MEMBERS PRESENT:  Albert Macchietto, Vice Chairman
    Adrian Ferguson
    Bryan Zimmer
    Edward Quinn
    John Schleicher
    Eduardo Santamaria
    Nicholas Hogan

MEMBERS ABSENT:  Douglas Bisson, Chairman
    Sarah Burt

OTHERS PRESENT:  James Krance, Preservation Administrator

Mr. Macchietto called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. with seven members present. Mr. Macchietto recognized two new board members, Nicholas Hogan and Eduardo (Eddy) Santamaria.

Mr. Quinn moved to APPROVE the minutes of the December 18, 2008, meeting. Mr. Ferguson seconded the motion.

AYES:  Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Quinn, Schleicher, Santamaria, Hogan
ABSENT:  Bisson, Burt

Motion carried 7-0

Election of Officers

Motion was made to nominate Mr. Douglas Bisson as Chairman of the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission by Mr. Macchietto. Second by Ferguson.

AYES:  Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Quinn, Schleicher, Santamaria, Hogan
ABSENT:  Bisson, Burt

Motion carried 7-0

Motion was made to nominate Mr. Albert Macchietto as Vice Chairman of the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission by Mr. Schleicher. Second by Zimmer.

AYES:  Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Quinn, Schleicher, Santamaria, Hogan
ABSENT:  Bisson, Burt

Motion carried 7-0
Discussion:

Approval of the 2009-2010 CLG Grant

Mr. Jim Krance, Preservation Administrator, stated a review is needed for a proposed project for the use of Federal grant money that is disbursed by the State. Last year a new theme was started known as Post World War II constructions and architectures that are 50-60 years old. It is a national trend reflected in preservation. The resources to be considered are surveyed and reviewed. The grant money can be used for surveying and nominations but not for “brick and mortar” projects.

Mr. Krance indicated several districts are being completed that was approved in 2008 for the Post World War II survey. This area was considered the western edge of the city. In the late 40’s and early 50’s. Post World II construction of the 40’s, 50’s and 60’s represents 50 percent of all construction in the United States including all construction before that time. For the first time in American history, the construction was not oriented toward the downtown area. New aspects of American life were addressed with interstate highways, four lane arterial roadway construction and parking lots especially in commercial areas. The previous grant was well received by the state and was approved unanimously. The Northern Natural Gas building nomination is presently being prepared.

Mr. Krance stated that with encouragement from the state and federal level, it is proposed to continue with the Post World II theme. It was learned that when dealing with lower level income housing, it was difficult to find houses with high integrity. There had been many alterations, additions and siding. Through discussions with the contractor and the state and after reviewing federal guidelines, it was decided to be more selective of the selected areas. The areas selected are more intact and with higher integrity. Suggestions were also sought from 20/20 Omaha whose particular focus is on the architecture from the 20th century.

Mr. Krance stated that all four areas to be considered share the Post World War II suburban layouts. They were built in a short period of time and include educational buildings, religious structures, commercial buildings and office buildings. Area One is called Mapleview and was preliminarily surveyed and suggested by 20/20 Omaha. The Mapleview boundaries are Maple Street to Blondo Street and 90th Street to 102 Street.

Mr. Krance stated that he and three other professional advocates (survey contractor, state historical society member and 20/20 Omaha representative) drove through Area One and Area Two and concurred that there could be potential resources and even potential historic districts because of some of the housing, especially in the northern area. The houses are intact and unaltered and could be worthy of a district.

Mr. Krance stated that Area Two is known as Indian Hills located south of Dodge Street to Pacific Street and between 84th Street and 90th Street. Area Two has the same advocacy as Mapleview but with several upper-middle class, high-style architect designed houses with a number of high quality period office buildings on the northern edge. The Countryside Village, a small shopping area, is of worth and there was excitement about Christ the King Church with the rare roofing system that was special to that era.

Mr. Krance stated that Area Three and Area Four includes an area called Hargle Roads and the northern part of Keystone. The neighborhood is very intact middle class housing that was built in the late 50’s.

Area Five is the newest of the four areas and consists of middle to upper-middle class housing and architect designed houses. The name of the area is Sunnyslope with houses built from the 50’s and finished out in the early to mid 70’s.

The last area is the original township of Millard. It does not have anything to do with the Post World War II theme but is a housekeeping situation because it represents a former independent town that Omaha has since annexed. Mr. Krance stated he felt it was important to finally survey the original township. The Union Pacific Railroad founded Millard in 1866 because it was a stop for wood and water to supply locomotives. The right-of-way for the first Transcontinental Railroad bisects the old town of Millard.
In 2008, grant money was used to nominate the Northern Natural Gas building. There is no consensus for a building for the present year. 20/20 Omaha had some suggestions but they were public buildings or buildings that might end up being demolished. Unless a suggestion is made in the near future, it is not proposed to nominate a building in 2009. The amount of money for 2009 was reduced to $25,000 as compared to $50,000 in 2008.

In response to Mr. Quinn, Mr. Krance stated that the survey contractor makes recommendations based on the Department of the Interior standards for evaluating historic properties. With each survey there will be a list of recommended buildings, i.e. private residences, institutions, schools, churches, etc. The individual buildings that 20/20 Omaha suggested this year was the Mutual of Omaha campus who declined at this time; WW Television Station; Bronco's; Lyman Richey building; Swanson Library; Willa Cather Library; South Omaha Library; Fire Department Headquarters building; Police Headquarters building and the former Commercial Federal Bank building at Dodge and Saddlecreek. The former Commercial Federal Bank building is slated for removal in the Med Center in the master plan.

The National Register can be a detriment or an impediment to possible federal money used for rehabilitation, expansion, or demolition. A 106 review is required when federal money is used on a project, the use of federal money is void if the proposed work is not in compliance with the Department of Interiors standards for the rehabilitation of any historic structure.

In response to Mr. Macchietto, Mr. Krance stated there are less than half the parcels to be surveyed in the proposed areas compared to the areas surveyed in 2008. Mr. Krance stated he believes the proposed grant areas can be completed for $25,000. The state will cut back if needed but it will not jeopardize the grant. The state may come up with an amendment.

In response to Mr. Santamaria, Mr. Krance stated the survey is printed and bound in a book. In the copies the surveyed property is photographed from the front and the side, assigned a site number and entered into a data bank. The publication is made available and includes a list of recommended structures and districts that have enough integrity, interest and/or historic importance. In response to Mr. Quinn, Mr. Krance stated he has a number of historic publications available and this year there will be an electronic version.

Mr. Krance stated that Vince Furlong helped spearhead the approval of the Vinton Street Commercial district approximately five years ago. The contractor at that time recommended that Vinton Street be a historic district. Grant money was used the following year to have the district written up and nominated to the National Register. A list of potential resources, including individual and districts, come from survey work.

Mr. Krance stated there might be a potential district in the Fairacres and/or Dillon Fairacres area in conjunction with the Dundee Historic district. The surveys provide potential individual structures and districts. Mr. Krance asked the members for suggestions regarding new projects or themes for next year.

In response to Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Krance stated the entire downtown district has not been surveyed. The downtown area has numerous individual nominations. The Old Market is a historic district but there is not enough cohesion for others areas to become a historic district in the downtown area.

In response to Mr. Quinn, Mr. Krance stated he would recommend the areas in the order that they were presented, Area One, Area Two, Area Three and Four, Area Five and old Millard. The Millard area does not have a potential district because the commercial district has been obliterated because of a big four-lane road through the middle. The Millard area would be a worthy cause such as Elkhorn, Florence, Benson and South Omaha. There are a number of attractive residences and a few commercial buildings.

In response to Mr. Macchietto, Mr. Krance stated a couple of residential districts have been proposed. One property owner was contacted that basically owned the majority of the property in the district which has been rental housing since the early 1900’s and continues to be unaltered rental housing. Mr. Krance stated he tried to win over their hearts and minds but they did not want to be considered for a historic district. A proposed district requires 50% of the property owners to be in favor. Another residential
district, which occupies the area where the original ballpark was located north of Vinton, was considered but there was not enough time to contact the property owners. Downtown Benson was surveyed approximately 5-6 years ago but the outcome of the survey revealed that the district was not intact enough to be a district; there were too many alterations and too many false facades put on the buildings. The contractor did not recommend downtown Benson as a historic district. The old Florence area did not become a historic district because of too much loss, not enough integrity and not a cohesive area. The high percentage of side-by-side buildings as in the Old Market and S 24th Street indicate good candidates for a historic district. Bemis Park and the Dundee area consist of block after block of historic houses that are still intact. In response to Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Krance stated that at some point in the future the Benson district could receive another examination.

Mr. Quinn moved to APPROVE the CLG 2009-2010 grant application to provide a survey for all areas proposed. Mr. Schleicher seconded the motion.

AYES: Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Quinn, Schleicher, Santamaria, Hogan

Motion carried 7-0

Mr. Krance stated that Jennifer Honebrink from the State of Nebraska will make a presentation at the next meeting. The presentation will consist of an overlook of all substantially built rental apartment buildings, built for the purpose, in the city of Omaha from the late 1800’s up to about World War II. It will be a basis for individual nominations so that anybody that would like to pursue a tax abatement project. This will act like an umbrella for the nomination so the individual research does not have to happen just to establish the importance in Criteria A.

Mr. Krance stated the Nicholas Street Historic District has been approved at the state level and the federal level.

In response to Mr. Hogan, Mr. Krance stated the National Register for the State of Nebraska passed a VIP program. Anyone with a house in a national register district or Omaha local district qualifies for a property tax freeze on any improvements made to the house as long as the improvements are 25% of the assessed value of the house. It is seen as an incentive because homeowners will fix up their homes without the fear of an increase in property tax. Property taxes are frozen for a period of eight years and then gradually brought up to full evaluation within 12 years. The exterior work completed on a home in a historic district has to meet the Department of Interior standards for rehabilitation.

Mr. Macchietto stated there are no restrictions on property in a National Historic District but there are incentive programs once a property qualifies. Mr. Krance stated being on the register is not an encumbrance. Individuals need to evaluate their own private tax and accounting situation. Local landmarking is different even though it qualifies for the VIP program/tax abatement. Potential homeowners can be reluctant to buy a home in a historic district because any change done to their property will need to come before the commission. Most people buy property in a historic neighborhood because they are attracted to the older building types and want to preserve the historic integrity and exterior of the house. Mr. Krance stated he reviews any type of work to be done before a certificate of approval form is issued for a permit. Approximately 1 out of 30 projects reviewed ever come before the commission.

Mr. Krance stated that most of the National Register districts such as Dundee, Goldcoast or the Field Club area realize it is an honor to have their neighborhood recognized as a historic district so they did the work and wrote the nomination before it was approved by the commission.
ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Ferguson moved to ADJOURN the meeting. Mr. Zimmer seconded the motion.

AYES: Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Quinn, Schleicher, Santamaria, Hogan

Motion carried 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Debbie Hightower
Recording Secretary