

LAKEWOOD HERITAGE ADVISORY BOARD



1999 ANNUAL REPORT

The year 1999 represented the third full year of operation of the Lakewood Heritage Advisory Board (LHAB). The Board successfully continued its efforts in the areas of public education, legislative assistance, and technical assistance to the Lakewood community.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

◆ **Hosted workshop on the Sacred Landmarks of Lakewood.** Approximately 60 persons attended this September 15, 1999 workshop, which was cosponsored by the Lakewood Historical Society and the Cleveland Restoration Society. The workshop was held in conjunction with the Lakewood Historical Society's Sacred Landmarks Tour, and advance publicity included a cover story in *The Plain Dealer Saturday Your Home Magazine*. The workshop included slide shows on the history and architecture of all the religious buildings in Lakewood, as well as information and recommendations for repairing and maintaining a religious building while preserving its architectural character. A packet of information was available free to attendees, courtesy of the Sacred Landmarks Program of the Cleveland Restoration Society. Special invitations mailed to religious congregations in Lakewood resulted in a number of congregations being present at the workshop and several requests for technical assistance to the Restoration Society program. The workshop was videotaped by the Lakewood Community Video Center.

Based on the time contributed by LHAB members, LHAB estimates that the slide show has a value of approximately \$3,000.

◆ **Continued internet site in cooperation with the Lakewood Public Library.** The LHAB site features a bibliography of materials in the categories of general restoration and maintenance, architectural styles, and architectural history. The purpose of the guide is to serve as an easy reference source for Lakewood residents, providing information about old houses and how to maintain, repair, and improve them inside and out, while being respectful of the architecture and design of the house. The listings include magazines and books held in the collection of the Lakewood Public Library, as well as a link to National Park Service publications.

Another highlight of the site is the complete text of the LHAB's popular *Front Porches of Lakewood* publication.

The site recorded a substantial number of visits during 1999. For the entire year, 1,261 visits were recorded to the home page, ranging from 56-222 per month. The *Front Porches of Lakewood* publication recorded an even higher 2,026 visits for 1999, ranging from 43-324 per month.

The address of the LHAB site is <http://www.lkwdpl.org/homepres>.

◆ **Continued speakers bureau and publication distribution.** LHAB members are available to offer programs to community groups on a variety of topics.

The successful *Front Porches of Lakewood* publication continues to be popular, with

approximately 260 copies distributed during 1999. For example, the publication was provided to participants in the annual City of Lakewood Realtors Tour, Help-To-Others (H20) luncheon, Sacred Landmarks workshop, and LHAB members. More than 500 copies of the *Front Porches of Lakewood* have been distributed since its publication.

LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANCE

◆ **Porch railing height.** At the request of the Housing Committee of Lakewood City Council, LHAB provided technical assistance for a potential ordinance that would help preserve the architectural character of thousands of Lakewood homes. The height of original porch railings on Lakewood homes is typically in the range of 26 to 32 inches. In contrast, the Lakewood building code requires that if a new porch railing is built, or more than half of the material in an existing porch railing is replaced, the new rail must meet the current code height requirement of 36 inches at the first story and 42 inches at the second story. This provision has created many railings that are out of proportion to traditional existing Lakewood porches and result in the look of a “playpen.”

LHAB provided excerpts of applicable rehabilitation regulations from the *Massachusetts State Building Code* (1979), which has been used as a model for subsequent rehabilitation codes, including San Francisco, Chicago, and the International Conference of Building Official’s *Uniform Code for Building Conservation*. In these codes, repair or replacement of building features are allowed, so that the architectural qualities of buildings are not compromised. The Massachusetts code also permits reconstruction of original buildings features that have been removed, based on evidence such as old photographs, pieces stored on the property, or physical evidence such as nail holes, paint ridges, and paint shadows.

It is important to note that this type of regulation does not increase the safety hazard posed by a building. In Lakewood, property owners are not seeking to lower the height of porch railings; instead, many homeowners are simply trying to retain the design of the railing as it has existed for the past 70 to 110 years. LHAB looks forward to working with City Council and the Mayor’s Office during 2000 to offer alternatives to Lakewood homeowners working to preserve their front porches.

◆ **Sandstone sidewalks.** At the request of the Public Works Committee of Lakewood City Council, LHAB was asked to prepare a position statement concerning sandstone sidewalks, their relationship to the heritage of Lakewood, and recommendations to address this issue.

LHAB believes that the character and charm of Lakewood is created not only by its buildings, but also the relationship of buildings to their front yards, sidewalks, treelawns, and streets. Sandstone sidewalks, like street trees, are part of the character of the community and should be preserved when possible. As these sidewalks are removed, part of the ambiance of Lakewood is permanently lost. Preservation however, must be balanced with the need for public safety in a pedestrian-oriented, densely populated community, as well as take into consideration the cost to public works projects.

Among its recommendations, LHAB suggested options such as:

- ▶ allow homeowners to level existing sandstone slabs or install new slabs as a solution to a sidewalk repair citation;
- ▶ continue to permit property owners to claim their own sandstone slabs if removal is necessary due to a City-sponsored sidewalk replacement project; and

- ▶ institute a City stockpile program, similar to Shaker Heights, permitting owners to obtain removed slabs for their personal use.

The City Engineer and the Department of Public Works have researched the various aspects of the issue and have presented their views to the Public Works Committee, including ideas on implementing some of the LHAB recommendations. LHAB will continue to participate with City Council, the City Engineer, and the Department of Public Works to create choices for Lakewood property owners concerning the retention and installation of sandstone sidewalks.

◆ **Demolition delay.** In February, 1999, Lakewood City Council approved Ordinance 49-98, which amended Chapter 1133 of the Zoning Code by changing the current procedure of the Building Department concerning the issuance of a demolition permit immediately upon request. The ordinance creates specific steps that an applicant needs to complete to obtain a demolition permit for a building located in areas zoned Office, Retail, General Business, or Industrial. The ordinance also provides guidance to the Lakewood Architectural Board of Review concerning the design of a replacement building, and requires the applicant to participate in good faith discussions with the City and other interested parties concerning preservation of the existing building.

LHAB provided background information on demolition delay ordinances throughout the country, provided written information on possible provisions of the ordinance, and participated in Council committee meetings.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

◆ **Residential Design Guidelines.** The ad hoc committee composed of members of LHAB and the Lakewood Architectural Board of Review continued to work with the staffs of the Department of Planning and Development and the Building Department on revisions to the *Lakewood Home Improvement Guide*. City staff has completed a draft revision of building code related material. LHAB and the Architectural Board of Review representative have completed draft narratives within the broader topics of: maintenance considerations for older houses; aesthetic considerations in maintaining, repairing, and building additions on older houses; and an illustrated guide of common architectural styles in Lakewood. Publication of the revised and expanded *Lakewood Home Improvement Guide* is anticipated during 2000.

◆ **Initiated project to survey all buildings located in commercial and industrial zoning districts for their historic and architectural value.**

With the passage of the previously described Ordinance 49-98, LHAB members realized that other city boards and commissions—particularly the Architectural Board of Review—city staff, and the general public could benefit from having a database of information concerning the relative architectural and historic significance of all the buildings in commercial and industrial zoning districts. This information would make developers, businesses, and property owners aware early in the site consideration phase whether a broader community consensus exists concerning the retention of specific buildings.

To meet this need to proactively provide guidance, LHAB prepared a proposal to undertake a survey of the approximately 720 structures within the city affected by the new ordinance. The survey will inventory the age

and design characteristics of the buildings, and assess their architectural and historic qualities. The result would be to assign one of three possible designations to each building, identifying its relative priority for preservation. The proposal received the support of both City Council and the Administration.

LHAB estimates that a project of this scale, if completed by an outside consultant, would cost \$40,000-\$45,000. In comparison, the estimated cost for completion by LHAB—through volunteer efforts—is approximately \$1,200. To help defray the project cost, LHAB worked with the Department of Planning and Development to obtain a grant in late 1999 from the Preservation Resource Center of Northeast Ohio.

This project will be completed during 2000.

◆ **Provided information on the benefits of listing Lakewood on the National Register of Historic Places.** At the request of Lakewood City Council, LHAB provided to both City Council and the Administration information on the National Register of Historic Places. The information also included a summary of the federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit and the pending Historic Homeownership Assistance Act, which have benefits available to listed properties. The information also included copies of a report documenting the economic benefits of historic preservation.

◆ **Offered technical assistance to five requests on maintenance and rehabilitation issues.** Through direct inquiries to LHAB members and referrals from City departments, LHAB members responded by telephone, with written materials, and/or site visits to Lakewood homeowners on topics that included exterior paint color schemes, front porch repair, metal window weatherstripping, architectural metal for front step railings, and fireplace mantel

restoration. These requests are in addition to the requests for technical assistance made by several Lakewood church congregations as a result of the previously described Sacred Landmarks workshop.

ADMINISTRATIVE

In January, 1999, Lakewood City Council reappointed two LHAB members, James Dolce and Richard Sicha, to four-year terms. In July, 1999, LHAB welcomed one new member, Rhonda Loje, appointed by the Lakewood Historical Society to fill the unexpired term of one their appointees.

In August, 1999, LHAB received the resignation of Mary Lou Call, an appointee of the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce. The Board would like to express its appreciation to Ms. Call for her involvement.

1999 LAKEWOOD HERITAGE ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Mary Lou Call
James Dolce, Vice-Chairman and Secretary
Sandy Koozer
Rhonda Loje
Paula Reed
Heather Rudge
Richard Sicha, Chairman

The seven members of the Board are appointed by the Mayor's Office, Lakewood City Council, Lakewood Historical Society, and the Lakewood Chamber of Commerce.

This annual report is prepared in accordance with Ordinance 50-95, Section 6.