

SPRINGFIELD PRESERVATION TRUST

Quarterly Newsletter

FALL 1983



**Stately Turn-of-the-Century
YMCA reigns at Apremont Triangle**

A NEW LIFE FOR THE OLD "Y"

The former YMCA building at Chestnut and Hillman Streets is proposed to be rehabilitated for 99 units of housing. Just two years ago, the city proposed demolition of the structure for a parking garage supposedly to serve the Chase Building on Main Street. The Preservation Trust was in the vanguard of several groups opposing demolition of this fine building which contributes to the architectural integrity of the Apremont Triangle area.

The Trust argued that the old "Y" was part of a district eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Both the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs agreed with this position and ordered the city to conduct a lengthy study before any demolition would be allowed. The city never conducted the study; instead it nominated the Apremont Triangle area to the National Register, thus opening the possibility of the 25% Investment Tax Credit as a tool to redevelop the 65 year old building.

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HOLLYWOOD: AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

In September the Board of Directors of the Trust filed for a temporary injunction barring the city from demolishing buildings in the South End's Hollywood section prior to environmental review. The Court decreed that the city has the power to demolish buildings which the city designates as "immediate threats to public safety." The Board maintains that because the buildings had already been vacant for a number of years, demolition could wait until completion of the environmental review.

Hollywood, western Massachusetts' largest and most complete early twentieth century apartment neighborhood is being threatened by redevelopment plans. The city of Springfield and Carabetta Enterprises of Meriden, Ct are proposing the demolition of approximately fourteen buildings, or one third of the neighborhood; the remainder would be rehabilitated.

Two years ago, the city proposed clearance of six buildings. The Trust objected to that amount of demolition and was invited by the city to provide alternatives. Several meetings were held with the Springfield Redevelopment Authority at which Trust representatives presented ideas to rehabilitate the entire neighborhood. The city's revised plan, however, called for even more massive demolition than previously proposed.

Because the new proposal was requesting both federal and state grant assistance, the Trust demanded an environmental review as required by state laws. The Trust and the Massachusetts Historical Commission felt that Hollywood is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Both the state and federal governments have agreed that further environmental review was necessary and so informed the city.

The city, however, attempted to circumvent the environmental laws by demolishing buildings through Building Department and Housing Court condemnation. The Trust sought legal recourse to prevent irreversible harm to Hollywood but was unsuccessful in the courts. The city moved ahead with demolition of four apartment buildings. The Trust will continue to argue that if the city cannot live up to its environmental review responsibilities, it should not be granted federal or state assistance in destroying historic assets.

STANDING OUR GROUND Editorial Comment

HOLLYWOOD IS HISTORIC. Not everyone may realize this, but in the 1960's not everyone realized the importance of Mattoon Street and in the 1970's not everyone realized the importance of McKnight. Hollywood is the largest, most complete early twentieth century apartment neighborhood in Western Massachusetts. It is an area which has the potential to be as vital as Armory Commons or Stockbridge Court. Not only SPT but also the Massachusetts Historical Commission believes Hollywood to be historic.

HOLLYWOOD IS THREATENED. Loss of one third of its buildings would drastically alter the fabric of Hollywood. Demolition is always final and irreversible; all alternatives should be explored.

Because the city wishes to use federal and state assistance for this project, it is required to undertake a review of the impact of the project on the environment. When only six buildings were to be demolished, almost two years ago, SPT advised the city that because of the historic nature of Hollywood, the city should take care in designing its proposal. Despite the SPT warning, the city continued and in fact, expanded its demolition plans to more than double the original number. Complaints from SPT regarding improper procedure brought concurrence from both the state and federal governments, which required the city to conduct a review.

The city then claimed that several of the Hollywood buildings which had been vacant and neglected for a number of years were immediate threats to public safety. Clearly, the buildings could have been boarded and secured, similar to the other city owned vacant apartments on State and Terrence Streets. At this point, SPT brought suit to stop premature demolition.

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Demolition has altered the Fabric
of this Unique Neighborhood.

SPT has not taken its position lightly: we knew that our \$80,000 rehabilitation grant could be jeopardized by our opposition to the Hollywood project. However, we felt that our integrity as a preservation organization was at stake. Our rehabilitation work will continue, if at a slower pace; and we will also continue to represent the needs of the city's historic built environment. SPT hopes that the controversy surrounding the Hollywood project will underscore the need for cooperation between the City and preservationists.

- The Executive Committee -

CITY WITHDRAWS \$80,000 McKnight Rehab Project Stymied

The expected grant from the city to restore four vacant, vandalized houses in the McKnight neighborhood has been withdrawn. In a newspaper article on October 14, the mayor said that his taking away the grant had nothing to do with our position on the Hollywood project in the South End. The Trust feels that this is untrue and that our position on the renewal project upset him and led to a cancellation of the grant. This was also made clear in a meeting with the Community Development Department on September 21.

What is so unfortunate is that the city's \$80,000 was going to be matched by a loan from a local bank which would have enabled the Trust to restore four houses in one year, a significant contribution to our fight on urban blight in the McKnight neighborhood. Jim Boone, Vice-President for Restoration lamented that, "the mayor's actions do not hurt the all-volunteer Trust, but it does have a significant impact on the City of Springfield and McKnight in particular." He added, "It is understood that our advocacy positions on demolition issues are very important."



This newsletter is published by and for the members of the
Springfield Preservation Trust, Inc.

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Editor wishes to thank the Board of Directors for their help.

SURVEY TO FOCUS ON INDIAN ORCHARD

The SPT Board of Directors has authorized shifting this year's survey project from Old Hill/Six Corners to Indian Orchard.

The shift was a result of an offer from developer Al Katz to help provide part of the \$5,000 local share for the \$10,000 survey if it focused on Indian Orchard. Although the Massachusetts Historical Commission will provide half of the project cost, the city of Springfield has not been willing to provide the local matching share. SPT will have to find other sources for the match, and Mr. Katz's generous contribution will go to that end.

Ed Lonergan, who did last year's South End survey will conduct the Indian Orchard survey which is expected to be completed in the spring of 1984.

NORTH/SOUTH END SURVEYS: FOUR POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The North End and South End surveys have been completed by consultants Ed Longergan and Lee Hamburg. Over 400 survey forms were completed and presented to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the City of Springfield, both of which provided the funding for this \$12,000 project.

Four potential historic districts have been identified. The Hollywood district contains 44 apartment buildings built between 1913 and 1927. The Mill River district is a nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial area. The Brightwood district is also an industrial area along the railroad near the Chicopee city line. The North Chestnut Street district is comprised of four houses designed by local builder/developer Napoleon Russell.

Individual National Register recommendations are:

Brightwood School	Second Trolley Garage
Jefferson Avenue School	Trolley Repair Barn
Lincoln School	former Union Street School
Carew Street School	William/Wilcox Street Greek Revival houses
Chestnut Street Junior High School	Mt Carmel Church
Home for Aged Women	County Jail
Sacred Heart Church	Central Street Rowhouses
St. Thomas Aquinas Church	Gemini Factory
Blessed Sacrament Church	Commercial Blocks on Main St. between Union and Hubbard
All Souls Church and Rectory	Acushnet Avenue School
Main Street Fire Station	

The survey also identified the oldest house in the South End: an 1805 Dale Street home, which has unfortunately been greatly altered.

MCKNIGHT RESTORATIONS: 15 Clarendon Handsome

The total restoration of 15 Clarendon Street is finished and the job is one that we can all be proud of. The woodwork was all refinished and it looks great, as do the ceilings, walls, kitchen, floors, roof, chimneys and all the mechanical systems. A very well-attended Open House was held on Sunday, October 23, as part of a marketing campaign through Sears Real Estate. Interested buyers at \$40,000 should call Jim Boone at 734-9110.



THOMPSON AND BOWDOIN STREETS

The Trust owns two additional homes at 67 Thompson Street and 174 Bowdoin Street. These were purchased in anticipation of the City's \$80,000 Development grant to us which has now been withdrawn. Work will not start on these projects until we have sold 15 Clarendon Street.

The Trust has come a long way from struggling through one restoration at a time. We can all be proud of our accomplishments.



A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am honored to have been elected President of the Springfield Preservation Trust. Many projects were in progress over the summer and are continuing this fall. Some new projects have been initiated in recent weeks. We have some dedicated and very hard-working members helping to carry out the goals of our organization. Please do not become complacent and allow others to do a job to which we all must contribute. Your support in the form of membership dues, donation of additional monies, and time and talents will be greatly appreciated. Hope to see you all at our next meeting.

June F. Delp-Burdick

NEW LIFE FOR OLD "Y"

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Meanwhile, the Eastmont Corporation of East Longmeadow has been working for the past two years on plans for rehabilitation of the "Y". It is proposing a \$5.2 million private investment and is requesting a federal Urban Development Action Grant of \$1.7 million to build a 200 car parking garage to the rear. If successful, Eastmont will begin work in early 1984. The Trust wishes them luck and commends them on their exciting proposal.



Special thanks go to Steve Wallace and Ed Lonergan who worked on advocacy to save the building from demolition and to city councilors Bob Markel, Rosemarie Coughlin and Mary Hurley who voted against demolition of the building when it came before the Council in April 1981. The Trust is pleased to have been itself part of this effort to save another piece of Springfield's built environment from the wrecker's ball.



BOARD MEETINGS

Curious about what goes on at a Board meeting? Please join us in the Community Room of the Forest Park Library on Oakland and Belmont Street at 7:30 on the first Wednesday of each month. You will find a friendly and lively discussion of projects and issues with which the Trust is involved. We welcome you !!

November 2
December 7
January 4



PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

___ Student \$10 ___ Individual \$15
 ___ Family \$25

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