

7.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 SUMMARY, DISCOVERIES MADE

The opportunity to undertake this project was valuable in continuing the leadership of the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission and Planning Department in their service to the Town's property owners and visitors. Their work has been effective, as exemplified by the high number of previously surveyed and designated resources from the 1990's that remain today. Only five resources have been lost. This also reflects the good relationship that has been maintained by the Historic Preservation Commission with the SHPO over time that has benefited the Town.

The most significant discoveries have been finding state tax credit program-eligible census tracts, their number, and their extent; discovering the fascinating history of the original sub-divisions called to attention by researching the Alberta Drive and Albion Avenue blocks; and seeing and appreciating the diversity of the Town's architecture across its nearly 200 years of settlement and growth.

The year 2018 is the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Town of Amherst in 1818. Next year is an opportunity to build on the recognition of its past by the public and civic leaders to continue and enhance the Town's character and reputation as being a fine place in which to live and to visit.

7.2 1998 HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY UPDATE

A total of 76 blue rated resources from the 1998 Intensive Level Survey were updated with new photos, conditions and information. Any noted changes to architectural or historic significance were noted. Over 90% of the resources still maintain their architectural and historic significance and would meet established criteria for Local Landmarking. See Appendix 2 for inventory forms.

Structures No Longer Meeting Local Landmarking Criteria:

1. 1990 Dodge Road (due to significant alterations)

Lost Historic Resources: Here is the list of structures so far observed to no longer be there, either demolished or lost through fire or other means:

1. Brenon Rd – Kramer's General Store
2. 1899 Campbell Blvd
3. 6325 Main Street
4. 6720 Main Street
5. 265 Reist – Reist Mill

7.3 2017 INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY OF SELECTED PROPERTIES

A total of 65 new blue-rated resources were inventoried as part of the Intensive Level Survey. These are resources that are included in the *Updated Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources* (KTA Preservation Specialists/Archaeological Survey, August 2011) that do not appear in the current *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources, Town of Amherst, Erie County, New York* (1998). See Appendix 3 for inventory forms.

7.4 POTENTIAL NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS

This survey work included surveying 2 blue-rated districts that are included in the 2011 *Updated Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources* that do not appear in the 1998 *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources*: the Alberta Drive district (43 properties) and the Albion Avenue district (39 properties).

Though assigned to survey just a block on Alberta Drive and on Albion Drive, we found those blocks to be representative of two, larger potential historic districts. These are described more fully in Section 5 and Section 6.

7.5 STATE TAX CREDIT - QUALIFYING CENSUS TRACTS

It has not been generally known that the Town of Amherst has census tracts that qualify for the New York State Historic Tax Credit programs. We found nine tracts that qualify, and they cover perhaps as much as 40% of the Town's land area, though not a majority of its buildings.

Promoting use of these programs will benefit property owners and the Town by attracting investments in historic buildings that are supported by the state and federal governments. The Town benefits from increased construction activity in existing buildings, reducing the impact on Town infrastructure caused by new building, and the review and approval processes to access the historic tax credits ensure that building alterations will enhance the historic character of buildings and historic districts, which retains and increases real estate value.

New York State has two historic tax credit programs, the commercial and homeowner programs. An overview of each one follows.

The program for the substantial, certified historic rehabilitation of a certified historic depreciable structure, known as the commercial credit program, allows state income tax credits of 20% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures of the rehabilitation project. This program is administered through the application for the federal historic tax credit, which is also 20%, that is available in all census tracts.

The State Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Tax Credit program allows the owner of a house listed in the National Register of Historic Places who applies for it to access

a state income tax credit of 20% of the costs of pre-approved home improvements that cost more than \$5,000, up to a credit of \$50,000.

The State Historic Preservation Office plays a crucial role in each program. Property owners should contact them before undertaking a project that desires access to the credits. More information can be found here: www.parks.ny.gov/shpo.

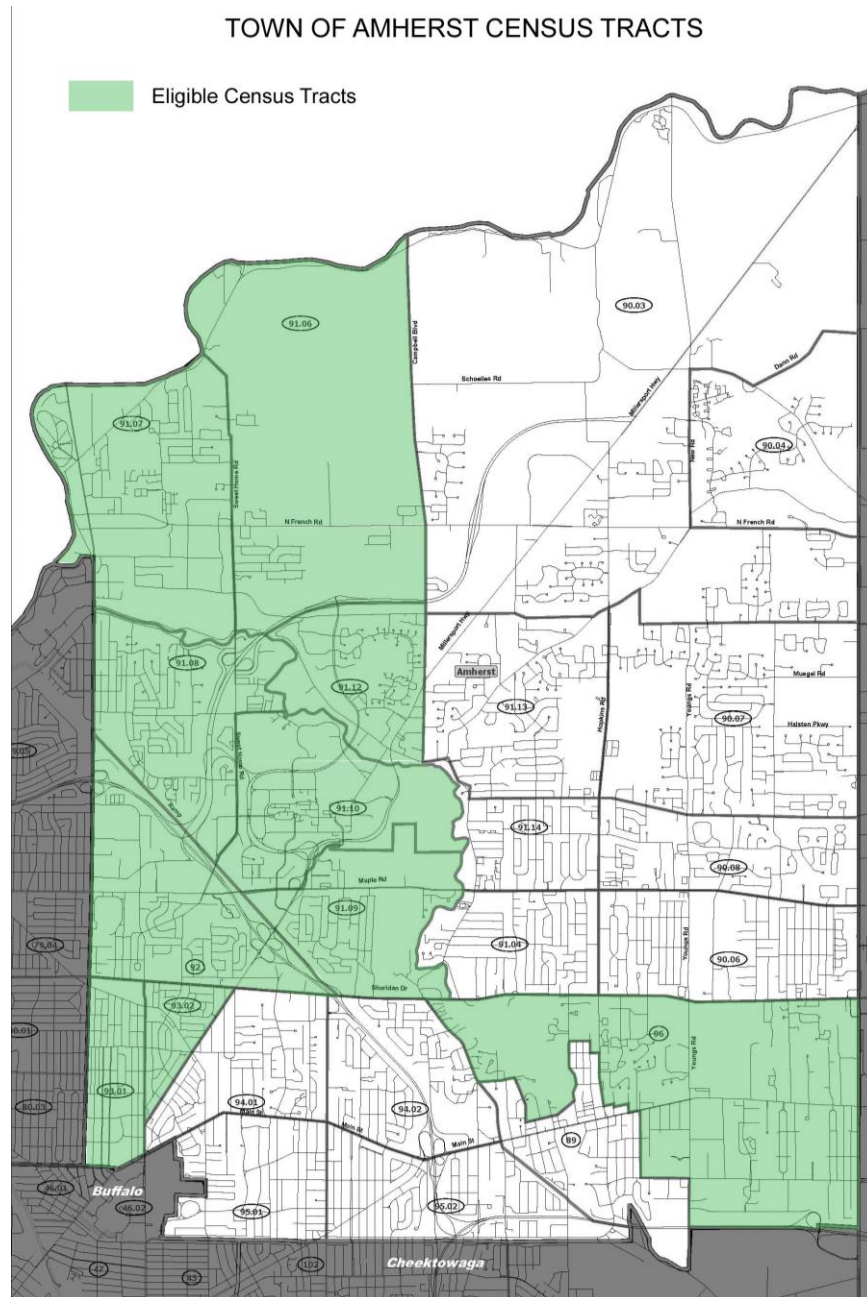


Figure 7- 1 – Map of Qualifying Census Tracts that Qualify for the State Historic Tax Credit

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority 1 - Nominate the Alberta Drive and Albion Avenue expanded potential historic districts for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as soon as possible. Listing will bring the benefits of the State Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Tax Credit program to hundreds of homeowners. This form of planning that puts money in their purses will clearly benefit them and the Town. These would be the Town's first National Register Historic Districts, a positive example for others.

Priority 2 – Make this Historic Resources Survey available to the public.

- Link this Survey to the Town's website at the Historic Preservation Commission's page.
- Prepare and mail an informational brochure to each owner of a property described in the Survey, to each Town Board member, to each Town department head and to the Police and Fire Chiefs.
- Work with the Town Assessor's Office and with the Town Building Department to "flag" historic properties described in the Survey so that owners are informed when they purchase a property and when they apply for a building permit that they are purchasing or own a historic property.

Priority 3 - Focus Historic Resources Survey and Nomination projects in census tracts that qualify for State Historic Credits. The work of this report built on the work of previous reports that focused on individual properties for a number of reasons in the past. With the awareness of the census tracts that are eligible for the state tax credit program comes the opportunity to plan a historic resources survey program for those tracts. There must be more potential National Register historic districts in the Town that would be identified with further historic resources survey work, and focusing on these tracts will use financial resources most effectively for the benefit of Amherst homeowners.

Priority 4 - Prepare a Preservation Plan. A Town-wide Preservation Plan will assist the Historic Preservation Commission to best serve the Town in identifying, recognizing, and protecting historic resources and property values. It will also assist elected and governmental officials, the Planning Board, the Amherst Industrial Development Agency, indeed all boards and commissions committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in the Town. At a time of great change in Amherst and Western New York, the process and result of preparing a Town-wide Historic Preservation Plan will benefit in helping to retain property and cultural value and in attracting new investment. The on-going and commendable planning efforts often underemphasize the role, value, and opportunity for historic preservation in achieving Town goals. Work with the SHPO to make preservation planning, especially as related to historic resources survey and nomination efforts, a fundable activity.

Priority 5 - Collaborate. Historic preservation is so important for the future of the Town of Amherst that there must be more people and organizations involved to do all that

needs to be done. We recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission take the lead in collaborating with agencies to foster collaborative relations to leverage its value Town-wide.

These include existing agencies, such as the Amherst IDA and the Amherst Chamber of Commerce, both of which are under new leadership, and both of which seek to increase the attractiveness of Amherst for growth.

Share this report with the public, the Town Board, the Planning Board, the AIDA, and others. Each agency seeks to improve the quality of life for the Town's residents and visitors, yet not everyone is aware of the value of historic preservation as a tool to achieve this goal.

We also recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission work in closer collaboration with existing agencies interested in history. The Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village is one important existing agency with whom to work even more closely. Perhaps historic preservation leaders could form a not-for-profit Amherst Historic Preservation organization, one that would focus on education and advocacy the HPC cannot undertake, funded by additional resources that the HPC cannot attract. These agencies can attract more interest, more volunteers, and more funding for historic preservation than can the Commission acting alone. For instance, a historic preservation colleague agency could present an annual "Doors Open Amherst", as has been done in many other communities.

Continue Previous Recommendations.

Continue to implement recommendations that were originally cited in the Bero Intensive Level Report as tools to protect, recognize, and revitalize the town's historic resources.

1. Designate local landmarks – local landmark designation is the best way for a property owner to access the consultation of the Historic Preservation Commission in planning appropriate alterations to a local landmark. This consultation helps the property owner benefit from the experience and knowledge of Commission members at no cost, and it benefits the Town by ensuring the owner of a landmarked property enhances its value in altering it and does not detract from property value. Local designation is the best way to protect historic properties because Commission review of proposed work provides an opportunity to "measure twice before cutting once and forever."
2. Pursue State and National Register nominations
3. Comply with state/national historic preservation laws
4. Be vigilant for potential threats
5. Share information with Town and County officials
6. Develop public education programs
7. Continue to tap into Certified Local Government (CLG) services
8. Regularly update of survey information