



VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE ARCHITECTURAL + HISTORICAL SURVEY

**Final Survey Report
November 5, 2013**

**Village of Downers Grove
Architectural Design Review Board**

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

SURVEY MISSION

Downers Grove’s unique historic architecture includes a diverse collection of Victorian and 20th Century vernacular architecture ranging from Queen Anne-styled farmhouses to Craftsman bungalows, Prairie Foursquares, and post-World War II modern Ranch homes. It is the Village’s desire to maintain and preserve its important architectural and historical resources for future generations. Therefore, in 2013, the Village engaged a professional preservation planning team to conduct an architectural and historical survey and inventory of four specific neighborhoods and subdivisions, including Denburn Woods, Shady Lane Estates, the E.H. Prince’s Subdivision, and the Maple Avenue residential and commercial corridor between Blodgett Avenue, Main Street and Burlington Avenue.

The primary objective of the survey is to identify, document and evaluate properties that are significant to the architecture and history of Downers Grove, and potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is this nation’s official of

list of buildings, structures and sites worthy of preservation and maintained by the National Park Service. The National Register was authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archeological resources.

Other important objectives in undertaking this Architectural and Historical Survey include:

- Identify and recognize opportunities for potential districts listed in the National Register where significant concentrations of significant and potentially contributing historic buildings may exist.
- Establish priorities for future local preservation efforts in designating local landmarks and districts.
- Serve as a baseline of information for future research and documentation



A Colonial Revival house at 4537 Linscott Avenue, 1940s

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activities for individual properties. Future research may yield new information and facts allowing other buildings to become eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as well as receive important consideration in local preservation planning activities.

- Encourage the use of survey information in educating residents regarding the history of their community and the legacy of the citizens, architects, and builders that shaped Downers Grove's urban design and development.
- Promote a community historic preservation "ethic" that encourages the long-term stewardship of Downers Grove's architectural legacy.
- The Architectural and Historical Survey should be considered a work in progress and efforts to identify other significant properties and potential districts through regular updates of the survey should be on-going mission of the Village's Architectural Design Review Board (ADRB) and other partner organizations and agencies. Activities that disseminate survey information to the public, through regular outreach and educational activities and initiatives, should also be undertaken.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN DOWNERS GROVE

The Village of Downers Grove adopted its Historic Preservation Ordinance in July 2007 in order to "...promote the protection, enhancement, perpetuation, and use of improvements of special character or historical interest or value in the Village of Downers Grove," and to "Provide[ing] a mechanism to identify and preserve the historic and architectural characteristics of the Village



A Queen Anne house at 4700 Highland Avenue, 1890s.



A Craftsman Bungalow with Colonial Revival porch and detailing at 4744 Middaugh Avenue, 1920s



An American Foursquare at 4732 Middaugh Avenue, 1920s

which represent elements of the Village's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history..."¹ The Ordinance also seeks to protect important historic buildings and resources through the designation of local landmarks and to encourage their proper maintenance, restoration and rehabilitation.

Established in 2004, the Downers Grove ADRB administers the Ordinance and is empowered to undertake a number of preservation planning activities such as the survey and documentation of historic resources within the community, the designation of local landmarks and historic districts, and the approval or denial of Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications for building improvements and demolitions. The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor.

Downers Grove is currently a designated Certified Local Government (CLG), a program established by the U.S. Congress through the National Historic Preservation Act Amendments of 1980 and managed jointly by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA). The CLG program provides Illinois municipalities and counties the opportunity to participate in state and Federal preservation grant and funding programs and other historic preservation related initiatives.

Prior Surveys

This *Architectural and Historical Survey* represents the first official survey of properties, sites and structures within the Village, and underwritten in part by a Certified Local Government grant from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Survey also builds on prior survey work, including the Illinois Historic Structures and Landmarks Surveys undertaken by the State of Illinois from 1970 to 1976, and a recent inventory of Sears Catalog Homes conducted by the Downers Grove Historical Society and local preservation advocates. The State of Illinois surveys, conducted

¹ Downers Grove Municipal Code, Chapter 12: Historic Preservation, Section 12.100. Findings.

at a reconnaissance level, documented 197 Downers Grove properties considered to be of both architectural and historical significance. Of these, 59 are located within the survey areas for this assignment (see below). The Sears Catalog Homes inventory lists approximately 168 homes within the Village of which 42 are located within the survey areas. Properties listed within both the State of Illinois and Sears Catalog inventory and located within the survey areas were evaluated by the survey team as part of this assignment.

Landmarks and Districts

Currently, only one property, the Avery Coonley School at 1400 Maple Avenue, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are no districts listed in the National Register. It is important to note that a building's listing in the National Register of Historic Places individually or as part of a district is honorary and implies no restrictions unless Federal monies or licenses are involved. In Illinois, any building rehabilitation projects involving State of Illinois funds, permits or licenses are also subject to review by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

Income-producing properties, however, are eligible to receive the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC) for substantial rehabilitation or adaptive use projects. Residential properties are also eligible for the Illinois Tax Assessment Freeze Program, which results in reduced property taxes in a defined time period for homeowners also undertaking a significant rehabilitation or restoration project. Building owners of potentially eligible properties considering or planning any exterior changes or alterations should consult with IHPA if they are interested in listing their property to the National Register to determine if such alterations would affect or impact National Register eligibility.

Apart from National Register listings, there are currently two locally designated landmarks, 5256 Carpenter Street and 4943 Highland Avenue. There are no local historic districts

within Downers Grove, although the Village's ADRB is authorized to designate districts under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Local designations would enable the ADRB to review proposed alterations and demolitions to individual landmarked properties and those located within local historic districts. In addition to the two local landmarks, 1741 Prairie Avenue has a facade preservation easement with Landmarks Illinois, the statewide non-profit historic preservation advocacy organization.

SURVEY PROCESS

Undertaking this survey assignment included five distinct tasks involving background and archival research, survey form development, the field work in the designated survey areas, the mapping of all surveyed properties, and the preparation of a Final Survey Report. A survey team comprised of professional architectural historians and surveyors conducted historic context research and the on-site survey work while a team of volunteers from the ADRB and the Downers Grove Historical Society collected building permit information for inclusion in the survey form.

Survey Form Development

A survey form was developed to document and evaluate each property within the designated survey areas. The form was developed in consultation with the Village and in accordance with the guidelines and recommendations set forth in *National Register Bulletin #24: Guidelines for Local Surveys*. Specific information to be recorded on each survey form included:

- **Building Location** — including street address and DuPage County Property Identification Number (PIN), supplied by the Village through its Geographic Information System (GIS)
- **Building Evaluation** — including its significance rating, its contribution to a potential National Register or local Historic District.
- **General Information** — including its overall building condition and integrity, current and historic function and reason(s) for its significance. Secondary buildings such as garages were also recorded if viewed from the public right-of-way.
- **Architectural Description** — including its overall architectural style and building form, approximate date of construction, building materials, significant architectural features, and building additions and alterations.
- **Background Information** — sources of information used to document architects, developers, contractors and original owners if known.
- **Photos** — including front and side elevations, commercial storefronts and other architectural features.

The survey form was developed using customized software for use in the field with an Apple iPad, and is compatible with the Historic and Architectural Resources Geographic Information System, the Geographic Information System of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. A copy of the survey form is included in the Inventory section of this report (*page 84*).

Archival Research

Both the survey and volunteer team conducted background research to gain a broad understanding of Downers Grove's history and the people, architects, developers, social groups and other historical forces that contributed to the Village's growth and development. Another objective was to confirm field observations

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A Colonial Revival-styled house at 5237 Brookbank, 1960s



A Queen Anne-styled house with roof tower, 1130 Franklin Avenue, 1890s

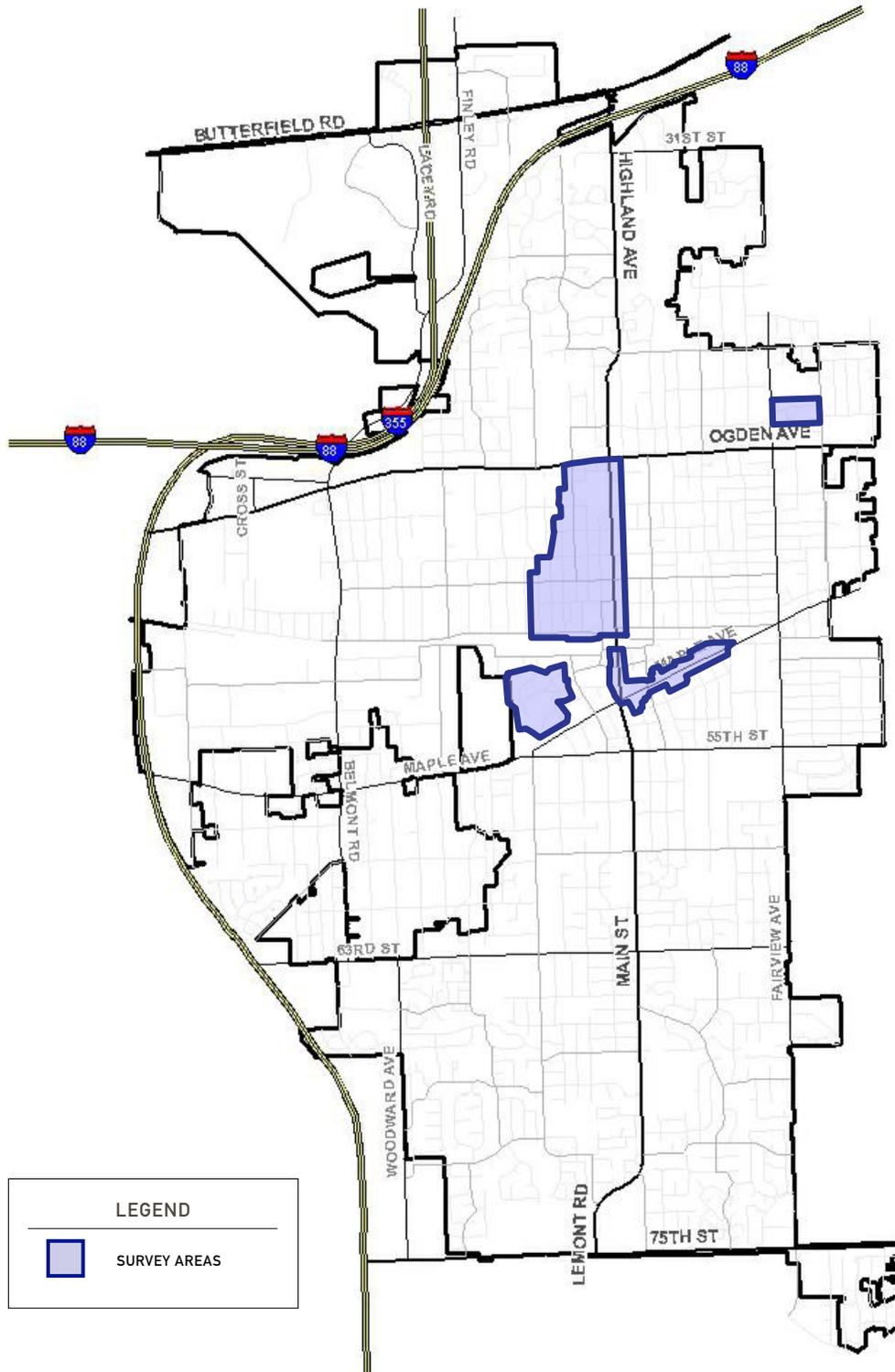
regarding building construction dates and alterations, architects and builders if known, and if properties were identified in other previous surveys. Available information from the Village of Downers Grove and the Downers Grove Historical Society were examined along with previous National Register nominations, DuPage County Tax Assessor records, newspaper articles, city directories and Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. These sources are listed in the bibliography. Additional information for several buildings was obtained from individual property owners during on-site field work. Collected research by both survey and volunteer teams were then recorded in a property's respective survey form.

Field Survey and Database

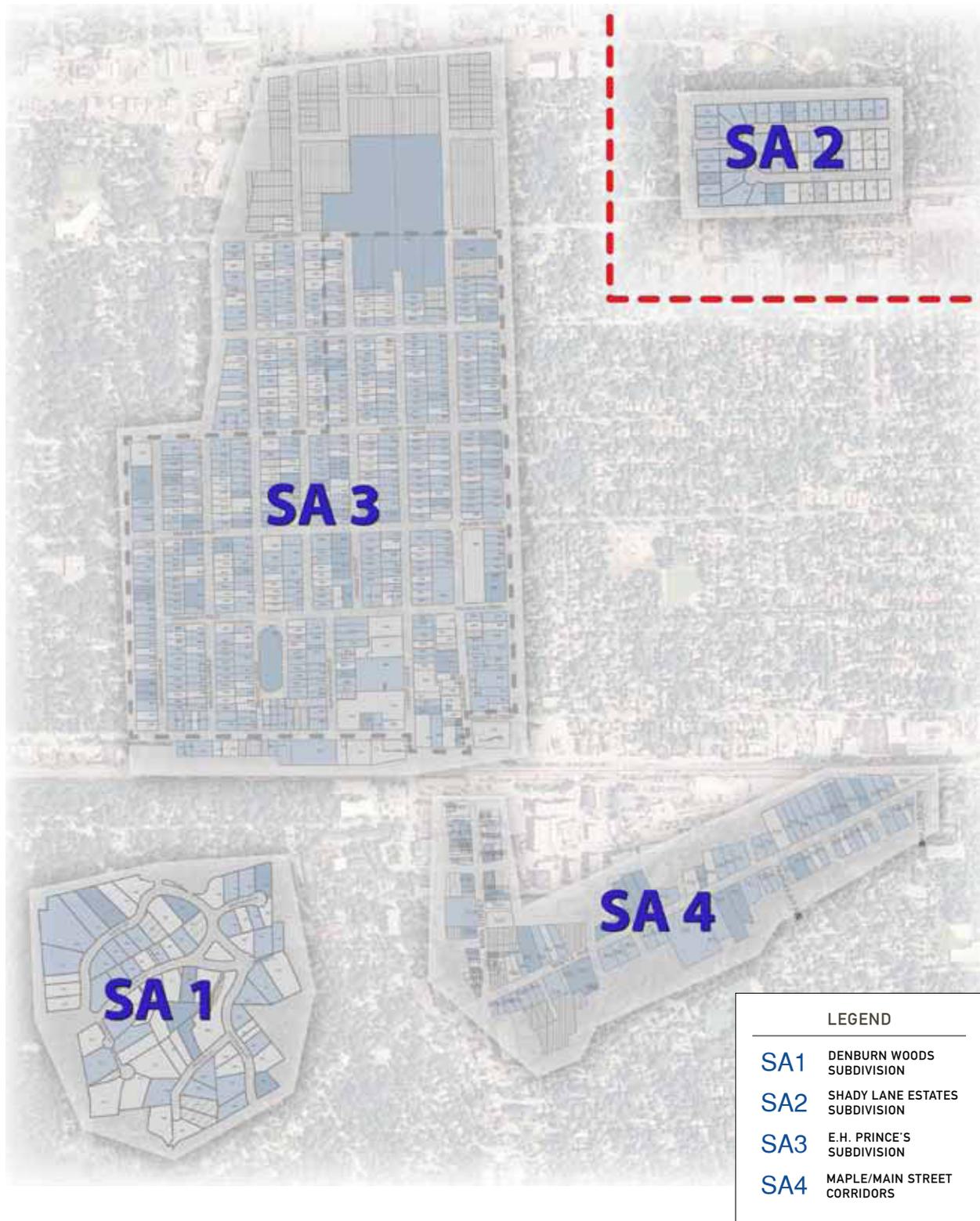
All properties and tax parcels within four separate survey areas and subdivisions, as determined by the ADRB, were surveyed as part of this assignment. An Apple iPad device and customized survey software was used to record field observations, and survey data, which was catalogued concurrently in an internet database accessible to both the survey and volunteer team. The survey team conducted the on-site survey work from April to June 2013 within four designated survey areas (*see Maps 1 and 2 for community context and survey areas on the following pages*):

- *Survey Area 1:* Denburn Woods Subdivision (incorporating Brookbank Road, Turvey Lane, Turvey Court and Meadow Lane)
- *Survey Area 2:* Shady Lane Estates Subdivision (incorporating Fairview Avenue, 40th Place, 41st Street and Shady Lane)
- *Survey Area 3:* E.H. Prince's Subdivision (incorporating boundaries of the Warren Avenue (south), Oakwood Avenue (west),

MAP 1: SURVEY AREAS AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT



MAP 2: DOWNERS GROVE SURVEY AREAS:



Highland Avenue (east), and Grant Street (north)

- *Survey Area 4:* Maple Avenue/Main Street Corridors (between Blodgett Avenue (east), Main Street (west) and Burlington Avenue (north))

An intensive level survey was undertaken to document building styles and forms for all properties, including their condition and integrity. Properties were also subject to more in-depth background research to determine original owners, building architect and contractors. All properties were evaluated in the field according to evaluation categories agreed to by the survey team and the Village. The evaluation categories include: Significant, Contributing, Non-Contributing and Notable Buildings less than 50 Years Old. The evaluation categories are explained in further detail below.

Survey Report

A *Draft Architectural and Historical Survey Report* was prepared in early August 2013 for review and comments by Village staff and the ADRB. A separate report consisting of all property surveys was also prepared in an electronic format and provided to the ADRB in a compact disc. The Report is organized in five separate chapters: Historic Context, Downers Grove Architecture, Survey Findings, Inventory and Bibliography.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The criteria and categories used to evaluate and classify Downers Grove properties according to significance were developed jointly by the survey team and the Village and were based on terminology used in most architectural and historical surveys and on recommendations provided in *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Local Surveys, A Basis for Preservation Planning*. The survey team used the National Register Criteria for Evaluation in judging property significance and their eligibility for listing in the National Register. According to these criteria, a

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A French Eclectic country house at 1 Lindenwald Place, 1920

building, structure, or object must be at least 50 years old and meet one of the following criteria:

- The building resource is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the country's history;
- The resource may be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; and,
- The resource is architecturally significant and embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, represents the

work of a master, possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

National Register eligible properties must also possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Properties less than 50 years old may be considered for eligibility if they are considered of exceptional importance or if they are integral parts of a potential National Register Historic District. It should be noted that given the scope of this survey assignment, properties were evaluated primarily according to Criterion C and their architectural significance. Properties may also be significant for both Criteria A and B; however, additional research will be needed to establish significance for historic events or persons for particular properties.

Certain properties are not ordinarily considered for listing in the National Register including buildings or structures moved from their original locations, reconstructed buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, cemeteries, buildings or structures that have had inappropriate and irreversible modifications, and properties that may have achieved significance within the last 50 years, although exceptions of high quality design and special significance will be made.

As noted previously, surveyors for this assignment recorded evaluation ratings on individual survey forms, which were later confirmed in additional site visits and background research. The survey team also consulted the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency regarding the significance of certain properties, especially those that were previously listed in the Illinois Historic Structures and Landmarks Surveys. The rating categories used for this assignment includes the following:

- **National Register Landmark** — a building, structure or site that has already been listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Significant** — a building, site or structure that is 50 years old and individually eligible under one or more of the Evaluation Criteria of the National Register of Historic Places. The building, site or structure, must possess a high distinction of architectural style or building type, or itself be valuable for understanding of a historic period or context, method of construction, use of indigenous materials, exceptional craftsmanship, or work of a master builder or architect. Significant historic resources must possess a high majority of its architectural features and elements typical to its form and style and a high degree of integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association.
- **Contributing** — a building, site or structure that is 50 years old, and possesses a moderate to good degree of integrity and a majority of its architectural features and elements. It may also be valuable for the understanding of a historic period or context, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials. The building itself may possess no particular architectural distinction as compared to others of its style and building type.
- **Non-Contributing** — a building, site or structure that is less than 50 years old, has poor integrity with most or all historic materials and details missing or completely covered, have alterations that are not reversible, or have significant changes in massing and scale due to incompatible additions and new construction.
- **Noteworthy Buildings Less Than Fifty Years of Age** — buildings that may meet one of more eligibility criteria for the National Register of Historic Places but

are less than 50 years of age (built after 1962). The National Register Criteria for Evaluation currently excludes properties that achieved significance within the last fifty years unless they are of exceptional architectural and historical importance.

It should be noted that specific criteria for designated local landmarks and districts is outlined in the Village's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Generally, properties meeting National Register eligibility criteria are also considered eligible for meeting any one or several of the Village's landmark designation criteria. However, some exceptions may occur when properties are determined not eligible for the National Register but may carry more local significance and thus meet the Village's designation criteria. These exceptions are noted in individual property survey forms and in various sections of this Report. Buildings not considered good candidates for either National Register or local designation but retained sufficient historical and architectural integrity were classified as "Contributing" properties.

The Village's designation criteria for individual landmarks include:

- A. Significant value as part of the historic, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, county, State or Nation;
- B. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, State or Nation;
- C. Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;
- D. Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, State or Nation;

- E. Unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
- F. Character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
- G. Area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.
- H. A source of civic pride or identity for the community.

The Village's designation criteria for historic districts include:

- A. The proposed historic district contains two or more contiguous properties along with such other buildings, places or areas within its definable geographic boundaries which, while not of such historic significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless contribute to the overall visual characteristics of the landmark or landmarks located in such district;
- B. A significant concentration of structures meeting any of the criteria for landmark designation;
- C. The proposed district establishes a sense of time and place unique to the Village of Downers Grove, and/or;
- D. The proposed district exemplifies or reflects the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the nation, the state, or the community;
- E. An area nominated for designation as an historic district shall be identifiable by clear and distinct boundaries.

Architectural Integrity

During the course of on-site survey work, all properties within the Village were assessed and

evaluated for their overall condition and historic integrity. According to the National Register evaluation guidelines, historic integrity is the “authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s prehistoric or historic period.”² Qualities of historic and architectural integrity include:

- Location
- Design
- Setting
- Materials
- Workmanship
- Feeling
- Association

In other words, historic integrity enables a property to illustrate significant aspects of the past. All seven qualities are important to understanding a building’s integrity but they need not all be present. It is recognized that changes occur over a particular building’s life span but its integrity can be maintained if the “overall sense of past time and place are evident.”³ An individual building’s overall architectural integrity was factored in to all evaluation ratings. The following rating system was used during on-site field work:

- **Excellent** — a high degree of integrity is exhibited if the property retains all or most of its architectural features, detailing and ornamentation, with no historic building materials covered or removed; and with no large unsympathetic additions. Exceptions to be considered include minor alterations to detailing, porches and other character-defining features.
- **Good** — a good degree of integrity is exhibited if the building retains a majority of its architectural features but may have alterations to materials

and wall surfaces, and detailing and ornamentation. The building still must maintain its major features including its roof shape, porch location and proportion, window types and location, and original location on its lot. Additions must be sympathetic to a building’s overall architecture, materials and form.

- **Poor** — a poor degree of integrity is exhibited if the building’s materials and details are missing or completely covered, or have unsympathetic, irreversible alterations and additions that greatly compromise the building’s character. Poor integrity may also be measured by missing original siding, ornamentation, porches and windows, and changes to roof shape and porch proportions.

In general, a significant number of properties and buildings have retained a high to good level of architectural integrity, which can be defined as buildings retaining most of their original materials and ornamentation. In some cases, alterations such as replacement windows did not impact integrity considerations as long as they were considered reversible and did not significantly detract from a building’s overall appearance and integrity. It should be noted that the survey documented the integrity of garages and other ancillary buildings located on a building lot if within view from the public right-of-way.

² *National Register Bulletin: How To Complete the National Registration Form*. National Park Service, 1997

³ IBID