issues of development, redevelopment or neglect that require varied and innovative approaches to ensure their continued or adaptive use.

Located in the eastern portion of the County, the **Sustainable Urban Area** contains most of the County's historical commercial and residential buildings. As communities grow and change, these buildings provide opportunities for rehabilitation and reuse while also enhancing the original urban and neighborhood character. Historic resources are often threatened and sometimes lost when significant buildings or development patterns are not recognized and protected. The County's Historic Preservation Program

provides local communities with assistance and support to sustain their historic resources. Furthermore, the Preservation Program fosters cooperation between municipalities that have established preservation ordinances and offers assistance to municipalities that have yet to fully recognize and protect their historic resources. Educational conferences and tours cosponsored by the Kane County Historic Preservation Commission provide opportunities for these groups to work together to develop strategies for meeting the preservation challenges within the Sustainable Urban Area.

The Critical Growth Area also provides unique historic preservation challenges and requires planning and innovative actions. As previously farmed and natural areas are developed either by municipal incorporation or by County Board action, there is a great potential for loss of character-defining landscapes and important historic resources. The County has integrated preservation planning into the earliest phases of the development review process to minimize loss of historic resources. Developers are made aware of important sites identified by the Rural Structures Survey and are strongly encouraged to incorporate existing houses and farmsteads into new developments. The protection of these sites contributes to the important visual characteristics of the area.

The rapid growth of the last decade, the record level municipal incorporations and the expansion of boundaries highlight the need for renewing and refocusing the Kane County Historic Preservation Program in the Critical Growth Area and providing assistance and support to local communities to preserve and sustain their historic resources. The County's Preservation Program can foster and promote cooperation between the County and those municipalities that have adopted preservation ordinances and offer assistance to the growing municipalities that have yet to fully recognize and protect their historic resources. Educational programs and tours cosponsored by the Historic Preservation Commission can provide opportunities to develop cooperative, intergovernmental strategies and plan for meeting the preservation challenges of the Critical Growth Area during the next three decades.

The Agriculture: Food and Farm Area of western Kane County contains small towns that are long-time centers of commercial and social activities. In its adopted Historic Preservation Plan (1989), the County Board recognized the importance of these small towns and called for careful treatment of their historic qualities. Although the quantity and type of their commercial uses have changed over the years, small towns still provide a social and cultural focus as well as limited but critical services to the surrounding area. Further, these small towns are the best location for new shops and services needed for expanding residential development. It is important that the villages retain their character and sense of identity as they change or grow. Businesses should be encouraged to locate in existing buildings. New buildings and site layouts should complement and reinforce existing development patterns and building architecture. Although all of these small towns are now incorporated as municipalities, there is more need than ever for the County's Preservation Program to focus on providing assistance

and support to the villages to protect and preserve their historic assets as they strive to be livable, sustainable, and healthy communities.

The central and western agricultural area of the County includes historic and scenic resources nestled within highly productive farmland. Historic farmsteads dot the countryside providing visual landmarks and serving as the working elements of over **175** years of agricultural history in Kane County. Fences, hedgerows, and scenic vistas combine with farmsteads to define the area's character. Intrusions into this setting easily distract from its appeal and diminish its unique beauty. The continued viable use of a working farm challenges preservationists and farmers to work together to develop innovative solutions for integrating historic farm structures with modern farming practices, local food production and community supported agriculture.

Historic Resource Protection

Historic resources in Kane County include residential buildings from different periods, farmsteads and agricultural outbuildings, small towns, scenic vistas, geological features and landscapes, commercial and industrial buildings, and road corridors. Structures such as water tanks, windmills, bridges, and cemetery art have historic significance in Kane County. Some of these resources are in pristine condition, while others may be in states of decay or alteration. The County's Historic Preservation Program recognizes there is more to historic preservation than merely preservation of buildings and structures. Vistas, landscapes and geological features also have historic significance.

These resources continue to be threatened by demolition, inappropriate rehabilitation, widening and new construction of roads, and new development. Neglecting historic resources reinforces public perception that old buildings and structures are of little value. As Kane County grows over the next three decades, it is important to plan for the protection of historic resources, especially along transportation routes. The construction of new roads and the widening of existing roads can endanger or adversely affect historic buildings and alter the character of small towns and landscapes. Locations and parking layouts for new or expanded commuter rail stations should be planned with consideration for surrounding community features and character. Careful planning of trail systems can allow greater access to historic sites and resources as well as provide opportunities for the public to enjoy these assets.

Preservation of historic resources is best accomplished through advanced and coordinated planning efforts. As municipalities annex land, newly incorporated areas may include historic resources. Some of these resources may be on the Kane County Register of Historic Places while others, although not designated, may have significant historic value. As of 2011, six municipalities had adopted their own historic preservation ordinances offering designation and protection of landmarks. Some offer as much protection as the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, while others do not. Coordination between the County and municipalities is more critical than ever to

preserve significant buildings and landscapes so that none are demolished or significantly altered as a result of annexation.

Kane County can protect municipal landmarks through intergovernmental agreements, technical assistance in establishing programs in communities without preservation tools and help to strengthen municipal ordinances. As of 2011, five municipalities have adopted intergovernmental agreements with the County to extend the Kane County Historic Preservation Ordinance within their jurisdiction.

The continued success of the Kane County Historic Preservation Program requires municipal cooperation and citizen support. The County must work with the municipalities, historical and historic resource preservation organizations, and the general public to communicate the importance of Kane County's historic resources.

Historic Preservation Program – 25 Years

Historic preservation planning efforts in Kane County began in 1987 with the establishment of the Kane County Historic Preservation Study committee. The purpose of the committee was to oversee the completion of the Rural Structures Survey, evaluate historic resources, and determine if action was needed to protect the County's historic resources. The 1986-1987 Rural Structure Survey inventoried all structures built before 1945 in unincorporated Kane County and unincorporated rural villages west of the Fox River. Identified structures varied from homes and barns to water tanks and a bridge. Three age groups were used in the survey: 1800-1859, 1860-1910, and 1910-1945. Only 14% of the buildings in the survey were found to be built prior to 1859, during Kane County's early settlement period. Results of this survey, reported in *Built for Farming: A Guide to the Historic Rural Architecture of Kane County* (1991), provided the justification for the protection of the County's historic resources.

Following the results of the Rural Structure Survey, the Kane County Board unanimously adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1988, making Kane County the first county in the State of Illinois to adopt such an ordinance. The ordinance established a Historic Preservation Commission with authority to recommend landmarks and historic districts for designation by the County Board to the Kane County Register of Historic Places. The Commission has the authority to review significant exterior alterations, additions, new construction, or demolitions proposed for designated landmarks or within historic districts.

In 1989, the County Board adopted the Kane County Historic Preservation Plan, which outlines specific goals, objectives and strategies for preserving the County's historic character and resources, as an amendment to the County's 1982 Land Use Plan. With the adoption of the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Plan, Kane County was the first county in Illinois to be recognized as a Certified Local Government, making the County eligible for historic preservation grants.

The Kane County Register of Historic Places is the official list of county landmarks, historic districts and road corridors recognized for their historical, architectural and scenic significance, as well as for their architectural or aesthetic importance, interest, or value. Resources having local, state, or national significance are eligible for designation and may be protected by the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Properties placed on the Kane County Register of Historic Places are protected from demolition or damaging alterations through county review processes.

In July 2000, the Historic Preservation Ordinance was amended to allow for the designation and preservation of rustic road corridors in Kane County. A rustic road corridor is a type of preservation district that is nominated or designated as a rustic road. Rustic roads tell part of the story of Kane County's history by preserving natural and built features along the road. Three rustic roads have been designated in the County to date, Brundidge Road, Ke-De-Ka Road, and Thurnau Road. Brundidge Road located at the edge of the City of Geneva provides a transition to the countryside as well as preserving the County's agricultural heritage which now compliments a four-season organic farm and market located along this road. Ke-De-Ka Road is an area of rural residences, including the National Register listed Ephraim Smith House and Bliss Woods Forest Preserve, which includes the Virgil-Gilman trail. Thurnau Road is a traditional gravel farm lane that supports crop-farming, horse farms, rural residences and the seasonal home of the Swainson's Hawk. Ke-De-Ka Road and Thurnau Road both have portions of the corridor in the villages of Sugar Grove and Pingree Grove, respectively, and are protected under intergovernmental agreements.

Descriptive permanent bronze plaques are placed on designated landmarks and signs are placed along historic districts and rustic road corridors to foster public awareness and appreciation. The County is dedicated to expanding the Register of Historic Places by systematically reviewing potential historic and/or scenic sites and areas, encouraging nominations, and publicizing new landmarks, historic districts, and road corridors. Revitalizing and expanding this effort is important as the County and expanding municipalities face the population growth and development of the next three decades.

In 2013, Kane County will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the passage of its Historic Preservation Ordinance. While this occasion certainly merits the recognition of past accomplishments, it should also be used to assess the County's Historic Preservation Program. Although the County has made great strides, much is still left to be done. Kane County needs to update its 1986 Rural Structures Survey to acquire a better understanding of existing Kane County historic resources. In addition, the County should update its Historic Preservation Plan and public outreach efforts to account for the current direction of the Kane County Preservation Program. Updating all aspects of the Historic Preservation Program and keeping in step with regional and nation historic preservation strategies and trends are fundamental actions needed for preserving community character. Finally, the County must continue to strengthen partnerships with municipalities to advance preservation planning and implementation efforts. As the percentage of incorporated land within the County continues to grow, so will the opportunities for intergovernmental collaboration.

Figure 78

25 Year Anniversary of Historic Preservation in Kane County

June 2013 will mark the 25th anniversary of the Kane County Historic Preservation Program and the Historic Preservation Ordinance. This 25-year period is highlighted by the following accomplishments:

- 44 individual landmarks designated by the Kane County Board, as of 2011
- The first unincorporated historic district in Illinois designated by the Kane County Board
- Rustic Roads Program adopted as an amendment to the Preservation Ordinance
- Seven national, state, and local preservation awards recognizing the efforts of the County Board, the Preservation Commission, and Development Department staff
- Publications: *Kane County Preservation Plan*, *Built for Farming*, and *That Darn Barn*
- Calendars: *1997 That Darn Barn*, *2002 Rustic Roads*, *2004 Preserving Kane County's Heritage*
- Co-sponsorship of county-wide preservation conferences, workshops, and bus tours
- Advocacy for over \$3.25 million in riverboat grants awarded by the Kane County Board for preservation projects.
- Intergovernmental agreements with five municipalities to extend the County's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the assistance of the Historic Preservation Commission for municipal landmarks, districts and rustic road corridors.

Policies:

1. Encourage the preservation of existing cultural and historic resources to protect Kane County's unique sense of place and to promote the creation of livable communities.
2. Promote and facilitate the reuse and/or retrofitting of existing buildings for preserving historic resources and as a tool for creating livable, sustainable and healthy communities.
3. Partner with existing historical societies, museums and other preservation organizations in Kane County to strengthen preservation and public education efforts.
4. Provide technical and grant information to assist property owners' research and restoration efforts.
5. Work in partnership with municipalities, townships, the forest preserve district, park districts, fire protection districts and other units of local government to promote and to protect historic resources and offer educational opportunities.

6. Encourage intergovernmental agreements with municipalities to allow for the adoption of historic preservation ordinances.
7. Update the Kane County Historic Preservation Plan and Rural Structure Survey.
8. Provide financial resources and incentives for the implementation of the adopted Kane County Historic Preservation Plan.
9. Retain the County's status as a Certified Local Government through the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.
10. Support the Kane County Rustic Roads Program to preserve character and scenic vistas for future generations.

