

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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The three principal steps of historic preservation are to *identify* historic resources, to *recognize* these resources officially, and to *protect* them from harmful changes. Undertaking these steps generally constitutes preservation planning.

The City of Buffalo has acted wisely in undertaking the Historic Resource Survey of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood, acting to identify significant architectural and cultural properties in this area. This work has identified the most prominent existing historic structures in the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood survey area. Since many buildings were not surveyed in this work due to budgetary and contractual limitations, the City of Buffalo should also consider a more intensive level survey of certain key neighborhoods or streets which are the most significant to the local community, such as areas along Amherst, Niagara, East and Dearborn Streets which formed the core of the Lower Black Rock neighborhood in the 1820s and 30s. Additional work in identification in the future could include undertaking more intensive level documentation of the resources identified in the reconnaissance level survey, including a more thorough investigation of individual properties and the completion of Historic Resource Inventory Forms ("blue forms"). However, we believe that the higher priority at this time is in the work of recognition.

One of the key initial steps towards a successful historic preservation and rehabilitation program in the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood should be a series of public education meetings. These meetings should consist of one or more 2-hour workshops for the public that will present information such as an overview of the finding and recommendations of the Historic Resources Survey, the process of becoming National Register listed, historic rehabilitation "do's and don'ts," and potentially reviewing sources of funding and technical assistance. It has been our experience that often times survey work, the National Register and historic preservation in general are embraced by local residents as tools for revitalizing and rebuilding communities once there is a thorough education initiative undertaken. Clinton Brown Company Architecture is the expert in both the commercial and residential tax credit programs for historic properties and our expert staff has conducted many such meetings throughout New York State.

CBCA recommends that the City of Buffalo begin to officially recognize the historic resources – structures and areas of their greatest concentration – identified in the historic resource survey by officially listing them as City landmarks and historic districts. As a Certified Local Government, the City of Buffalo has the authority to begin this process immediately under the City Preservation Ordinance, Article III. Other buildings identified in this survey may consider beginning the process of nomination to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

As there is much work to do, the process could be accomplished over time and by sub-dividing and distributing the work. The City may undertake this process several ways, such as by

- encouraging property owners to apply for designation,
- designating city-owned properties
- identifying threatened properties as priority designations, or
- proceeding by property type such as commercial properties.

Once historic properties that have been identified in the historic resources survey have been recognized, especially if historic districts are designated, the step of protection can be pursued. For historic structures owned by the City, this may mean commissioning a historic structure report in which experts evaluate what must be done to protect the historic features of a structure to ensure that its character is protected while new life-sustaining use and investment are added to it. Owners of larger and more prominent buildings such as churches, industrial or factory sites or other sites could be encouraged to undertake historic structure reports for their significant buildings. For historic districts, this may mean that the City commissions design guidelines for the rehabilitation of contributing structures, as well as for compatible design of new structures to be built so that the district's historic character is protected and enhanced, building by building. Finally, the City could undertake educational presentations and workshops because educating historic property owners on how to take care of their properties is a form of enhancing their protection.

All of these steps, when taken together, are essential components of a preservation plan. Under the Secretary of the Interiors Standards, preservation planning is important to (paraphrasing):

- Strengthening the integration of historic preservation into the broader public policy and land-use planning and decision-making arena
- Increasing the opportunities for broad-based and diverse public participation in planning and historic preservation activities, and
- Expanding knowledge and skills in historic preservation planning and practice

By undertaking a preservation planning process, the City can align short-term and long-term actions with the overall goal of creating what author Anthony Tung calls, a "culture of conservation" in his book *Preserving the World's Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis* (2001).¹ A culture of conservation is a way of life that recognizes and protects the community's

¹ Tung, Anthony M. *Preserving the World's Great Cities: the Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis*. New York: Clarkson Potter, 2001. Print.

inheritance from the past as a means of preserving its unique character as a place to live in the future. As quoted in the magazine *Architectural Record*, he points out:

The universal trait for preserving cities is unnecessary loss: all cities that have initiated conservation protections have suffered the loss of architectural culture and, in retrospect, have come to the conclusion that what was gained did not warrant the harm that was done.²

The City of Buffalo already has a strong tradition of recognizing and celebrating its architectural heritage. In 2006, Clinton Brown Company Architecture was commissioned by the City of Buffalo to complete and submit a series of three Intensive Level Historic Resource Surveys for the Grant-Ferry-Forrest, Triangle and Broadway-Fillmore neighborhoods in the City. The City of Buffalo has also designated a wide variety of individual buildings and historic districts as local landmarks over the past nearly 50 years. Numerous State and National Register listed individual buildings as well as historic districts have also been promoted and created in the City of Buffalo. This survey of the largely undocumented Black Rock neighborhood is a valuable next step in the City's continued effort to identify and recognize significant neighborhoods and communities in Buffalo.

The City of Buffalo has shown wise leadership already by commissioning this Historic Resource Survey. This survey work was funded by the Preservation League of New York State's Preserve New York grant program, The Baird Foundation, The John R. Oishei Foundation, The City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning and the Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency. Implementing these recommendations will further enhance the special character of the Black Rock neighborhood and the high regard it holds in the region.

6.1 Key Individual Properties

Among those buildings which are identified as Individually Significant (S) on the Annotated List (Section 3), many stand out as notable historic properties. Several other properties are likely not eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers but should be considered by the City for local landmark status given their unique architecture, tie to Buffalo or Black Rock history or for other reasons. Any building in the list below which is identified as individually NRE should also be considered for local landmark designation.

1. **52 Amherst Street** - this deceptive building at first glance appears to have been constructed ca. 1910, but historic maps and photographs indicate that this frame commercial building originally dates to ca. 1870s and was "re-skinned." Appears individually NRE.

² Lerner, Kevin. "Preserving the World's Great Cities: A New Book by Anthony M. Tung." *Anthony M. Tung | Preserving the World's Great Cities*. Architectural Record Online, 2002. Web. 01 July 2010. <<http://www.anthonymtung.com/preservationpress/29.html>>.

2. **64 Amherst Street** – a significant and nearly intact example of an early 20th century fire station in a unique Craftsman/ Italianate style. Appears individually NRE.
3. **71 Amherst Street** – The Jacob Smith House and Tavern represents one of the few largely intact ca. 1830s-era houses remaining in Black Rock and the City of Buffalo. Lovingly and painstakingly restored over almost 20 years, this house should be designated both as a local Buffalo landmark and also nominated for the State and National Registers.
4. **81 Amherst Street** – An excellent example of an Eastlake-detailed Victorian era residential building, despite its vinyl siding which is minimally intrusive. Appears individually NRE.
5. **85 Amherst Street** - St. John's Evangelical Church, constructed in 1890, is an excellent example of a Medina sandstone Gothic Revival church. Appears individually NRE.
6. **200 Amherst Street** – The Former Buffalo Stove Works, constructed ca. 1890s, is an excellent representative of the type of 19th century industrial architecture which once played a key role in the growth and development of Black Rock. Appears individually NRE.
7. **395 Amherst Street** - Hook and Ladder No. 12 Firehouse, built in 1912 to the designs of City Architect Howard L. Beck, is an excellent and unique example of a Flemish Revival style fire house in Black Rock. Appears individually NRE.
8. **415 Amherst Street** – Built ca. 1923, the Former People's Bank of Buffalo branch building is an excellent largely intact example of a late Neoclassical-style bank building. Appears individually NRE.
9. **417 Amherst Street** – The Church of the Assumption campus includes the spectacular Romanesque Revival church building as well as the Our Lady of Black Rock school and Rectory buildings. The entire complex of buildings appears to be NRE.
10. **23 Austin Street** – The ca. 1890 former Buffalo Smelting Works buildings are a rare, remaining and unique example of brick industrial buildings near the Niagara River in Black Rock. While the site has been altered over the years, these buildings appear largely intact. Appears individually NRE.
11. **350 Austin Street** - The First Hungarian Baptist Church, built 1912 by noted architect John H. Coxhead, is significant for its connection to the Hungarian community which had a strong presence in the Grant-Amherst neighborhood.

- The recent addition of vinyl siding over the wood shingle is a reversible change. Appears individually NRE.
12. **164 Dearborn Street** - This ca. 1880 Italianate house is an excellent and largely intact example of this style in the Black Rock neighborhood. It appears to have possibly been relocated to this site ca. 1900 when it replaced the earlier ca. 1850s Baptist Church on the site, although analysis of the foundation and basement may reveal it to be original to the site. Potentially NRE and should be considered for local designation.
 13. **189-191 Dearborn Street** – The ca. 1830s Samuel Howell House is a rare remaining example of limestone-constructed late Federal / early Greek Revival style residential architecture and is among the oldest remaining houses in the City of Buffalo. It appears to be individually NRE and should be considered for local designation.
 14. **218 Dearborn Street** – An excellent example of a ca. 1880s-era worker's cottage with Italianate details with a unique Victorian-era porch, this small building retains the majority of its relatively elaborate woodwork details. Appears individually NRE.
 15. **237 Dearborn Street** – This Greek Revival-style house appears to date to ca. 1850s and is among the oldest extant houses in Black Rock and the City of Buffalo. Its later Colonial Revival alterations reflect changing tastes in American architecture. Appears individually NRE.
 16. **243 Dearborn Street** – A unique example of brick-constructed Greek Revival architecture with later Italianate “updates.” Appears individually NRE.
 17. **252 Dearborn Street** – A good example of an Eastlake-decorated workers' cottage. Appears individually NRE.
 18. **285 Dearborn Street** - One of the best examples of Queen Anne residential architecture in the survey area, this house retains an exuberant Eastlake porch. Appears individually NRE.
 19. **157 East Street** – The former Saint Francis Xavier church complex / present Buffalo Religious Arts Center was listed on the State and National Registers in 2009. It should be considered for local landmark designation.
 20. **161 East Street** – (see above) The former Saint Francis Xavier church complex / present Buffalo Religious Arts Center was listed on the State and National Register in 2009. It should be considered for local designation.
 21. **221 East Street** – The unique, eclectic Zion German Methodist Episcopal Church (aka East Street German ME Church; presently New Beginnings

- Church) built 1889-1891 by J.S. Rowe retains much of its original unique Romanesque Revival appearance. Appears individually NRE.
22. **165 Germain Street** – Designed by architect W.H. Zawadski, St. John's Ukrainian Catholic Church (New Apostolic Church) is a modest example of a brick church with Tudor Revival style detailing. Appears individually NRE.
 23. **233 Gorton Street** – This small ca. 1870s-era worker's cottage is an excellent example of its type and retains many original features. Appears individually NRE.
 24. **927 Grant Street** – The ca. 1910 Polish Cadet Hall is an excellent example of a social hall from this era as well as being a significant place in the lives of the local, largely Polish Grant-Amherst community. Appears individually NRE.
 25. **986 Grant Street** - St. Elizabeth's Roman Catholic Hungarian Church is a beautiful example of a Romanesque Revival style church with a signature steeple. It was designed by prominent Buffalo architect Max G. Beierl in 1906-1907. Appears individually NRE.
 26. **1005 Grant Street** - Public School No. 42 was initially constructed ca. 1914 with a substantial enlargement made in 1923. It is an excellent example of educational architecture in a vaguely Collegiate Gothic style. Appears individually NRE.
 27. **1020 Grant Street** - All Saint's Polish National Catholic Church is a unique 1950s polychrome church building which is the sole remaining Polish National Church in the City of Buffalo. Appears individually NRE.
 28. **1065 Grant Street** - The Showplace Theater is an excellent example of a brick early 20th-century movie palace which appears to retain many of its original exterior features. Appears individually NRE.
 29. **60 Hertel Avenue** – The spectacular Spanish Baroque Revival/ Italian Gothic Revival St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church designed in 1925-27 by noted local architects Oakley & Schallmo is part of a complex of buildings which also includes a Rectory and School. The church has been previously listed as a local landmark, and the entire complex of buildings appears NRE.
 30. **101 Hertel Avenue** – Built in two stages in 1894 and 1927, PS No. 51 (aka Black Rock Academy) is a good example of Italianate and Collegiate Gothic educational architecture. Appears individually NRE.
 31. **211-219 Hertel Avenue** – A unique vaguely Art Deco industrial building which dates to the 1930s and was likely built for the J.C. Eno, Ltd. company who

- specialized in manufacturing “effervescent salts” at this location. Appears individually NRE.
32. **1 Howell Street** – The former American Buffalo Robe Company factory building is a rare remaining example of late-19th century factory construction left in Black Rock. The company made lap robes for travel in carriages and later automobiles. Although altered with non-contributing additions, it appears potentially NRE and should be considered for local designation.
33. **141 Marion Street** – The former H.J. Heinz Co. Warehouse dates to ca. 1920 and is a good example of a brick industrial building from the early 20th century. Appears individually NRE.
34. **26 Military Road** – The ca. 1870 former Primary School No. 20/ St. Elizabeth’s School building is a unique example of a brick, clipped-gable Romanesque Revival school building which is reportedly the oldest remaining school building in Buffalo. Appears individually NRE.
35. **47 Military Road** – A ca. 1890 vernacular cottage which is an excellent and largely intact example of its type. Appears individually NRE.
36. **70 Military Road** – The Immanuel German Evangelical Church, built 1894 by architect W.S. Brickell is an excellent example of a Gothic Revival church in Black Rock. Appears individually NRE.
37. **1765 Niagara Street** – The impressive Former Grand Trunk Railway Company’s Black Rock Freight Office (aka Custom House and Canadian National Railroad Office) which dates to 1915 is a rare, remaining and largely intact example of railroad related architecture in the City of Buffalo and in the Black Rock neighborhood. Appears individually NRE.
38. **1776 Niagara Street** – Possibly designed by the prominent firm of Esenwein & Johnson ca. 1917, the US Government Store House and Office was originally built for the US Army Corp of Engineers who were active in restoring and rebuilding the adjacent Black Rock Lock. Appears individually NRE.
39. **1932 Niagara Street** – A unique brick Classical Revival building, the Jubilee Library & Recreation Building is an excellent and largely intact example of its style. Appears individually NRE.
40. **1940 Niagara Street** – The former Unity Temple Masonic Lodge designed by Green & Wicks in 1905 is a unique stone example of a temple-fronted Neoclassical Revival building in Black Rock. The sphinx statues are also significant features of the building. Appears individually NRE.

41. Squaw Island, Niagara River (International Railroad Bridge) –

Constructed in 1873, the International Railroad Bridge is a significant early railroad structure connecting the US and Canada. Appears individually NRE.

6.2 Multiple Property Documentation Form

Buildings located in the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood survey area are among the oldest extant structures remaining in the entire City of Buffalo. The area contains the largest collection of early nineteenth-century houses found in Buffalo. However, the survey area, like many of Buffalo's lower and middle-class neighborhoods, has been devastated by demolition, neglect, urban blight and other factors over the past several decades. Many of Black Rock and Grant-Amherst's streets reflect the demolition of numerous houses and commercial buildings. The area's architecture has also suffered from an overall loss of historical and architectural integrity due largely to exterior alterations, inappropriate additions and the replacement of historic components with modern elements such as vinyl replacement windows or porch supports and columns. The Black Rock survey area retains many buildings which are of historical or architectural significance which are scattered throughout the survey area and deserve recognition.

Because of the apparent lack of a contiguous, intact and clearly definable traditional historic district per the *National Register Criteria for Evaluation* as visible on the map "Black Rock Historic Resource Survey Area, by Significance Rating" which can be found in Section 8, CBCA recommends that the best option to maximize the number of eligible buildings for the State and National Registers is to create a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). This broad cover document titled "Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood" should encompass the history and architecture of both the Black Rock neighborhood and the Grant-Amherst neighborhood within the boundaries of the Planning Neighborhood and survey area. National Register Bulletin 16B "How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form" notes that:

*"The Multiple Property Documentation Form streamlines the method of organizing information collected in surveys and research for registration and preservation planning purposes. The form facilitates the evaluation of individual properties by comparing them with resources that share similar physical characteristics and historical associations."*³

While the MPDF document will not register any properties with the State and National Registers, it will provide a strong historical and architectural context statement under which a wide variety of individual buildings can be registered including residential, commercial, industrial, religious and other building and structure types. The flexibility of this document will also allow for additional buildings or districts to be registered using the MPDF as rehabilitation and restoration projects may bring new buildings into eligibility. Each individual building, site, structure, object or historic district registered using the MPDF cover

³ Bulletin 16B, page 2.

document must *individually* adhere to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.

The boundaries established in an MPDF can vary based on the individual focus of the document. MPDFs can deal with a specific building type or construction method utilized throughout a city, county, region or even an entire state. An MPDF can also deal with the resources within clearly physical boundary, such as a town or city, or the resources of a historical or cultural boundary, such as a neighborhood or community. A Multiple Property Documentation Form is flexible in the type and scope of buildings which it covers. In the case of the Historic Resources of the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood MPDF, the document covers the area defined by the City of Buffalo in 2008 as the Black Rock Planning Neighborhood, which contains the communities of Lower Black Rock and Grant-Amherst.

Buildings registered either individually or in a historic district under the MPDF cover document will then be potentially eligible for the State and Federal Historic Preservation Rehabilitation Tax Credit programs.

6.3 Local “Historic Black Rock” Historic District Designation

In order to protect and preserve the unique historic and architectural character of the Black Rock and Grant-Amherst neighborhoods, CBCA also recommends that the creation of a locally designated Historic District be considered. A locally designated historic district will help the community and residents meet many of their goals for protecting and enhancing the unique character of their historic neighborhood.

While there does not appear to be a potential State and National Register-eligible contiguous historic district in the survey area, there is sufficient intact historic fabric in several areas to create a locally designated “Historic Black Rock” historic district. The standards for becoming locally designated are broader than and not as restrictive as the standards for the State and National Registers, allowing for an area with significant local or regional historical importance that does not necessarily conform to the National Register Criteria for Evaluation to become recognized. Local districts can also be certified for tax purposes by the National Park Service. This certification can allow property owners the opportunity to access both the State and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit programs which are available both for residential and commercial projects.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), the City of Buffalo has the authority to establish local historic districts under Chapter 337, Article III of the City of Buffalo Code. Under § 337-14:

A. A proposed local designation must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 1.) It has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the city, state or nation.*
- 2.) Its location is a site of a significant local, state or national event.*
- 3.) It exemplified the historic, aesthetic, architectural, archeological, education, economic or cultural heritage of the city, state or nation.*
- 4.) It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributing to the development of the city, state or nation.*
- 5.) It embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials.*
- 6.) It is the work of a master builder, engineer, designer, architect or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the city. State or nation.*
- 7.) It embodies elements of design, detailing, materials or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant.*
- 8.) It embodies elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative.*

9.) *It is a unique location or contains singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature within the city.*

B. Any structure, property or area that meets one (1) or more of the above criteria shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.

The *Historic Black Rock: War of 1812 Bicentennial Community Plan* (2008) created by the Black Rock Riverside Good Neighbors Planning Alliance advocates for protecting and preserving the extant architecture and heritage of the Black Rock neighborhood. The “Vision Statement for Historic Black Rock” reads as follows:

Enjoy a safe, clean, diverse, and walkable neighborhood with a sense of community that is widely admired. Vibrant churches, stable home values, a prosperous nearby Niagara Street business district and easy access to waterfront parks and the Riverwalk provide amenities and real history unique to their community. Active citizen participation in neighborhood life sustains the community’s harmonious quality of life.⁴

Based on this statement of the goals for creating a Historic Black Rock area, the imperative to establish a local historic district becomes clear. Preserving the unique sense of place of the historic commercial, residential and other types of buildings is a key component to revitalizing a “safe, clean, diverse and walkable neighborhood with a sense of community.” Establishing a desirable historic district area which capitalizes on its sense of history and place creates not only a stable and inviting residential base but also encourages the growth and development of commercial businesses.

While creating an MPDF and registering buildings on the State and National Registers will make property owners potentially eligible for grants and tax credit programs, it provides no protection from inappropriate and irreversible alterations, renovations, replacements and even demolitions so long as the work is done utilizing private funds. Alternately, however as established in the City Code, all proposed exterior alterations to properties designated as local landmarks or in local historic districts must go for review by the Buffalo Historic Preservation Board. The Board will review the proposed changes to the exterior of the building, and evaluate the modifications based on the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. This review process helps to protect historic buildings from irrevocable and irreversible harm, and can help to mitigate the further loss and loss of integrity of historic buildings in the Historic Black Rock

⁴ Quoted from *Black Rock Riverside Good Neighbors Planning Alliance. Historic Black Rock: War of 1812 Bicentennial Community Plan. Rep. Buffalo: City of Buffalo, 2008. Historic Black Rock: War of 1812 Bicentennial Community Plan. City of Buffalo. Web. 1 July 2010; 1.*
<http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/files/1_2_1/city_departments/SPlanning/BlackRock/Plan_Black_Rock_draft_plan_12_29_2008_001EntireDocument.pdf>.

area. Establishing a locally designated historic district as a companion to the MPDF and individual National Register listings will provide a greater level of protection from the further loss and alteration to both significant and marginal buildings included in its boundaries.

Establishing a local historic district will also help to create a “brand” and strengthen the identity of the Historic Black Rock neighborhood. Buffalo has several local historic districts which demonstrate this phenomena including the Allentown Historic District and the West Village Historic District. Each neighborhood capitalizes on its status as a local historic district to create a unique sense of place, a clearly identifiable neighborhood character and a unique historical and architecture locale. Benefits to creating a locally designated historic district include:

- **Local districts protect the investments of owners and residents.** Buyers know that the aspects that make a particular area attractive will be protected over a period of time. Real estate agents in many cities use historic district status as a marketing tool to sell properties.
- **Local districts encourage better design.** It has been shown through comparative studies that there is a greater sense of relatedness, more innovative use of appropriate materials, and greater public appeal within historic districts than in areas without historic designations by attracting investment in existing places
- **Local districts help the environment.** Historic district revitalization can, and should, be part of a comprehensive environmental policy.
- **The educational benefits** of creating local districts are the same as those derived from any historic preservation effort. Districts help explain the development of a place, the source of inspiration, and technological advances. They are a record of ourselves and our communities.
- **A local district can result in a positive economic impact from tourism.** A historic district that is aesthetically cohesive and well promoted can be a community's most important attraction. The retention of historic areas as a way to attract tourist dollars makes good economic sense.
- **The protection of local historic districts can enhance business recruitment potential.** Creative companies seek communities that offer their workers a higher quality of life, which is greatly enhanced by successful local preservation programs and stable historic districts.
- **Local districts provide social and psychological benefits.** A sense of empowerment and confidence develops when community decisions are made through a structured participatory process rather than behind closed doors or without public comment.⁵

⁵ Adapted from a document from the Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions. "Benefits of Local Historic Districts." Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions. Web. 8 July 2010. <<http://www.heritagesocietyaustin.org/BenefitsofLHDs.pdf>>.