

# **Centre Park Historic District**

# **Strategic Action Plan**

*Revised and Adopted 8/4/2008*

## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Mission of Centre Park Historic District is to promote architectural preservation and enhance neighborhood living.*

### GOALS

- 1) **Promote a sense of community throughout the neighborhood**
- 2) **Address issues and concerns affecting quality of life in the neighborhood**
- 3) **Promote the preservation of architectural integrity in the District**
- 4) **Develop and maintain the resources and structure required for the organization to achieve it's mission**

### GOAL 1: Promote a sense of community throughout the neighborhood

- A) Continue to sponsor and support neighborhood activities
  - Network with Centre Park neighborhood groups. *Ongoing, continue to work with Crime Watch & neighborhood church groups*
  - Conduct activities and events to promote neighborhood involvement. Continue Family Movies in the Park, Arts and Antiques Fair, Flea Markets, Christmas House Tour, Garden Tour etc. Consider new events for future.
  - Produce and distribute a calendar of events. *Annually*
  - Promote activities to welcome and engage participants through ongoing promotion, advertising, and welcome packets. *Ongoing*
  - Sponsor and organize Community Interest meetings. *At least two per year starting 2009.*
  - Maintain and expand Block Captain Program to facilitate interaction among neighbors.
- B) Maintain Headquarters Building as the focal point of the community. *Market use and availability of building as soon as building is approved for this use.*
  - i) Complete work needed for full occupancy requirements *Complete project by end of 2009*
  - ii) Secure funding to make improvements to mechanicals *Begin fund search 2009*
  - iii) Finish second floor for additional uses *Begin design work 2010*
- C) Market our neighborhood (promotion)
  - i) Use various media (magazines, newspaper, BCTV, other TV programming)
  - ii) Solicit testimonials from residents
- D) Better identify the boundaries of the District
  - i) Signage at main entrances

- ii) Investigate street signs in historic brown with CPHD logo for all streets within the district. *Establish budget and funding source by Spring 2009.*

## **GOAL 2: Address issues and concerns affecting quality of life in the neighborhood**

- A) Monitor quality of life issues and concerns
  - Maintain communication with the appropriate authorities
  - Take proactive approach to identify potential changes in the neighborhood
    - 1) Conduct periodic survey monthly to gather feedback and share results
    - 2) When issues are identified, notify appropriate municipal office or department
    - 3) Establish a follow up procedure to ensure issue has been addressed
  - iii) Support the City of Reading Council of Neighborhoods
- B) Maintain Block Captain program to support quality of life in the neighborhood
  - i) Schedule regular meetings to include speakers relating to issues affecting quality of life. *Hold monthly meetings*
  - ii) Organize seasonal neighborhood cleanups. *Participate in Great American Cleanup*
  - iii) Organize Flea Markets
  - iv) Attempt to secure a Block Captain for each block
- C) Continue to contribute to the improvement of Centre Park
  - i) Reseed lawn *Ongoing*
  - ii) Repaint lampposts *Contact City in Fall 2009 for appropriate process, Complete by Fall 2010*
  - iii) Restore, replace or redesign fountain circle. *Form committee by Spring 2009. Charge committee with annual report on progress*
  - iv) Do regular assessment of park trees
- D) Support Garden Club to improve quality of life
  - i) Recruit additional volunteers *Ongoing*
  - ii) Continue landscape improvements to Centre Park *Ongoing*
  - iii) Maintain and beautify green space within the general neighborhood *Ongoing*
  - iv) Identify future Garden Club projects and create 5-year plan for future projects. *Complete by Fall 2008*
- E) Apply for CDBG funds and investigate grant opportunities to provide for neighborhood improvements
  - i) Centre Park improvements
  - ii) Pedestrian lighting surrounding Centre Park
  - iii) New public sidewalks
- F) Advocate for policies that support the goals of Centre Park Historic District

### GOAL 3: Promote the preservation of architectural integrity in the District

- A) Support preservation and maintenance of District properties
  - i) Develop watchdog group (i.e. Block Captains) to identify and report historic preservation violations to the City's call center. *Identify this group and it's procedures by end of 2008.*
  - ii) Encourage active members of CPHD to seek positions on various city and county boards (zoning, planning, HARB, etc) *Ongoing*
  - iii) Continue to recognize positive preservation efforts (Preservation Month Awards)
    - a. identify properties that have undergone exterior renovation work. *Do on a quarterly basis by reviewing HARB minutes*
    - b. highlight renovated properties in CPHD newsletter or on website. Ask committee to make recommendations for these featured properties and follow through with providing photos and information.
  - iv) Promote the Artifacts Bank as a resource for historic building materials
    - a. develop a support network with other similar facilities for the purpose of information exchange and education. *Ongoing*
    - b. sponsor or attend events that promote architectural preservation through the use of salvaged building materials *Investigate home shows, old house fairs, etc.*
    - c. expand advertising network (Old House Journal, etc.) pending availability of funds *Investigate other opportunities for publicity and promotion*
    - d. fully utilize the CPHD website to advertise or feature specific products *Begin process in 2009*
    - e. develop on-line sales of Artifacts Bank inventory *Investigate by Summer 2009*
  
- B) Educate residents and the community about the benefits and responsibilities of preservation and property maintenance
  - i) Integrate preservation education into all CPHD activities *Ongoing*
  - ii) Compose and distribute a letter to all property owners that explains the benefits and responsibilities of owning property in CPHD. Use this opportunity to actively solicit membership. *Begin process by Fall 2008*
  - iii) Create and distribute an annual Neighborhood Report. *Executive Committee to be responsible for creating this with the input of other CPHD committees and other neighborhood groups.*
  - iv) Maintain a Welcome/Membership Committee
    - a. Empower committee to create events or opportunities conducive to attracting potential members
    - b. Actively recruit members thorough a yearly door-to-door campaign. *Membership Committee to begin Fall 2008*
    - c. Distribute a welcome packet for new residents of CPHD *Ongoing*
  - v) Educate realtors about the benefits and responsibilities of living in a historic district
    - a. Compile a Realtor's Information packet. *Complete by Fall 2009*

- b. Executive Director or President to make presentation to Realtor's Association *(at least once yearly)*
  - vi) Establish a Resource Center at Centre Park Headquarters Building
    - a. Compile information on sources for building materials, preservation methods, contractors who work on older homes, etc. *Contact area colleges concerning help or use of intern for project. Spring 2009*
    - b. Sponsor seminars on "How to Do It Yourself" restoration and maintenance. *Begin when building is approved for this use. Ongoing thereafter.*
  - vii) Market the architectural heritage of the neighborhood
    - a. Solicit testimonials about benefits of living in the district. *Secretary responsible for this.*
    - b. Incorporate these testimonials on to the website and into other information packets
    - c. Develop Walking Tours and include with as many CPHD sponsored events as possible. *Contact Chris Miller & Michele Lynch to develop script. Complete by Winter 2008*
    - d. Partner with area schools in establishing childrens preservation education efforts/programs/field trips. *Connect with Museum Council's potential program*
    - e. Use Fritz Rothermel's illustrations to create postcards, coloring books, or other educational materials.
  - viii) Gather property information, historical data, photographs, etc *Contact area colleges concerning help or use of intern for project. Begin contacts Fall 2009.*
    - a. Make information available for residents or property owners
    - b. Use this information for attaining National Historic District status *Begin process by Spring 2011*
    - c. Create a database of archival materials (organized by address?)
  - ix) Create a resource guide for architectural styles and preservation education. *Review and update Reading Eagle insert from 1980's. Complete in 2010*
  - x) Educate property owners about existing grant programs available for exterior improvements. *Have info at headquarters. Put info on website by Fall 2008.*
- C) Partner with other organizations that share similar goals
  - i) Continue to partner with established historic and neighborhood groups
  - ii) Look for opportunities to coordinate efforts with new partners
  - iii) Establish connections with state & national preservation organizations
  - iv) Attend activities or conventions that promote historic preservation

**GOAL 4: Develop and maintain the resources and structure required for the organization to achieve its mission**

- A) Develop a policy and procedure manual for operations
  - i) Establish a committee to review existing information and update as required *Create basic form as guide for needed info. ED to complete by Fall 2008.*

- ii) Outline responsibilities and duties of all Officers. *Executive Committee & two ad hoc members with board experience. Complete by Fall 2008*
  - iii) Develop day-to-day responsibilities for Executive Director *ED with Executive Committee Complete by Sept. 2008.*
  - iv) Outline policies and procedures for all “Special Committees”. *Executive Committee to review existing guideline and make any necessary changes. Complete by Fall 2008*
  - v) Establish Headquarters Building maintenance schedule *Building Committee to complete by Fall 2008.*
  - vi) Review and update manual annually to reflect appropriate changes *Ongoing by Executive Committee or Operations Committee if formed.*
- B) Foster Volunteer involvement
- i) Identify volunteer needs. *Annually*
  - ii) Circulate volunteer request form to the community *Annually with report to the neighborhood*
  - iii) Assign volunteers based on interest
  - iv) Record volunteer names and hours *Create form for Volunteer Coordinator to keep records of hours. Complete by August 2008*
  - v) Recognize all volunteers after each activity
  - vi) Hold annual Volunteer Appreciation Party *Start summer or fall of 2009 with Picnic in the Park*
  - vii) Ask current volunteers to bring a friend or co-worker with them when they volunteer for CPHD events
- C) Maintain and expand membership
- i) Send annual renewal notices in a timely manner *1<sup>st</sup> notice to be mailed December, 2<sup>nd</sup> notice mid January of each year*
  - ii) Create a database of residents and property owners *Get intern to update existing list. Complete by end of 2010.*
  - iii) Form a mailing list database for activities *Email database to send notices. Intern can also compile this list.*
  - iv) Prepare a plan to increase membership *Committee to complete plan by Fall 2008.*
  - v) A representative of the membership committee should be at all events to encourage joining CPHD.
- D) Maintain existing funding sources
- i) Maintain sponsorship opportunities program for all CPHD events
  - ii) Investigate ways to increase revenue from existing events *Consider presale of tickets and credit card acceptance. Also investigate add on activities to existing events such as a pre-tour brunch at one of the B&B's*
  - iii) Investigate ways to increase revenue from the Artifacts Bank
    - a. Promote bi-annual sales including outside of Berks County
    - b. Institute program for consignment and internet sales
    - c. Contact construction companies for donations and purchases. *Construct database and send letters and brochures by Fall 2008.*

- d. Advertise Artifacts Bank in Reading Eagle Home Editions (Spring & Fall)  
*Investigate Summer 2008*
  - e. Attend Berks Builders Home Show and other such events that promote home renovations
  - f. Place photos of select items on website. *Begin by end of 2008.*
- E) Develop new funding opportunities/activities
- i) Identify new funding sources (i.e. foundations, grants, government agencies, additional special events, etc. *Form a Fund Development Committee to help identify sources. Form by Fall 2008. One idea is a fundraising Arts & Crafts Auction with items donated from A & A Fair vendors.*
  - ii) Create a comic book for children using Fritz Rothermel's house drawings that will educate children about architectural styles and design elements *Begin design work by Fall 2008. Complete project by end of 2009.*
  - iii) Develop a series of note cards with Fritz Rothermel's house drawings. *Complete first series by September 2008*
  - iv) Investigate history related bus trips *Ask for volunteer to investigate costs, etc. for 2009 season*
  - v) Penn Square memorabilia fund raiser

## Addendum

The Centre Park Historic District, Inc, established when the District was formed in 1982, has always had goals projects and activities at its core. However, those goals were never incorporated into a written document. By the year 2000, it was deemed necessary to have an official Strategic Plan. Several strategic planning sessions were held beginning with the first session on March 30, 2001 and ending with the adoption of the organization's first Strategic Action Plan on August 5, 2002. The Centre Park Historic District Strategic Plan has since been revised several times on an almost yearly basis. It is often useful to acknowledge major goals that have been achieved since beginning the strategic planning process. The following is a list of some of those major goals.

Establish Block Captain Program. *Established December 2003*

Conduct quality of life survey of District. *Completed Fall 2002*

Meet with Codes and Police Departments to request their help in addressing neighborhood complaints. *Beginning in 2003 there has been an ongoing cooperative effort, which has included neighborhood meetings with City department heads; neighborhood codes sweeps and the introduction of street sweeping in the District.*

Design a complaint form for neighborhood concerns and place on website. *Completed January 2003*

Form a Welcome/Membership Committee. *Completed January 2003*

Acquire a building for the Artifacts Bank, CPHD office and community meeting space. *Building acquired March 2005*

**(It should be noted that after the acquisition of our Headquarters Building, much work was also done to the building. Work included the restoration of both the front façade and interior office room, as well as building the Community Meeting Room and the handicap accessible bathroom, all of which was not part of the Strategic Plan but was certainly a major effort)**

Expand the Artifacts Bank operation. *Number of days and hours expanded June 2005.*

Complete Centre Park renewal project begun in 1999. *Completed phase 1,2,3,4. in 2004*

Enhance southern entrance to District (Gateway Garden Project). *Completed Fall 2007*

Establish computerized accrual accounting system and develop an annual budget. *Completed December 2002*

Establish filing system for CPHD records. *Completed Summer 2003*

Develop a Sponsorship Opportunities Program for all CPHD events. *Completed Spring 2004*

Compile a welcome packet to be distributed to new residents. *Completed Spring 2005*

Establish and implement a recognition policy for appropriate improvements to District properties. *Started with Preservation Week Celebration 2005*