

CHAPTER 9: Historic Resources

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts recognized by the National Park Service for their importance to local, state, and national history. Properties may be recognized for their outstanding architectural, archaeological, and cultural qualities. The National Register was created to encourage public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect significant historic and archaeological resources.

Buffalo has several individual buildings on the national register as well as one district:

- ▶ Buffalo Post Office
- ▶ Carnegie Public Library
- ▶ Holland House
- ▶ Johnson County Courthouse
- ▶ Methodist Episcopal Church
- ▶ St. Luke's Episcopal Church
- ▶ Union Congregational Church
- ▶ Buffalo Main Street Historical District

These are shown on the National Register of Historic Places Map.

The Federal Government offers a program of tax incentives to support the rehabilitation of historic and non-historic buildings for income-producing purposes. Tax credits are available to property owners. A 20 percent Federal Tax Credit is available for substantial rehabilitation of a certified historic structure whose end use is income-producing.

Any property listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places is considered historic. Federal law requires that every federal agency "take into account" how each of its undertakings could affect historic properties. This applies to any project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part under the direct or indirect jurisdiction of a federal agency.

Downtown Project

The City of Buffalo recognizes the importance of creating and maintaining an economically vibrant, every-day functional, and physically attractive Main Street Business District. The City is presently seeking grant funding to undertake a downtown study project. Some specific themes that will be examined in the study include:

- ▶ design standards for new buildings
- ▶ traffic flow and parking constraints
- ▶ pedestrian friendliness/safety
- ▶ number of housing units used/vacant/in need of work
- ▶ consumer needs/concerns
- ▶ business owners' needs/concerns

National Register of Historic Places map

- ▶ general main street assets, strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ creation of a downtown committee to facilitate the improvement, organization, and promotion of downtown Buffalo

Additional Considerations for Historic Resources

The following are ideas that should be considered for the historic resources of Buffalo as part of the upcoming downtown study or separately:

New Districts and Additions: Beyond the downtown Buffalo Historic District and the Holland House and churches outside the district, there are other buildings that are historically or architecturally significant. The City should encourage and assist property owners to extend the existing district and/or create additional historic districts.

Signage and Promotion of Historic District: The historic district might benefit from better and more signage indicating the boundaries of the district. More signage along main highways directing tourists to the district would also be beneficial.

Parking Regulations: In many communities, the parking regulations for new construction typically require all parking needs be met with on-site parking and not by parking on the streets. Sometimes requirements such as these inhibit renovation and reuse of historic buildings. Such regulations can even lead to the demolition of historic buildings to make way for required parking lots. In historic districts, modern parking regulations should be adapted to the older building patterns. One concept is to allow new downtown construction projects to contribute to a city parking fund in lieu of providing on street parking. The parking fund is then used to buy and construct city parking lots located near the historic district.

Local Historic District Regulations: Local historic districts are zones designated by the city under its zoning authority. Local historic districts are one of the most commonly used and effective tools for preserving and enhancing historic buildings and districts.

Local historic districts usually require review and approval for any exterior building changes or new construction within the district. A local agency is usually created to review and approve the proposed design of such changes. Some communities make the local agency's decision non-binding while most others require properties in the district to adhere to the local agency's approval.

It is important to set the boundaries of local historic districts after careful study of the architectural and historical candidate properties. It is also important to have close consultation with the property owners. The district is drawn to include buildings and places that are of importance because of their history or architectural style. Buildings that are not historically important may also be included in the district because their location is important to the overall historic character of the district.

Preservation and Restoration of Publicly Owned Buildings: The Johnson County Courthouse is one of the cornerstones of the downtown historic district. The old Carnegie Library (now the Jim Gatchell Museum) is another great architectural asset to the district. The Buffalo Town Hall was constructed in 1900 and housed the town offices and fire hall; it could be another great asset to the historic district with the restoration of the building's façade.