Des Moines FORUM Preview – A Preservation Caucus
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In this Issue

BY PATRICIA M. BLICK, CHAIR, NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF PRESERVATION COMMISSIONS

Des Moines. In the words of their hip downtown clothing company Raygun, “Hell Yes.” And NAPC is headed to the heartland, just in time for FORUM 2018, A Preservation Caucus. Hell Yes!

Enjoy this issue of The Alliance Review as you make plans to descend on Des Moines. You may, or may not, know much about Des Moines; not to worry, Michael Morain has many suggestions for your visit. Laura Sadowsky sets the stage for your stay with a foundation of its history, architectural historian Paula Mohr previews the diverse architecture of Iowa’s capital, and William Whittaker highlights the archaeology of the city. Much thought and effort has gone into the FORUM tour offerings, one of the most popular features of the conference, and this is outlined by Paula Mohr, with whom we were privileged to explore Des Moines neighborhoods last year. As we well know, historic preservation commissions and Main Street organizations work hand in hand in many of our historic communities, so we are pleased to include a piece by Michael Wagler on the Iowa Main Street approach.

In anticipation of FORUM 2018 the NAPC Board held our spring meeting in Des Moines last March to meet with the host committee, select venues for programming, and tour local neighborhoods. Des Moines did not disappoint. The local team is dynamic, organized, and creative. I can’t wait to return this summer!

In this issue you will also learn more about NAPC’s Executive Director, Stephanie Paul. Many of you already know Stephanie, especially if you have worked with her to set up a CAMP (Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program) or worked through details of the last FORUM in Mobile, Alabama. Stephanie started with NAPC when we opened in Norfolk in 2014 as a client of Commonwealth Preservation Group and continued as Program Director when NAPC transitioned to become a completely independent organization in January of 2017. At our Fall 2017 Board Meeting in Chicago, the directors decided a title change was in order, one which truly reflects her authority and responsibility.

We look forward to seeing you this summer at FORUM 2018 - Des Moines!
Midwesterners tend to think that the big stuff in history happened somewhere else. The battles, political upheavals, cultural revolutions — all the important parts of the American Story happened in the big old cities on the coasts, away from the small towns and cornfields that shoot up fresh and green every spring.

As the Iowa-born writer Bill Bryson once told a friend in a British travel guide, “There are only eleven old things in Des Moines, and one of them’s my mum.” And now, sadly, even she is gone.

But don’t believe Bryson — or anybody who tells you the same thing. When historic preservationists from across the country gather in Des Moines this summer for the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions Forum 2018, they’ll see plenty of historic evidence that suggests that Iowans might be too humble for their own good. You can find all sorts of fascinating historic sites if you know where to look. In fact, the handy Iowa Culture mobile app maps more than 3,500 cultural landmarks statewide — museums, public artwork, highlights from the National Register of Historic Places and more.

You can download it for free from the Apple Store or Google Play and start taking virtual tours of Iowa even before you arrive for Forum.

The theme for this summer’s gathering is A Preservation Caucus, and it’s worth noting that when national media folks stampede to Iowa’s presidential caucuses every four years, they’re inevitably surprised by how much Des Moines has to offer. They gush about downtown, where long-neglected historic properties now buzz with shops and restaurants. Des Moines “has most certainly become cool,” Adam Nagourney wrote in the New York Times during the 2008 cycle. “It is a change that has crept up on the people who live here and comes as a surprise, even to the occasional visitors.”
Colin Woodard echoed the idea in 2016 in a Politico essay called “How America’s Dullest City Got Cool,” noting that Des Moines has “transformed into one of the richest, most vibrant, and yes, hip cities in the country.” He pointed out that Des Moines has recently topped a handful of national rankings – the nation’s richest city (U.S. News) and its best for young professionals (Forbes), families (Kiplinger), home renters (Time) and businesses and careers (Forbes again). It’s the best at attracting millennials (Bloomberg) and has the highest community pride in the nation (Gallup) – even if Bill Bryson might not agree.

Des Moines has showed up on so many recent lists that Raygun, a local shop that specializes in snarky T-shirts, sells a shirt that extols Des Moines as the “Number One City To List as the Surprise City on a List of Cities!” If you go to Forum, you’ll see some great historic architecture, from the gold-domed State Capitol, to Mid-Century marvels by Mies
van der Rohe and Gordon Bunshaft, to the famous covered bridges of Madison County.

But there will be plenty to see and do in your spare time, too. So here’s another list, loosely arranged from east to west . . .

**The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden** on the north edge of the East Village features a rainforest, desert and bonsai gallery under a massive geodesic dome, plus 13 acres of beautiful outdoor gardens. The place stays open late on Thursdays in the summer, when visitors—and frogs in the lily pond—gather to listen to live music on the terrace of the indoor-outdoor café. Admission is $6-$8.

**The Robert D. Ray Asian Garden** wraps around a bright red Chinese pagoda that overlooks the Des Moines River. It’s a small site, with a simple path that winds through grove of pines, and it honors former Governor Ray’s successful efforts to welcome thousands of Asian refugees to Iowa in the 1970s. Admission is free.

**The Iowa Cubs** play the New Orleans Baby Cakes three times during NAPC Forum, at 7 p.m. July 20 and 21 and 1 p.m. July 22. The triple-A baseball team plays at Principal Park, right at the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers, with a perfect view of the State Capitol. If you go, try a pork tenderloin or a dainty little Iowa specialty called the Bacon Explosion. Tickets are $9-30.

**B-Cycle bike rentals** offer an easy way to explore downtown and the trails along the Principal Riverwalk. You can rent a bike for $3 per half-hour.

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The High Trestle Trail Bridge is about 30 minutes northwest of town, but it’s worth the trip.
from any of a dozen stations and zip around wherever you’d like. For an even easier option, catch the free D-line bus that shuttles back and forth on Grand Avenue and Locust Street, downtown’s main east-west drag.

The Downtown Farmers’ Market attracts 20,000 to 30,000 people to Court Avenue every Saturday morning from May to October and is often ranked the second-best farmers’ market in the country (right behind Pike Place Market in Seattle). At the end of July, you’ll find sweet corn, rhubarb pie, Dutch letters, Salvadoran pupusas and enough juicy tomatoes to feed Italy.

Mainframe Studios houses 64 artist studios in a 160,000-square-foot former office building that opened last fall after a $12 million renovation. The buzzing hive of creativity is one of the largest art collectives in the country and is open to the public. Just wander inside, find an open door and poke inside to meet painters, potters, jewelers, rock carvers, letterpress printers and even a glass blower down in the basement. Admission is free.

The Pappajohn Sculpture Park fills 4.4 acres on the west side of downtown with 28 sculptures by A-list artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Keith Haring, Mark di Suvero and Willem de Kooning. Grassy berms divide the sculptures into separate open-air “galleries,” and a free audio tour is available on your mobile phone (515-657-8264). The best part: The park is open from sunrise to midnight and admission is free.

Gray’s Lake Park is the crown jewel of Des Moines’ 75 parks and the hub of the city’s 63 miles of paved trails. A 2-mile loop encircles the park’s 100 acre lake, in a former rock quarry, and is a popular spot for running, biking, swimming and more. You can rent bikes, kayaks, paddle boats and other gear for $10 per hour at the concession stand, 4-8 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m.-8 p.m. on weekends.

The Des Moines Art Center, which manages the Pappajohn Sculpture Park, perches on a hill on the city’s leafy west side, and the building itself is a work of art. Its three wings were designed by Eliel Saarinen (1948), I.M. Pei (1968) and Richard Meier (1985) and together they house one of the country’s best collections of contemporary art. Take a break for lunch at the museum’s restaurant and grab a table by the reflecting pool in the sun-dappled courtyard. There are worse ways to spend an hour. Admission is free.

The High Trestle Trail Bridge is about 30 minutes northwest of town, but it’s worth the trip. It spans a half-mile, 13 stories above the Des Moines River valley, and its spiraling square archways were designed to conjure the spiraling descent into the shafts of coal mines that used to operate in the area. The BBC included the bridge on a worldwide list of “eight amazing footbridges,” and it’s especially beautiful at night, when colored lights illuminate the arches.
Des Moines from Frontier Outpost to the Heart of Iowa

By Lauren Sadowsky

The soil is rich; wood, stone, water and grass are all at hand. It...is in the best part of the country, where the greatest efforts of the squatters will be made to get in...Such is the desire of people to get a footing in the country that I believe I could hire corn raised here for twenty-five cents a bushel.
– Captain James Allen, December 30, 1842

Shortly before midnight on October 11, 1845, fires blazed along the hills surrounding Fort Des Moines as hundreds of families anxiously awaited the rifleman’s signal. In the three years since the Sauk and Meskwaki had ceded their remaining lands in Iowa to the United States government, Captain Allen and his dragoons had spent a good deal of time at the new outpost protecting them from the forays of squatters attempting to secretly scout out claims before their moving date. But now the wait was finally over. At the stroke of midnight, rifle shots pierced the air and hundreds of torches skittered across the landscape. By dawn, settlers had laid claim to thousands of acres and the previously quiet, gently-rolling landscape around the fort teemed with change.

Fort Des Moines was constructed in 1843 on a terrace above the confluence of the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers. Native American presence at the site dates back over 3,000 years. Within and near the site of the fort, archaeologists have uncovered features suggesting camp or village sites as well as flaking debris from flint knapping. Historical accounts discuss the presence of over a dozen mounds within the vicinity, three of which are known for certain today. Captain Allen, who had overseen the construction of the fort, originally named the outpost Fort Raccoon, after the river that formed its southern boundary. Authorities in Washington D.C., however, deemed the name to be in bad taste at best and shocking at worst. They ordered him to call it Fort Des Moines, a
name previously assigned to a decommissioned fort founded on the site of present-day Montrose, Iowa.

The newly-formed Polk County assumed ownership of the fort in January, 1846, almost one year before Iowa became a state. Within seven months, the dragoons marched out, the land and buildings were auctioned off, and Fort Des Moines was declared the county seat. As word spread that the prairie land west of the old fort was just as fertile as the land to the east, settlement fever pushed well past and the Iowa legislature decided to move the capital from Iowa City to a more centralized location. Many Central Iowa settlements vied for the honor, but in 1855 the state chose Fort Des Moines. After heavy lobbying and perhaps a little good old-fashioned bribery or land speculation (according to accounts from the jilted residents living on the west side of the Des Moines River at the time), citizens on the eastern bank succeeded in their quest to have the honor of a new capitol built on their side. Two years later, the city dropped “Fort” from its name and the seat of state government officially moved to a temporary building near the site of the present capitol, which was completed after many stops and starts in 1886.

Des Moines’ central location proved fortuitous. The population quadrupled between 1860 and 1870, as railroads reached the city and extended beyond, quickly turning it into the capital of commerce within the state. Thanks to a thriving agricultural market surrounding Des Moines, the last quarter of the 19th century witnessed a building
boom within the city and the rise and expansion of numerous industries. Banking, insurance, manufacturing, publishing, building materials, hotels, and retail, including the newfangled shopping experience known as the department store began to spring up. Thanks to businesses such as the Equitable Life Insurance Company, the insurance industry catapulted Des Moines onto the national stage by the 1880s when it was hailed as the “Hartford of the West.” Civic pride and enthusiasm rose and spilled into beautification efforts. Women’s clubs pushed for the development of urban parks in the 1890s; and commercial clubs encouraged new municipal buildings, street lighting, and the reconstruction of bridges after the turn of the century. Subsequent campaigns in the following decades resulted in the removal of older homes around the capitol and the creation of the park-like atmosphere of the grounds today.

Soon automobiles forced new changes onto the cityscape. Iowa led the nation in the ratio of licensed cars to people in 1915. The automobile’s popularity resulted in
dealerships and other automotive-related businesses stretching along major thoroughfares in Des Moines. By the 1920s, the city had its hands full attempting to mitigate traffic congestion. Despite the downturn in the agricultural economy following World War I, rising unemployment, and bank failures, the asphalt-paving of roads began in the late 1920s and new residential subdivisions opened, allowing residents greater ease in moving out of the city center.

More changes wrought by the automobile, national security interests, and social change loomed on the horizon following World War II, however, drawing growth and development toward the suburbs. With the establishment of the interstate highway system in 1956, the city razed several neighborhoods along its path through the heart of Des Moines in the 1960s. Strip malls, shopping centers, motels, and restaurants built along these new travel corridors siphoned off business from long-established Des Moines enterprises. Urban renewal efforts in Des Moines also began in earnest in 1957 when the city slated close to 300 acres north of downtown that contained many residential neighborhoods filled with late 19th-century housing stock for demolition.

Where some saw decay, others eventually saw opportunity. Industrial employment rose in the 1960s and reinvestment began to trickle into Des Moines with new construction in the 1970s. Downtown slowly began to draw businesses and their employees back, but it still emptied out by the end of the day as people returned to their homes outside the city’s core. Many began to realize that to truly breathe new life into downtown, Des Moines had to expand its focus beyond the business community to entice people back for entertainment and residential purposes. But the land on which older, neglected buildings sat was precious, endangering much of the city’s remaining historic fabric. New construction increased in
Bird's-eye view overlooking Des Moines downtown commercial district, looking northwest along Mulberry Street. Hotel Rodgers (nonextant) is in the foreground and the Hippee Building (extant) across the street, 1949.

Undated photo of road construction with a residential area in the mid-ground and state capitol in the background, most likely looking east ca. 1966 during I-235 construction.
the following decade, including office buildings, parking ramps, and the infamous skywalk system that connects many buildings throughout western downtown.

In the face of loss, Des Moines’ historic preservation movement gathered momentum, thanks in large part to the availability of tax credits. These tax incentives provided the enticement that developers needed to re-envision many remaining historic buildings, and inspiring others to do the same over following decades. Building valuations increased and the residential population gradually followed suit with the rehabilitation of former historically commercial and industrial areas into mixed-use neighborhoods in conjunction with new contemporary art and public spaces.

Today, Des Moines has little resemblance to its origins as a lonely northern outpost on the fringes of Euro-American settlement. The efforts of many have ushered in a renaissance in Des Moines, drawing people from the suburbs and beyond back into the heart of the commercial capital of Iowa.
Architecture of Downtown Des Moines: Some Highlights from the Twentieth Century and Beyond

By Paula Mohr

In its 170-some years, the evolution of Des Moines’ commercial core has paralleled that of many American cities. Fort Des Moines, an early foothold in terms of Euro-American settlement, today survives only as an archaeological site. Early commercial buildings of wood frame on both the east and west sides of the Des Moines River were replaced with brick later in the nineteenth century. At the turn of the twentieth century another wave of development introduced tall buildings or skyscrapers. In the midst of all this change, we can see the impact of external forces, including architectural ideas from Chicago, the City Beautiful Movement and the contributions of nationally and internationally renowned architects. The “book” on Des Moines’ architecture is still being written.

As a result of this constant renewal and rebuilding, only a handful of nineteenth century buildings survive in Des Moines’ downtown. In the Court Avenue entertainment area across the river from the FORUM conference hotel are several notable examples. The brick Italianate Hawkeye Insurance Co. Building (c. 1869-1881), on Fourth Street, was designed by local architect William Foster and speaks to the city’s role in the American insurance industry. Directly across the street, the Youngerman Block (1876), also by Foster, features a façade of “Abestine Stone,” a nineteenth-century artificial stone manufactured by the building’s owner, Conrad Youngerman. The five-story Des Moines Saddlery Building (c. 1878), just around the corner, represents early manufacturing in downtown Des Moines. With its cast iron storefront, cast stone window hoods and stringcourses marking each floor, it is the largest extant example of Italianate architecture in the city.
The Equitable Life Insurance Building was designed by the Des Moines firm Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson in 1924. A 19-story late Gothic Revival building, for 50 years it was the tallest building in the state. The crowning tower originally housed its water tank.
Among local architects, no firm shaped the face of the city more than Des Moines-based Proudfoot and Bird. (The firm’s name varied over time and today is known as BBS Architects Engineers.) In addition to serving as architect for the state’s three public universities, the firm designed churches, schools, banks, hotels and the houses of Des Moines’ prominent families. It was responsible for the designs of the monumental Polk County Courthouse (1906), Des Moines Building (1931), Masonic Temple (1912), Teachout Building (1912) in the East Village, Equitable Building (1924) and the Des Moines Fire Station No. 1 (1937), just to name a few public and commercial landmarks. The firm worked in a variety of revival styles including Tudor, Classical, and Gothic as well as Art Moderne.

Des Moines also turned to Chicago architects – no surprise given the proximity and strong railroad connections between the two cities, along with the Illinois city’s emergence in the nineteenth century as an architectural powerhouse. One of the first instances occurred outside downtown but involved an influential Des Moines businessman. In 1866 wealthy banker Benjamin Allen hired Chicago architect William Boyington to design an elaborate Second French Empire mansion named Terrace Hill (now Iowa’s governor’s mansion). In 1890, the Des Moines Catholic diocese hired Chicago church architect James J. Egan to design St. Ambrose Cathedral on the northern edge of today’s downtown. In the following decade, Daniel Burnham’s Chicago firm designed the Fleming Building, an 11-story office building, and one of the earliest steel-frame buildings in the state.

Des Moines’ other connection to Chicago is through the City Beautiful Movement, popularized at the Columbian Exhibition held in Chicago in 1893. Around the time of this influential event, the Des Moines Women’s Club and other civic-minded organizations began clamoring for improvements to both sides of the Des Moines River. This public space, the Civic Center Historic District, developed over the course of five decades and is composed both of buildings in the classical style

Outside of the downtown (but related to the city’s movers and shakers), the Des Moines Art Center board hired Eliel Saarinen in the 1940s to design the first of a multi-phased museum building. (I.M. Pei and Richard Meier would design later additions). Soon after, trustees for Drake University also hired Saarinen to prepare a campus plan and design several academic buildings and residence halls. At Drake, Saarinen’s work would later be supplemented by his son, Eero Saarinen, along with Sasaki, Walker and Associates and Harry and Ben Weese.

In the 1960s, German Bauhaus architect Mies van der Rohe was brought from Chicago to design two buildings. Home Federal Savings and Loan on Grand Avenue, one of downtown’s most prominent streets, was finished in 1962. It is a three-story steel building with Mies’ trademark applied I-beams, travertine marble and granite pavers. Luckily, it is under rehabilitation with assistance from historic tax credits. This commission led to another project on Drake’s campus, where Mies designed Meredith Hall for the new School of Journalism. This building was completed in 1965.

Des Moines’ insurance industry has been a major force in the development of downtown in the twentieth century. In 1962 Watson Powell Jr., chairman and president of American Republic Insurance Company, turned to Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) to design a new headquarters on downtown’s northern edge. Inspired by the firm’s designs for the Air Force Academy Chapel, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company and Chase Manhattan Bank, Powell wanted a modern building that would provide a humane and efficient workplace for the company’s employees. A two-time AIA award recipient (1967 for its original design and 2016 for its sensitive rehabilitation by BNIM Architects), FORUM attendees will have an opportunity to see this modern masterpiece during a reception Friday evening.


As the twentieth century went on, other commissions were awarded to firms beyond the state.
The Principal Financial Group has been a major architectural client downtown since the 1930s. Its original building, known as Corporate One, designed by the firm Tinsley, McBroom, & Higgins, was built by the predecessor company Bankers Life Insurance in 1939. Architectural Record named it “The Building of the Decade” in 1940. As the company grew, so did their campus, and in 1992, the company hired Helmut Jahn of Chicago to design what is locally known as the Z Building on Seventh Street, just north of its 1939 building. Jahn’s interior features a site-specific work by Maya Lin that includes a trickle of water running down the building’s glass walls and collecting in a jagged crack in the lobby.

The building known simply by its street address, 801 Grand, was erected in 1990 and today, at 44 stories, is the tallest in Iowa. The architect, Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum of St. Louis, clad the building in granite. The most prominent feature, however, is the eight-sided turret at the top, visible for miles beyond the city limits. This feature (some call it an orange juicer) is a Post-Modern interpretation of the Equitable Building tower located two blocks to
the east. The eight-sided motif is carried throughout the interior of 801 Grand in paving, metal work and signage.

In the late 1990s, as part of the downtown renaissance (and particularly the western gateway to downtown), the Des Moines firm Herbert Lewis Kruse Blunck Architecture designed an award-winning addition for Meredith Corporation, parent company of Better Homes & Gardens and many other magazines. In 2002, British architect David Chipperfield designed an iconic new central library, also in the western gateway. Clad in triple-glazed glass and copper mesh panels, it appears semi-opaque during the day but at night has a translucent glow.

The most recent chapter of Des Moines’ architectural history is being written with the construction of the Krause Gateway Center, designed by the Italian architect Renzo Piano. “Lightness, simplicity and openness are the main concepts expressed in the design,” Piano noted. When completed later in 2018, it will not only be a significant contribution to the city’s architectural legacy but also an important symbol of the sustained commitment to downtown on the part of city leaders, corporations and the thousands who work, live and play there.
Preservationists who write historic district protections know this: when you've lost the original windows, you've lost the integrity and character.

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- The Bridges of Madison County
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The Bridges of Madison County
Frank Lloyd Wright’s Historic Park Inn
Iowa State Capitol
State Historical Museum of Iowa, with an exhibit about historic theaters
Mary Neiderbach is a senior city planner with the City of Des Moines. She has specialized in the fields of neighborhood planning, housing and historic preservation. As a 5th generation Iowan, she enjoys the urban environment of Des Moines surrounded by the small towns and rural countryside of Iowa.

A Half-Century of Preservation in Des Moines

By Mary Neiderbach

For the past 50 years, Des Moines residents have balanced preserving the architectural and historic resources that highlight our unique and rich history with the needs of a growing, energetic city. Battles over preserving buildings have been fought and lost, but it has made the community even more aware of the importance of historic resources in keeping our sense of place. Savvy preservationists have banded together to educate and instill respect for the built and natural environment. Others have worked to establish review boards and ordinances to ensure preservation is considered in any decision. Here’s a chronology of some successes, and a few failures:

1968

Des Moines citizens fought for the preservation of “Old Fed.” Built in 1871 in the “French Second Empire style” inspired by the Second Empire Style of Paris, Old Fed was the oldest public building in downtown Des Moines. On June 24, 1968, the Des Moines City Council voted unanimously to tear down Old Fed and replace it with a 600-car, city-owned parking garage. The Council expressed their regret at the necessity for demolishing the building but believed the parking ramp was vital to the economic health of downtown Des Moines. The ramp was intended to induce J.C. Penney to locate a new downtown store across the street. The Penney’s store has long been remodeled into county offices, and the parking garage was torn down in spring of 2018.

1976

Des Moines approved the Landmark Ordinance protecting historic structures from remuddling or demolition. A city-wide survey of historically and architecturally significant buildings was completed.
1977
The Sherman Hill Neighborhood Association was formed. Des Moines neighborhood organizations have led the way for preservation by combatting demolition of abandoned structures with rehabilitation potential.

1978-1980
The Owl’s Head Historic District and Sherman Hill Historic District were listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

1976
Fort Des Moines #3 was declared a National Historic Landmark. In 1917, the fort served as the site of the first commissioned officers’ training program for African American men in the United States. During World War II it served as home to the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps.

1980
Twelve architects formed “The Committee for the Preservation of Bankers Trust” to save the Bankers Trust Building, one of Des Moines first skyscrapers built in 1891 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Although the Ruan Company delayed the demolition date, the building ultimately succumbed to a “modern” building with large areas of glass and exposed steel.
1982
The city approves a historic district ordinance that includes design review. Both the Sherman Hill and Owl’s Head Historic Districts are designated after petitions are submitted by more than 51 percent of property owners within the districts. The historic preservation commission consists of six at-large members and two residents from each designated district.

1986
Des Moines becomes a “Certified Local Government” and remains so to this day.

1995
The city adopts a historic preservation plan that establishes a framework for integrating preservation values into community decision making.

1990-2000
Des Moines funds a variety of studies to explore the history and architecture of the community’s heritage within its neighborhoods resulting in numerous districts listed in the National Register. The studies and nominations were funded through Community Development Block Grants, State Historical Society of Iowa funds and neighborhood contributions.
2009
The 6th Avenue Corridor (6AC) becomes an “Urban Main Street” recognized by the Iowa Economic Development Authority.

2012
A portion of the River Bend Neighborhood is designated as the city’s third local historic district. It is comprised of four National Register Historic Districts (Riverview Plat, Prospect Park Second Plat, The Oaklands and West Ninth Streetcar Line). This low-moderate income neighborhood, with a large number of absentee landlords, will benefit from the city’s design review.

2012
The city boldly took ownership of the “Des Moines Building” a historic downtown skyscraper which had become a public nuisance. In 2017, the rehabilitated building was nominated for an ACHP/HUD Secretary’s award for Excellence in Historic Preservation.

2016
After public outcry over the demolition of a “Lustron House” built by a member of the prominent Weeks family, the city adopts a demolition review ordinance with a set of procedures to follow before a demolition permit can be issued.

Photo credit: Stephen Travels
NAPC is excited to have Mary Means as our keynote speaker at the Opening Plenary. Mary will look at the history of the preservation movement and talk about her extensive experience in this ever-evolving field, along with her thoughts on the future.

Mary is the visionary who launched the national Main Street program, said by some to have mainstreamed historic preservation, and recognized by others as the single most effective downtown revitalization program of the last 30 years. More than 1200 cities and towns – many here in Iowa – have brought life back to their downtowns using the processes she and her colleagues developed. Means has been a leader in place-based community development, helping communities capitalize on their historic character. Heading a national practice from Mary Means + Associates for over 30 years, she has built bridges between plans and people at an unusually wide range of scales – from large heritage regions, to cities, to neighborhoods, and even a few white elephant historic buildings. She has been a leader in marshaling grassroots support through direct engagement in ways that make a difference in shaping places, communities and their landscapes. Her speaking and writing – in APA’s Planning Magazine and the National Trust’s Forum have set timely markers challenging planners, designers and preservationists alike.

The event will be held at the Des Moines Scottish Rite Consistory. Built in 1927, the building is a late example of the Neo-classical style. Designed by one of the state’s leading architects, Roland Harrison, of the local firm Wetherell and Harrison, it is constructed of Bedford Indiana limestone.

On Saturday, July 21 we will have our Climate Impact and Resiliency Luncheon. Featured guest speaker Jeff Goodell, an investigative journalist and author of The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Restoring of the Civilized World, will discuss how his own interest in sea level rise began with Hurricane Sandy and was strengthened while reporting his story, “Goodbye Miami”, for Rolling Stone Magazine. His talk will address climate change’s potential to massively reshape cities around the world, perhaps much sooner than we think.

Jeff Goodell is known for his writings on energy and environmental issues. He is a native of California and worked briefly at Apple Computer in the early 1980s. He is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and Columbia University. Jeff’s most recent book, The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Restoring of the Civilized World, was a New York Times Critics Top Book of 2017. He is a Contributing Editor at Rolling Stone and the author of five previous books, including, How to Cool the Planet: Geoengineering and the Audacious Quest to Fix Earth’s Climate, and Sunnyvale, a memoir about growing up in Silicon Valley, which was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. As a commentator on energy and climate issues, Goodell has appeared on NPR, MSNBC, CNN, CNBC, ABC, NBC, Fox News and The Oprah Winfrey Show.
With 150 National Register listed structures, 27 National Historic Districts, 2 National Historic Landmarks, 22 Local Historic Landmarks, and 3 Local Historic Districts, Des Moines’ historic neighborhoods are a dynamic part of our award winning capital city.

Preserving our past to build our bright future.
The Buried City Beautiful: The Archaeology of Des Moines

By William E. Whittaker

There are three times as many archaeology sites in the Des Moines area as you would expect given its area. While the juncture of the Raccoon and Des Moines rivers has always been attractive to humans, the explanation for the number of sites goes beyond setting. Compared to the rest of the state, Des Moines is densely populated and therefore citizens are more likely to report sites they find. In addition, there have been far more professional archaeological surveys in the Des Moines areas than in any other part of the state.

Some of the most spectacular Iowa archaeology has occurred in and near Des Moines. The pioneering surveys of Lake Red Rock and Saylorville Lake during the 1950s through the 1980s recorded hundreds of sites, revealing the extensive use of the Des Moines River valley for millennia. Excavations for large infrastructure projects in downtown Des Moines exposed prehistoric Indian sites, the remains of the 1843–1846 Fort Des Moines, and features of the early town of Fort Des Moines. The oldest site with good preservation in Des Moines was uncovered during an expansion of the Des Moines water treatment plant in 2010-11.

There are three known prehistoric sites downtown, ranging in age from the Late Archaic to the Late Prehistoric period, spanning roughly 3000 years. Hearths, pits, and scatters of artifacts including pottery and spear points were excavated, some more than five feet below the ground. Indian burial sites are also known in other parts of Des Moines, including a large Great Oasis burial site in western Des Moines (ca. A.D. 900–1100), and the remains of an 1840s Sauk Indian cemetery dug in the early 20th century.

The most spectacular Des Moines excavation was at the Palace site in 2010–2011, located at the
wastewater treatment facility southeast of downtown. The Palace site was a large Middle Archaic habitation occupied intermittently between 7,200 and 6,500 years ago. The oldest clear evidence of substantial basin houses in the Midwest come from the Palace site, as does the oldest-known human burial. Occupied in the era before domesticated plants, the Palace site residents consumed a varied diet, including lots of deer and mussels, with smaller amounts of turkey, goose, duck, raccoon, beaver, river otter, pond turtle, snapper, rabbit, dog, muskrat, and ground hog. Plant foods included black walnut, beechnut, acorns, onion, garlic, and camas bulbs.

The prehistory of Des Moines was once more visible than it is today. Woodland and Late Prehistoric Indians built burial mounds from about 3,000 years ago until the arrival of Europeans. Early American settlers into the area noted 15–18 mounds in the area of today’s downtown, and between 1846 and 1883 destroyed all of them. A handful of mounds still exist in other parts of the city, on bluffs overlooking the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers. One can still be seen in Union Park north of the old carousel.

At and near the site of the Science Center (401 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway) excavations reveal glimpses of an early historic, Prehistoric Woodland, and Oneota habitations. Just before construction of the Science Center began in 2002 prehistoric Indian and historic features were uncovered at the site, including a small sandstone cabin foundation. Normally, when features are exposed they are carefully mapped, photographed, excavated in levels, profiled, and soil samples taken for flotation analysis. In the lab artifacts are analyzed, soil samples floated for tiny seeds, charcoal, bone, and other artifacts and all this data is
included in a report. During construction five more features were found, historic foundations, a well, and a pit, but little is known about them, because excavation was not allowed.

The City of Des Moines supported the exploration and excavation of features related to the U.S. Army post that gave Des Moines its name. The headquarters of Fort Des Moines was located near the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Second Avenue. Two chimney foundations, a buried safe-keeping box, and a privy latrine survive from the fort and two side-by-side hearths suggest the headquarters building was probably more than 40 feet wide. A wooden box in the center of the headquarters floor contained mainly floor sweepings: lots of ash, food waste, trade beads and personal items, including a military button, Indian trade beads, and pipe fragments. Hidden floor boxes are known from other forts, they probably held a lock box with money, annuities, and other valuables. The latrine reveals that during the fort’s occupation and early town, people ate beef, pork, and fish; seed remains include brassica (mustard family), coffee, melon, garden bean, peach, and grape seeds.

Strangely no evidence of corn, wheat, or other common grains were found.

Other parts of the old fort have been excavated, including the enlisted men’s quarters, called “Raccoon Row”, which ran along what is now Martin Luther King Parkway from 2nd Street to beyond 3rd Street. Features from the fort era include two barrack fireplaces, three barrack foundations or floors, a drainage line, a storage pit or sump, and a midden. Along 1st Street, other Fort-era features have been excavated including foundations of the officers’ quarters.
The construction of Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway and other developments in downtown have identified parts of the early town and city of Des Moines as it developed, including the first paved street (embedded with lead type from the ancestor of the Des Moines Register), the timbers of the 1866 Walnut Street wooden bridge, a railroad turntable, and the foundations of a candy factory.

Probably the most visually stunning archaeological features are the remains of the 1905 Library fountain complex, where a large curving wall and intact stone font revealed some of the glamor of Des Moines when it was known as the “City Beautiful.” When it was excavated in 2005, traffic backed up as drivers slowed to look at the exposed remains. The font is now incorporated into the east side of the World Food Prize building. The juncture of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers remains an attractive place to live, as it has for millennia. A mobile app for a walking tour of Des Moines archaeology is available at https://geotourist.com/tours/210.

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Historic photo of library fountain.

Map of library fountain archaeological site.

1905 Library Fountain excavations.
Evolution, Acceptance, And Change: The Main Street Approach As A Catalyst For Revitalization

By Michael Wagler

The term “Main Street,” has come to mean so much in our society. To some, it’s just the name of a street. To others it’s the collection of old buildings, maybe that place where people used to go shopping. In some cases, the words Main Street are used as a synonym for “downtown.” More recently, the term “Main Street” is used to represent small business or, more directly, the opposite of big business. No matter how you interpret it, Main Street symbolizes so much of who we are as a people. Main Street is a direct connection to our history, an indicator of a community’s economic health, as well as a representation of an evolution of our culture that is constantly occurring.

That evolution, and the acceptance of a place’s progression over time, becomes an important element that is often overlooked in the revitalization process. How many times have you heard something like this: “I remember when everyone came downtown. We had two men’s clothing stores, three women’s clothing stores, and a general store. You could really get anything you needed right here in our downtown.” That idealistic memory of downtown is just that, a memory. A recollection of what once was, but may never be again.

Too many times, we use the memory of the past as our vision for the future. This becomes a road block, as a place begins to evolve. We must realize that after a place has deteriorated incrementally over time, it often reaches a point (economically, physically, and/or socially) where it’s just not the same. It has changed into something new we didn’t plan for, expect, or at least at the beginning, want. The old hotel has been adaptively used as apartments; “Well that’s great, but it’s not a hotel anymore,” or the old hardware store is now an artist incubator; “It’s wonderful the space is being
used, but now we have ‘those people’ here.”

Our instinct is to retreat to what is familiar, what downtown was in the past. The reality is that downtown will be different in the future. It will be changed. That change will welcome new types of businesses, new uses for downtown spaces, and new faces as leaders. The acceptance of change can be one of the most difficult elements when working with a place. But, like a grieving process, we must learn to accept that the old ‘us’ is gone before we can be open to the idea that the new ‘us’ will be different. Different in exciting new ways that will position our downtowns to thrive in the next chapter of our community’s evolution.

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

In the early 1980’s, the National Main Street Center’s Main Street America™ program introduced a pioneering approach to downtown revitalization. The Main Street Approach™ offers community-based revitalization initiatives with a

Nearly slated for demolition 30 years ago, downtown Cedar Falls has experienced an amazing transformation through its revitalization journey using the Main Street Approach.

The rehabilitation of the E.E. Warren Opera House in Greenfield became an important turning point in the community’s confidence to tackle big downtown challenges.
practical, adaptable framework for downtown transformation that is tailored to local conditions. The approach was designed to help communities get started with revitalization and grows with them over time.

Main Street empowers communities to set their own destinies. While revitalization is challenging work, the Main Street program offers a roadmap for locally-owned, locally-driven prosperity. Across the country, thousands of communities have used the Main Street Approach to transform their economies, leverage local leadership, and improve overall quality of life. Through this empowerment, the approach assists communities with the evolution and changes that will inevitably occur during revitalization efforts.

THE APPROACH AT WORK
Successful communities have learned to hone the Main Street program’s balance of historic preservation, creativity, business support, and organizational basics. The following section will explore snapshot case studies from three central Iowa Main Street programs. These stories demonstrate rural revitalization against all odds, a diverse urban program utilizing community-initiated development to lead by example, and a successful traditional retail district in the midst of its continued evolutionary process.

GREENFIELD (POPULATION 1,982)
Greenfield is the prototypical rural, county-seat downtown. With its central, tree-lined courthouse square, intact one to three story early 20th century commercial buildings, and locally-owned businesses, downtown Greenfield has an intimate historic district character. Dominated by the grand E.E. Warren Opera House, downtown had seen its better days when the community entered the Main Street program in 1995.

From the beginning, the revitalization of the long vacant opera house was a primary goal of the local Main Street program. Understanding the daunting task ahead and the community’s uncer-
tainty of the badly deteriorated building’s future, the local program embarked on a process built on incremental improvements and creative use of the undeveloped space, all while working towards a long-view vision. Through the 20+ years of the active revitalization process, desired end use of the spaces evolved as opportunities arose, partners were added to the vision, and passionate volunteers joined the effort.

The E.E. Warren Opera House officially reopened in 2012 as the Warren Cultural Center. The creative use of the spaces, including a partnership and the simultaneous rehabilitation of the adjacent Hotel Greenfield, enabled the project team and community to reimagine what the future use would be for the grand building. Including a retail space, leasable office spaces, overnight lodging options, and the main entertainment venue, the Warren Cultural Center was able to diversify its use of space and sources of income to be more financially sustainable. The size, scale, and sophistication of this amazing project provided the opportunity for the community and region to experience how Greenfield would not let major challenges stand in the way of a bright future. Greenfield demonstrated the payoff of an incremental process paired with a bold vision for the new chapter of downtown. The Warren Cultural Center project serves as a catalyst for other projects in the district, to think big and take action incrementally.

DES MOINES’ 6TH AVENUE CORRIDOR
(Population 203,433)

Des Moines’ 6th Avenue Corridor Main Street district is located just north of downtown Des Moines and is one of the state’s most culturally and socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods. Once the center of the independent community of North Des Moines, the corridor evolved in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a mixed-use street with two strong commercial nodes. Bisected by a major north-south connector street and burdened with a series of demolitions and deteriorated structures, the 6th Avenue Corridor is visually no longer a traditional historic commercial district.
This presents a number of challenges and opportunities that require an adjusted implementation of the Main Street Approach.

Beginning its Main Street program journey in 2009, 6th Avenue Corridor invested its first years into developing capacity for the program and finding new ways to engage with district stakeholders. Through the years, the program has helped facilitate many new construction projects that have begun to change the appearance of the corridor. Facing difficult rehabilitation realities, the Main Street program is positioning itself as a development lead for some of the district’s most critical and catalytic projects.

Currently spearheading the redevelopment of the historic North Des Moines City Hall building for mixed-use opportunities and the redevelopment of a late 19th century carriage house that will serve as the organization’s office, the program is demonstrating a new perspective of investment on 6th Avenue Corridor. This model of leading by example, in combination with strengthened city partnerships and a leadership role with streetscape improvements, is positioning the district to experience a major economic, physical, and social transformation in the coming years.

WEST DES MOINES’ VALLEY JUNCTION
(Population 56,609)

Valley Junction, West Des Moines’ original name, is the historic core of one of Iowa’s fastest growing communities. With the feel of a small town, the historic Valley Junction district is tucked away in a central location in the Des Moines metro. Through the years the economic niche of the Valley Junction district has evolved from its neighborhood-serving roots to an antique-dominated focus in the 1970s-80s, to its more recent retail destination niche. It is safe to say that the district has always seen some level of economic success. A major reason for this continued success is the ability of community leaders to be proactive as economic opportunities and trends evolve.

This progressive mindset is now positioning Valley Junction for its next evolution; one that is proactively adding capacity and opportunity to an already strong foundation of neighborhood assets. Initiatives to add urban-style living options, new dining and nighttime establishments, and revised utilization of downtown spaces have sparked major adaptive reuse projects that are challenging the norms of district residents’ emotional ties to the Valley Junction area.

Projects like the reuse of a historic neighborhood elementary school as affordable, artist-oriented housing have brought some of these emotions to the surface. This highlights the reality that our built environment plays a much more important role than merely as physical structure. In this case, the school’s closing marked the end, the death, of a community’s shared memory of that space. While the continued use of the structure does support its continued life, without an opportunity for the community to collectively grieve the loss of that past reality, the openness to accept its new use becomes difficult.

This evolutionary challenge of historic preservation is replaying repeatedly in Valley Junction. These projects are driving the district’s continued evolution but also forcing local partners to balance elements of change with an acknowledgement of the past. This is being demonstrated through increased outreach and connection with the neighborhood, celebrating history through new National Register listings, and creating financial incentives to support historic rehabilitation of the district’s unique architecture and character.

EMPOWERING CHANGE

The American journalist Sydney J. Harris once said, “What we really want is for things to remain the same but get better.” This quote sums up a difficult reality for local revitalization efforts. In order to be successful, revitalization needs to be a positive force for change, but also a mediator of emotional connections to a community’s comfort.
Development processes, whether personal or communitywide, will never be linear. There are going to be periods of time when change comes easy, other times when it feels that nothing is going to done, and still other times when we feel that sense of déjà vu, that sense that we have tried this before.

As each place walks through its own process of evolution, acceptance, and change, it is important for a community to build a foundation of tools to navigate the emotional connections of change. Those tools include:

1. Building an inclusive, diverse, and transparent network of support. This network of support, communication, and encouragement becomes the basis for an honest relationship with the community.
2. Working to collectively develop a vision that provides a long view for the district, but focuses on a strategy of incrementalism to celebrate small wins throughout the process. These minor, consistent wins not only build confidence but also demonstrate change in a more digestible fashion.
3. Strengthening the community’s “collective emotional intelligence” to build awareness of the changes ahead, the challenges that accompany them, and how those changes will impact the strongest asset of any place, its people.
4. Developing leaders with the perseverance and patience to lean into the many challenges throughout the journey. Developing leaders with these qualities at all levels creates a sustainable leadership network as well as a dispersed broader base of people to deal with challenges, rather than one key volunteer or staff person.

These tools are inherently built into the Main Street Approach and are characteristics of local places that have experienced revitalization success. By acknowledging that revitalization is more than simply driving change but also about supporting the personal connections to a place, local leaders can use the emotional impact of change as an empowered tool. This can position a local revitalization program to be more engaged through honest conversations with the community. It can also give residents of a place permission to celebrate the past in a different way and to build acceptance that new versions of who we are going to be is different. And that is not only okay, it’s exciting. That is, until things change again.
Tour Opportunities During FORUM 2018

By Paula Mohr

What says the “Midwest” more than Prairie School architecture and a trip to the rural countryside? FORUM attendees will have an opportunity to register for one of two special tour options on Thursday, July 19. Here are some highlights:

PRESERVATION IN RURAL AMERICA: BUS TOUR TO GREENFIELD AND WINTerset
This tour will look at the exciting preservation work being done in two rural communities near Des Moines. A stop in Greenfield will include the E.E. Warren Opera House (recipient of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s 2013 National Preservation Honor Award) and the Hotel Greenfield. This project, the result of a $6.2 million rehabilitation, was accomplished by a community with a population under 2,000. Today, the opera house is a vibrant venue for live performances, events, and hosts a gallery for Iowa artists.

We will then travel to nearby Winterset which received national exposure with the publication of the book The Bridges of Madison County and the movie of the same name. At the recently-rehabilitated Iowa Theatre, we will have a panel discussion focusing on the particular challenges and opportunities for rural communities. We’ll make a stop at a one-room school and one of the county’s iconic covered bridges. Participants can also choose to visit either the John Wayne Birthplace & Museum or the Iowa Quilt Museum on their own.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT AND PRAIRIE SCHOOL ARCHITECTURE IN MASON CITY
Condé Nast named Mason City, Iowa, with its collection of Prairie School buildings, one of the world’s 20 best cities for architecture lovers. This all-day bus tour to Mason City will focus on the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his disciples. A highlight will be a tour of the 1911 Historic Park Inn Hotel and City National Bank Building, the world’s last remaining hotel designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Lunch will be served in Wright’s Banking Room where the architects who led the restoration project will talk about their approach to the project and some of the unexpected surprises during construction. Other tour stops will include Wright’s Stockman House (based on the famous Fireproof House) and the Architectural Interpretive Center. Finally, participants will have a special opportunity to tour two private residences designed by Prairie School architects Walter Burley Griffin and William Drummond located in the Rock Crest - Rock Glen neighborhood.
Winterset Courthouse Square.

Hogback Covered Bridge.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Stockman House.

Frank Lloyd Wright's historic Park Inn Hotel and City National Bank Building in Mason City.

Melson House, Mason City.
NAPC is happy to announce that the Board of Directors recently promoted Stephanie Paul to the position of Executive Director. As we approach our biennial conference, FORUM 2018, we felt it was time to really introduce her to our readers, since she interacts with so many of them on a regular basis, and many of you will meet her in person this summer in Des Moines.

TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT NAPC
The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. NAPC was founded in 1983 to provide a forum for commissions to discuss mutual problems and to serve as a national voice representing the needs of commissions. It was also partly formed in response to the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act. These amendments provided, for the first time, direct federal financial assistance to preservation commissions whose local government met the standards of the new Certified Local Government (CLG) program. NAPC is governed by a board of directors composed of current and former members and staff of local preservation commissions and Main Street organizations, state historic preservation office staff, and other preservation and planning professionals.

HOW DID YOU ENTER THE FIELD?
I grew up in southeastern Pennsylvania near Philadelphia and came to Virginia to attend Old Dominion University, in Norfolk. After college, I began working in the nonprofit sector with a focus in outreach, events, and building training and continuing education programs, which are all still a large part of what I do in my current position at NAPC. My work with architecture, and preservation came when I joined AIA Philadelphia as Director of Programs and Events nearly twenty years ago. Later, I moved back to the Hampton Roads area where I live at the beach with my husband and three kids. I joined NAPC in 2014 as Project Coordinator and my role and responsibilities have evolved to my current role as Executive Director. Over the years I’ve enjoyed a pastime of searching for properties that need a little rehab love and then investing in them and bringing them back to life.

GIVE US SOME BACKGROUND ON YOUR ACTIVITIES IN THE ORGANIZATION
The core mission of NAPC is to build strong local preservation programs through education, advocacy, and training to local commissions, communities and Certified Local Governments nationwide. I focus primarily on planning and implementing our established education and training programs, including our biennial FORUM conference and Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP), both of which have provided essential training to thousands of commission members and municipal staff. The goal of CAMP is to provide high-quality and
engaging experiences to preservation related boards and commissions of all types through the use of presentations, hands-on exercises, group discussions and networking (mentoring) opportunities via live training. I also provide technical support and manage an information network to help local commissions accomplish their preservation objectives. Everyone loves the NAPC-L, our member listserv!

WHAT ARE THE SOME NOTABLE SUCCESSES OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NAPC RECENTLY?
I would consider the growth and popularity of CAMP, the Commission Assistance Mentoring Program, as one of our greatest successes to date. In a typical year we hold CAMPs in over 30 communities, training nearly 1500 commission members, staff, community leaders and volunteers. But CAMP wouldn’t be the success that it is today without the commitment and dedication of our 30 CAMP trainers. They give their time and bring great energy and expertise to the program.

HAVE THERE BEEN RECENT CHANGES TO FUNDING OR STAFFING AT NAPC?
For nearly 30 years, NAPC was housed as a program within the University of Georgia in Athens. In 2014, the decision was made to transition NAPC to a fully independent organization. In January 2017, I was hired as the first non-contract/consultant employee of NAPC and in January 2018 we added a second employee.

WHAT KINDS OF PARTNERSHIPS DO YOU HAVE WITH OTHER PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS?
We work closely with many of the other national historic preservation organizations such as the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCOSHPO), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Preservation Action, and the National Trust as well as individual state historic preservation offices and the cities and commissions nationwide. We often coordinate board meetings in conjunction with conferences presented by these other organizations, and several of them hold meetings in conjunction with FORUM.

HAVE YOU HAD A CAMP IN YOUR COMMUNITY?
Yes, in December of 2015, four cities in Hampton Roads came together to bring CAMP to the region. These cities included Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Norfolk and Chesapeake. It was a great opportunity to have CAMP in Hampton Roads. I facilitate quite a few CAMPs each year but rarely get to attend.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO TELL OUR READERS THAT MIGHT ENCOURAGE THEM OR BE HELPFUL IN SOME WAY?
Every day I get to engage with the people doing the “hard-work” in their communities across the country. They often call our office looking for information, technical assistance, or just the sympathetic ear of someone who understands the day to day struggle of historic preservation in their communities. In working with so many historic preservation commissions, staff, and volunteers, the remarkable thing isn’t how different they all are, but how similar the issues are in these communities. And how much they benefit from working together and sharing their experiences. We encourage everyone to follow our social media outlets, either via Twitter, Facebook, at our website www.napcommissions.org, or NAPC-L. And we’re always looking for volunteers to help advance our mission, particularly those involved in the work of local preservation commissions. Volunteers can serve on a variety of committees and in other capacities that take advantage of their individual skills and experiences. Editorial and production work on The Alliance Review, membership recruitment and retention, resources development, education programs and technical assistance are just a few of the possibilities.
CALIFORNIA

The atrium of the Wells Fargo Center building in Los Angeles was recently demolished, and it came as a shock to local advocacy groups. The property owner reportedly applied for a construction permit in December. The permit was issued within two days, and demolition began soon thereafter. The Los Angeles Conservancy, which announced via a social-media post that the atrium had been demolished, called its destruction “an outrage.” Completed in 1983 with architects Skidmore, Owings & Merrill and sculptor Robert Graham, Wells Fargo Court was conceived with developer Robert Maguire as “an urban, indoor Garden of Eden.” Designed primarily to display Modernist sculpture, the space was the only Lawrence Halprin project where the landscape design was subservient to sculpture, in this case works by Graham and other artists, including Joan Miro and Jean Dubuffet. Sadly, the destroyed landscape was also Halprin’s only atrium design.

https://tclf.org/halprin-wells-fargo-court-demolished

GEORGIA

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birth home, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Prince Hall Masonic Temple (the initial headquarters of the SCLC) and King’s burial site have all been upgraded from national historic sites to a national historic park. The Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Park Act was signed into law by President Trump and sponsored by Georgia Democratic Rep. John Lewis, who said he was proud “to work in a bipartisan, bicameral manner” to establish Georgia’s first National Historical Park ahead of King’s birthday and the 50th anniversary of his assassination.


IOWA

A grant through the Iowa State Historic Preservation Office has been earmarked for an intensive survey of the “Smokey Row” neighborhood in Waterloo. Smokey Row was settled by African-Americans and European immigrants starting in the early 1900s. During a 1911 strike, the Illinois Central Railroad brought many black workers from Holmes County, Mississippi and provided them boxcars for living quarters. The migration boosted the city’s African-American population from 22 to nearly 400 people by 1915. Croatians and other white immigrants eventually withdrew from the neighborhood. Restrictive real estate deed covenants blocked blacks from buying property outside of the neighborhood, creating de facto segregation.

Ed Ottesen, chairman of the city’s Historic Preservation Commission, hopes that the project will eventually lead to Smokey Row’s official designation as a historic district. http://wcfcourier.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/grant-to-document-waterloo-s-smokey-row/article_571770a5-f708-551a-ba6e-7c3c9d7d0b32.html

NEW JERSEY

Henry Kip and his brother Peter were members of a ragtag militia that walked Polifly Ridge, the last defense against British troops looking to pillage the farms of Bergen County. After volunteering for guard duty, the Kips walked home to a Dutch stone farmhouse on the edge of the meadows. That house, built by 1743, still stands. During the Revolutionary War, it was one of dozens of homes along the old Polifly Road, which served as the residential hub for Bergen County’s political and economic elite for more than a century. Today the Kip homestead is the last of those houses left and a developer wants to knock it down. The old homestead looks to be in rough shape, but appearances deceive, said Carla Cielo, a consultant who specializes in historic preservation. Its sagging porticoes can be removed, its roof replaced, the stucco on its exterior walls fixed or scraped off. Underneath, the stone walls remain solid. With a little work, the place could stand “for another 200 years,” Cielo said, compared with a projected lifespan of 30 years for most modern construction.


NEW YORK

The Buffalo Preservation Board is considering the designation of two Frank Lloyd Wright-designed residences in the city as local landmarks, over objections from the owners of the property. The William R. Heath House and Walter V. Davidson House are designed in the Prairie School style. The Preservation Board is not required to seek permission from homeowners to submit applications for the properties to be designated as local landmarks. Board Chairman, Paul McDonnell said, “One of our duties as a Preservation Board is to identify properties that are eligible to be locally landmarked, either because of their significance or they’re endangered. We acknowledge that neither is endangered, but I don’t think anyone can deny they’re significant. Buffalo is one of two cities in the world that has architecture by Wright and (Henry Hobson) Richardson, the only two cities in the world. We feel that it’s important that these buildings should not only be recognized, but perpetually protected.”

http://buffalonews.com/2018/02/22/preservation-board-sets-hearing-on-landmark-status-for-wright-homes/

PENNSYLVANIA

The blocks between the Delaware waterfront and
Independence Mall are home to one of the richest collections of architecture in all of Philadelphia, with buildings that track the nation’s evolution from colonial settlement to industrial powerhouse. Now an upscale neighborhood of loft-style apartments, Old City hardly lacks for activity; its streets are thick with fine restaurants, vintage furniture stores, and clothing boutiques that lure locals and tourists alike. And yet, in the 15 years since the city declared the area a historic district, Old City has lost no less than five distinctive, 19th-century commercial buildings to fire and other unfortunate events.

The latest blaze, which swept through a trio of mid-19th century merchant buildings is the most devastating loss yet. Designed to mimic Italy’s Renaissance palaces, they are part of a stunning ensemble that stretches virtually uninterrupted along Chestnut Street from Second to Fifth Streets. One building, designed in 1856 by Stephen Decatur Button, is such an elegant piece of work that architect Louis Sullivan singled out the design as a source of inspiration. It’s true that old buildings like these are prone to fires, but that doesn’t mean it couldn’t have been prevented. It would have probably cost no more than $75,000 to equip some of these buildings with sprinklers. Federal tax programs allow owners to write off the investment, so the out-of-pocket cost is much less. Putting in sprinklers would also reduce the cost of the owner’s building insurance premiums. Thankfully, no one was killed in the latest Old City fire. But as architectural casualties pile up, Philadelphia is losing more of its irreplaceable patrimony.


SOUTH CAROLINA
Nearly two-dozen gravestones at the Olde Presbyterian Church cemetery in downtown Lancaster were knocked down or broken after a concert inside the historic church building which now serves as a cultural arts center. Some stones date back to the 1800s and mark graves of war veterans and prominent figures in Lancaster’s history. John Craig, chairman of the Lancaster County Society for Historical Preservation, said the historic society is outraged, and the community should be, too. The church and cemetery are among the oldest in Lancaster, and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Police are investigating the vandalism, but no arrests have been made. The vandalism described in a Lancaster police report as “injury to grave property” will cost well over $10,000 to repair. In the summer of 2016, nine stones were damaged and cost more than $6,000 to repair. http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/crime/article192795624.html

TEXAS
El Paso Community College is looking to add a new parking garage to its Rio Grande Campus. However, the planned parking garage will sit on a historical site, which raised a red flag for the Historic Landmark Commission. Architects for the project said they only found out recently that the garage would be built at the location of an old historic house. A cement rock wall is all that’s left from this house, which has a history stretching back to the 1900s. During a meeting in early January, the college announced that they will work with the commission to accommodate the rock wall into the new parking garage.


VIRGINIA
Engineered by Claudius Crozet in 1856, the Blue Ridge Tunnel was meant to serve as a railroad passage through Afton Mountain. Today, the Claudius Crozet Blue Ridge Tunnel Foundation is seeking to restore and reuse the tunnel as a community landmark and create a historical interpretation of it. Staff and students from the University of Virginia (in collaboration with Leidos, an information technology, science and engineering firm) are helping the foundation do this by using robots to map this historic tunnel. Nicola Bezzo, a professor at UVA whose laboratory has been researching autonomous vehicles, has already deployed a robot to laser-scan the first half of the interior using Light Direction and Ranging (LiDAR) technologies. He chose a robot over a drone due to former’s stability, reliability and robustness. Traveling at a speed of 2mph, this robot was able to maneuver over the rocky (and often damp) terrain, using multiple laser scanners to record 360 degrees of the tunnel. Bezzo said that the robot is able to track itself as it moves and simultaneously collects data points. This information immediately downloads onto a computer, where the robot can translate it into a map. This type of data can then be used to assess how the tunnel has changed over time and help plan for any future restoration or construction.

https://news.virginia.edu/content/darkness-uva-robot-maps-historic-tunnel
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### Early Bird Registration

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**FORUM Hotel:**

Embassy Suites Des Moines: Main Conference Hotel – Rate of $159 per night plus limited government rate rooms available.

**Conference Schedule:**

Conference pre-sessions open on the afternoon of Wednesday, July 18, tours and pre-sessions on Thursday, July 19, full conference sessions begins on Friday, July 20 through noon on Sunday, July 22, 2018.

For more information on attending FORUM 2018, becoming a sponsor, and general questions contact NAPC at director@napcommissions.org or 757-802-4141.
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