

**The Upper Bluff
Establishing a Local Historic District**

**Presented by
The Joliet Historic Preservation Commission
and
City Staff**

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INTRODUCTION

Since September of 1990, the City of Joliet as had in effect an historic Preservation Ordinance which provides support for community-based efforts to preserve out common heritage. Joliet is blessed with a rich, cultural, historical and architectural character which, one lost, can never be regained.

In order to assure the preservation of our common heritage, Joliet's historic Preservation Commission seeks to establish a Local Historic District to be known and The Upper Bluff. With the input and support of the community, the success of this effort to benefit future generation of Joliet citizens depends on us all.

WHAT IS A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT?

The designation of “local historic district” both complements and extends that of “National Register Historic District”, which the district already has. The local designation establishes, at the neighborhood level, a set of specifications designed to lend value, stability and distinction to properties and streetscapes.

Because proposing the establishment of The Upper Bluff District now includes the adoption of a certification procedure for the review of exterior renovation, alteration, new additions and new construction, the input, cooperation and support of district residents are both necessary and crucial in this effort to preserve our community.

Preservation efforts like ours are occurring throughout Illinois and, indeed, throughout the country. Again and again, these efforts have succeeded in promoting the stabilization of neighborhoods and property values. Establishing local historic districts can accomplish these aims for Joliet. The Upper Bluff would be the first such district established in the city.

THE BENEFITS OF DISTRICT DESIGNATION

The Proposed Upper Bluff Historic District contain numerous structures of cultural, historical and architectural significance which demand preservation. These buildings and sites are valued by the city and its residents. District designation seeks to commemorate and enhance this valuation.

The benefits and aims behind establishing a local historic district are many and varied:

- A. to foster civic pride and community involvement in the preservation and maintenance of Joliet's most distinctive properties;
- B. to preserve, promote and maintain Joliet's historic resources;
- C. to protect and enhance Joliet's attractiveness to residents, visitors and prospective home buyers;
- D. to encourage the designation of landmark and historic district status for structures, buildings and sites on local, state and national level; and
- E. to educate the community and the public at large as to the significance of historic preservation

THE IMPORTANCE OF DISTRICT GUIDELINES

A local district review and certification procedure is an important way to protect, enhance and maintain valued community assets. These guidelines can encourage community reinvestment in traditional neighborhoods like the Upper Bluff.

A local historic district operates under a set of design guidelines tailored to meet the needs and concerns of the district. District residents and the Joliet Historic Preservation Commission must work together via public hearings to develop this set of guidelines. Once adopted, these guidelines will be used by the Preservation Commission to determine whether proposed building alternations are compatible with the historic character of the district and the expectation of its residents.

What follows is a draft set of guidelines for The Upper Bluff Historic District tentatively put forward in an effort to encourage local interest, input and support for the preservation of The Upper Bluff neighborhood. The proposed adoption of district guidelines in no way forces residents to bring their properties into compliance with some arbitrary architectural code. To the contrary, only over the long term will these guidelines work to maintain the local heritage.

These efforts can best go forward at the neighborhood level, district by district. With the help and guidance of community residents like you, Joliet can look forward to a brighter future, one illuminated by the architectural light of its past.

A DRAFT OF THE UPPER BLUFF HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES

Since the enactment of the National Preservation Act of 1966, the preservation movement in this country and abroad has been building momentum and remains a viable presence in the world today. Preservation of the local district buildings, structures and sites of historic and architectural significance is clearly in the long-term interest of the neighborhood and the city as a whole.

Locally, an excellent cross-section of buildings exists in The Upper Bluff District. The structures represent all periods of Joliet's residential development and serve as a visual record of the city's history, culture, resources, lifestyle, economy, and politics. Our historic homes display a rich level of architectural detail that creates a unique sense of place within an expanding modern city.

I. GENERAL CRITERIA

The Commission shall consider, where applicable, the following criteria in determining whether or not proposed construction, alteration or demolition is compatible and appropriate:

- A. The maintenance of the integrity of The Upper Bluff streetscapes;
- B. Whether the proposed work will highlight or enhance any exterior feature or improvements of the property;
- C. Whether any new improvements will have a positive effect and harmonize with the external appearance of neighboring properties;
- D. The extent and process of any proposed demolition and subsequent changes in landscaping;
- E. Whether the proposed work will result in the maintenance or addition of site landscaping and other vegetation;
- F. A report from the building inspector on the state of repair and structural stability of the improvements under consideration;
- G. * A consideration for the financial ability of the owner doing the proposed work and the timeframe in which it is to be completed; and
- H. * The residents of the District may participate in the reasonable interpretation and enforcement of the district guidelines. The will ensure that the needs and concerns of the residents are fully considered.

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II. ACTIONS SUBJECT TO COMMISSION REVIEW

The following actions, in consideration of the wishes and wherewithal of the property owner, shall be subject to review by the Preservation Commission. Once reviewed, a certificate of appropriateness will be issued per the established guidelines:

- A. Renovations, alterations, exterior construction and/or exterior demolition performed on property located within The Upper Bluff Local Historic District shall require a certificate of appropriateness;
- B. All new construction including main buildings, garages, sheds, porches and decks visible from the street shall require a certificate of appropriateness; and
- C. All relocation of existing structures into or out of The Upper Bluff Historic District shall require a certificate of appropriateness.

III. SPECIFIC DESIGN CRITERIA

Historic renovations and contemporary designs for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material. The design should be compatible with the size, scale, material and character of the property and surrounding neighborhood.

- A. **Height:** The height of new buildings or additions shall not exceed the median height of existing buildings adjoining the subject property and streetscape.
- B. **Scale and Proportions of the Front Facade:** The size (height, width and massing) and proportions of new structures or additions should relate to the scale of adjacent buildings. Single, monolithic forms that are not relieved by variations in massing should be avoided. Smaller, varied masses and facade articulations are common elements on older buildings and should be utilized to match the scale and rhythm of existing buildings.

C. Proportion of Openings and Doors:

The size and proportion of window and door openings should be compatible with those of existing structures. Every effort should be made to retain (and repair as needed) original windows and doors, sash, lintels, sills, pediments, hoods and hardware. The repair of existing windows and doors is preferred to replacement with new products. If replacement proves necessary, the new windows should closely match the previous windows in size and number of lites.

In cases where an existing door is not original to the structure, replacement with a salvaged, replacement or reproduction door which matches the architectural style of the structure is a good alternative.

Secondary doors located on structures should remain simple and understated in appearance. If replacement is needed, the traditional appearance of the door should be maintained.

D. Roof Shapes and Materials:

The roofline of new structures or additions should be compatible with adjoining structures.

Roof materials should consist of slate, cedar shake, tile or a modern asphalt shingle counterpart which is suggestive of historic roof material.

New additions to structures should employ rooflines that have the same historic character to serve to complement existing rooflines.

The pattern of existing roof material should be repeated in new additions or accessory structures such as garages.

E. Architectural Details and Exterior Construction Materials:

Historically, architectural decoration was freely used to embellish the exterior of a structure. Eye-catching details such as crown moulding, stone lintels, terra cotta trim, patterned brick, fish scale siding, narrow clapboard, beveled, stained and leaded glass are all striking aspects of the traditional façade and, as such, should be retained.

1. **Architectural Features:** Cornice brackets and other detailed trim elements help define the unique character of houses in The Upper Bluff District. If these elements were boxed-in with siding, much of the character of the district would be lost.

Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material need not be identical to but should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence, rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.

2. **Sidings:** Although it is preferable to restore or to maintain the original clapboard siding, excluding the incidentals of routine maintenance, in cases where deterioration or other consideration warrants replacement or repair, narrow, horizontal clapboard siding may be covered with similar-dimensioned vinyl or aluminum siding. However, decorative wood trim elements should not be covered with siding materials.
3. **Building Attachments:** Metal, vinyl or fiberglass awnings, hoods or shutters that would detract from the existing character or original historic appearance of the structure should not be used.

It is appropriate to paint wood siding and trim as well as stucco; however, as a general rule, brick, stone or terra cotta surfaces should not be painted.

4. **New Construction:** Exterior construction materials, including textures and patterns, should be compatible with surrounding structures.

Architectural details and materials should be incorporated as necessary to relate the old with the new and to preserve and enhance the inherent characteristics of the neighborhood.

F. Landscape and Appurtenances:

Where natural or existing topographic patterns contribute to the unique beauty of the district, they shall be preserved. New or renovated landscape treatments shall be designed to enhance architectural features of historic structures and to strengthen or contribute to the neighborhood streetscape.

Insofar as practical, the landscape shall be preserved by minimizing tree and soil removal during or as a result of new construction. Changes in grade due to landscape redesign, new building construction or building additions should be harmonious with the general appearance of neighboring areas.

It shall be recognized that repetition of certain plantings will help achieve unity of design.

Appendix 1

The Secretary of the Interior's Standard for Rehabilitation

<http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/rehabstandards.htm>

APPENDIX II

About the Joliet Historic Preservation Commission

Joliet's historic Preservation ordinance establishes an Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission consists of 12 member appointed by the Mayor and City Council for a term of three years on the basis of expertise, experience or interest I historic preservation, architectural history, construction, engineering, neighborhood organization or related files.

The Principal duties of the Historic Preservation Commission include, but are not limited to,

1. Education
 - a. To inform and educate city residents about the historic and architectural heritage of the city by publishing maps, newsletter, brochures and pamphlets and by holding programs and seminars; and
 - b. to provide information and assistance relevant to the designation of landmarks and historic districts.

2. Preservation Assistance:
 - a. to assign in the preparation of application involving the designation or certification of landmarks and historic districts and their alteration or renovation; and
 - b. to develop and maintain technical information relating preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic properties.

3. Designation and Certification:
 - a. to hold public hearing, review applications, conduct advisory committees and make recommendation regarding the designation and certification of landmarks and historic districts or renovation of the same, and the issuance of certificate of appropriateness for such undertakings.

APPENDIX III

The Upper Bluff Historic District



SKETCHES

Front Page	The structures depicted are Joliet Local Landmarks (clockwise from upper left) The Brooks Home The Dr. Higgins Home The Pitcher Home The Campbell/Strong Home
1	Residence in The Upper Bluff Local Historic District
2	The Dr. Higgins Home
5	Residence in The Upper Bluff Local Historic District
7	Residence in The Upper Bluff Local Historic District
9	Residence in The Upper Bluff Local Historic District
10	Features of residences in The Upper Bluff Local and National Register Districts
11	Residence in The Upper Bluff National Register District
12	The Brooks Home
13	Garage of a residence in The Upper Bluff Local Historic District
14	Features of a residence in The Upper Bluff National Register District
Back Cover	The Campbell/Strong Home

(Back Cover)

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