

Two Buffalo neighborhoods seeking national recognition

Two Buffalo neighborhoods are engaged in efforts to become National Register Historic Districts. The application for University Park, a section of University Heights, is complete and awaiting review by the New York State Review Board in March prior to submission to the National Park Service for listing on the National Register. When listed by the Park Service, it will be the first National Register-listed historic district designated in Buffalo in almost twenty-five years. Meanwhile, preliminary work on nominating Hamlin Park, a Buffalo local historic district, is set to begin in January. Listing on the National Register is valuable for celebrating the history of a neighborhood. But perhaps even more important for individual homeowners, listing also extends eligibility for New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credit of twenty percent for such qualified work as furnaces, plumbing, electrical, roofs, and gutters necessary to repair and rehabilitate a historic home.

University Park

The effort to nominate University Park, an area roughly bordered by University Avenue to the west, Main Street to the south, Capen Blvd. to the east, and Kenmore Avenue to the north, began about two years ago when a small group of neighborhood residents, led by Paul McDonnell, Buffalo Preservation Board chair, began discussing creation of a historic district in the neighborhood.

In 2009, Mr. McDonnell, along with Kerry Traynor of the University at Buffalo, Dan McEneny of the New York State Historic Preservation Office and Michele Brozek Knoll of the City of Buffalo—Office of Strategic Planning began working to move a nomination forward.

The first step was for a University at Buffalo historic preservation class to survey the neighborhood under the guidance of Ms. Traynor. Annie Schentag, an Urban Planning graduate student, also under the guidance of Traynor, then worked tirelessly throughout spring and summer of 2010 to draft the nomination. When completed, the draft met with praise from the New York State Historic Preservation Office. At a public meeting in November, many of the more than sixty residents in attendance voiced their support. During fall 2010, Ms. Brozek Knoll completed the building list, intern Chelsea Petrucci provided the photography, and Dan McEneny oversaw and edited the entire document. §

Hamlin Park

Volunteers are being sought to help survey Hamlin Park as part of a community-based, volunteer-driven effort to nominate this local historic district to the National Register of Historic Places.

Hour-long training workshops will be held during the week of Jan. 24, with a tentative survey date of Saturday, Jan. 29, and a 'rain date' of Sunday, Jan. 30. Volunteers will be asked to bring their digital cameras, and in small groups will complete a simple checklist on the condition of buildings in assigned sections of Hamlin Park.

This effort is being spearheaded on a pro-bono basis by Preservation Studios, a full-service historic preservation consulting firm headed by PBN trustee Tom Yots, in conjunction with the Hamlin Park Taxpayers Association, Preservation Buffalo Niagara, the Buffalo Preservation Board, and other organizations.

If successful, placement on the National Register will bring additional recognition to this historic neighborhood and new benefits to neighborhood residents and businesses, including tax credits and special reviews for state and federally funded projects.

In addition to helping benefit this early twentieth century neighborhood, volunteers will gain a close look at its architecture. To sign up as a Hamlin Park volunteer, email Jason Wilson at jasonwilson@preservationstudios.com.§

University Park designer created restrictions to ensure beauty and cohesiveness

As a basis for discussion of their proposal for creating a National Register historic district, neighbors had in hand the pamphlet "University Park: A Restricted Residence Subdivision," published in 1914, that was designed by its author, Anthony J. Huck, to entice new homeowners to a "beautiful, harmonious residence district."

University Park land had been owned by Huck for many years—his ancestors had purchased it from the Holland Land Company for fifty cents an acre. However, he did not produce a development plan with Matthew-Northrup Works until 1913, shortly after announcement of the planned expansion of the then-private University of Buffalo. Travel to numerous residential communities in the U.S. helped Huck envision an ideal community featuring setback restrictions, distance between houses, green and open spaces, and garages, reflecting the



Photo courtesy of Michele Brozek Knoll

growing importance of the automobile to the area's upper-class residents. The unique features of the neighborhood have remained almost completely intact nearly one hundred years later, and a great majority of homes in the

district have retained their historic character and original building fabric, making the neighborhood ideal for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. §