State of Preservation Report

State College Borough
Historic Resources Commission

Update for 2016

Introduction

Background

The Historic Resources Commission (HRC) was established in 1995 to advise Council on matters pertaining to historic resources, advocate for the preservation of those resources, and serve as a clearinghouse for information and education on such matters. They review and make recommendations on construction plans involving historic structures and work closely with the State College Planning Commission and Design Review Board. Additional duties are described in the mission statement below.

HRC Mission

It is the mission of the Commission to:

- to advise Borough Council on matters pertaining to historic resources;
- identify historic resources within the Borough of State College;
- advocate for the preservation of these historic resources; and
- serve as a clearinghouse for information and education on historic resources in the community and the preservation thereof.

Purpose of this Report

As previously stated the Historic Resources Commission's mission is to advise, advocate, and educate the general public on preservation matters. The Historic Resources Commission (HRC) is committed to supporting these goals and fostering an appreciation for our rich and unique 20th century heritage. This report stresses the benefits of historic preservation, highlights losses, as well as accomplishments, in the community, and provides a set of activities which the HRC will focus on in the future.

Currently the Commission works to fulfill its mission through a variety of tasks. These include ongoing efforts such as the approval of plaque applications and maintenance of the HRC website. Future projects, such as evaluating potential National Register Historic Districts properties, are also a part of our mission. More detail and insight will be provided on these projects later in the Report.

The HRC recognizes historic preservation and neighborhood preservation are linked. There are some property owners that also embrace the concepts in the HRC mission by completing successful projects that have embraced neighborhood preservation and their positive impact on neighborhood preservation, such as: the revitalization of a historic home in the 100 block of East Hartswick; the restoration of 317 East Hartswick; the survival of; new construction at 700 West College Avenue, renovation of Beta Theta Pi at 220 North Burrowes Street and the conversion of a single-family home at 334 South Atherton Street into an attorney's office.

The Commission as an advisory board and therefore does not have the ability to

require preserving contributing structures in the Borough Historic Districts and historic properties outside the historic districts. The commission does review projects that involve all or partial demolitions, to be made aware of what activities are impacting contributing buildings in the Borough. In the last two years two contributing buildings in the Holmes Foster/ Highlands Historic District were demolished. No contributing buildings in the Borough were lost to fire. In the last two years three contributing buildings were partially demolished to modernize, repair or expand the buildings.

The Commission tracks these contributing properties and other properties of interest that have been lost to demolition or fire. A complete listing and a map illustrating the location of these properties is provided at the end of this report in Appendix A.

There are additional properties that are threatened to be demolished. The historic properties that the Commission believes are threatened are the Post House and the Train Station adjacent to North Atherton Street. However, no proposals have been submitted to demolish either.

The losses and potential losses are the greatest incentive the HRC has for reaffirming its commitment to educate the public on preservation issues and to advocate for more diligent stewardship of these resources. The HRC believes it is worth noting that loses will not always be replaced and continued efforts must be made to maintain the integrity of the Historic Districts. Education can lead to appreciation, and this appreciation can in turn lead to advocacy in support of preservation. In order to provoke appreciation, there are some benefits that land owners and members of the community should be aware of and commission members can help providing this awareness.

Benefits of Historic Preservation

There are a number of benefits that a region with emphasis on historic preservation can enjoy. These benefits can affect the economy of the area, the community of locals, and the natural environment at large.

- *Economic Benefits*- Multiple reports indicate the economic benefits of historic preservation. Not only is economic impact felt, but jobs are created, and state tax revenue is generated. A report released in Pennsylvania dated February 22nd 2012 states that the annual average economic impact of historic preservation efforts in the state is 534 million dollars, along with the creation of 4,600 jobs, and 12 million dollars generated in state tax revenue. A similar report released in Georgia states that during a five year period of rehabilitating properties 7,550 jobs were created and 201 million dollars were generated in earnings.

  Heritage tourism can also have great economic impact. The “Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation Activities in Pennsylvania” (link: http://www.preservationpa.org/page.asp?id=50) report states that in a year an average of 1 billion dollars account for total visitor spending, 2.9 billion dollars account for total expenditure, and 37,000 jobs are accounted for in total employment. 90 million dollars are also generated in state tax revenue due to heritage tourism in PA. These multiple reports serve to highlight the potential importance of historic sites to a region’s economy.

- *Community Benefits*- Members of the community who live in a historic district tend to experience an increase in property value. Historic landscapes or buildings add certain uniqueness to the area in which they are located. Through learning, understanding, and displaying the historic subtleties of the area, a sense of pride is incited. Older communities can experience revitalization, improving the safety and security of its citizens.

- *Environmental Benefits*- Historic buildings transition easily into green buildings. The fact that no new resources are being used, nor is there any significant amount of construction work in the process of preserving or repairing older homes, means it is a form of sustainable development. Preserving historic buildings also means preserving the natural environment; urban sprawl into the countryside is prevented, thus conserving natural green space. In a way, the preservation of historic buildings is the highest form of recycling.

Accomplishments

- *Draft HARB Ordinance* – The Commission spent time developing a HARB ordinance. Final edits are needed and a submission to PHMC is required for work to continue in 2017.
- *Merging of Historic Resources Commission with Design Review Board* – Borough council enacted an ordinance to merge these two ABCs in 2016. It is anticipated that there will be some challenges the merger and will need to be addressed in 2017.
- *Historic District Plaque Program*- Since the inception of the program, 97 plaques have been requested. Four plaques were requested in 2016.
- *HRC website*- The HRC website can be found as a part of the Borough's website. It is updated periodically with information about the Borough's history and architecture
- *Demolition of contributing structures and enclosures of porches on contributing properties*- The HRC is informed on the demolition of structures and provides advisory input. The locations of these demolitions are shown in an attached map. Alterations are reviewed by the Commission. Many times changes made are in keeping with the style of the property. The commission makes suggestions to further enhance the proposal. Appendix B notes information on partial demolitions.
- *Signag*e- Historic District Signs have been implemented throughout the Borough, thanks to efforts from the HRC and the Neighborhood Association Presidents. Installations began in 2007 and the majority of the signs have been installed based on the budget for the project.
- *National Register Historic District*- The importance of registering historic districts, buildings, or sites is well understood by the State College Borough. The initial submission for expansion of the College Heights Historic District has been submitted for initial review by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The PHMC received the inventory and had comments that the area would be considered too large and additional information would be needed.

- *Historic Streetscape*- Street trees present among historic districts add quality and character to the districts. Some of these face infestations and diseases; the Commission fully supports the Tree Commission in maintaining these street trees as part of the Borough's historic district.

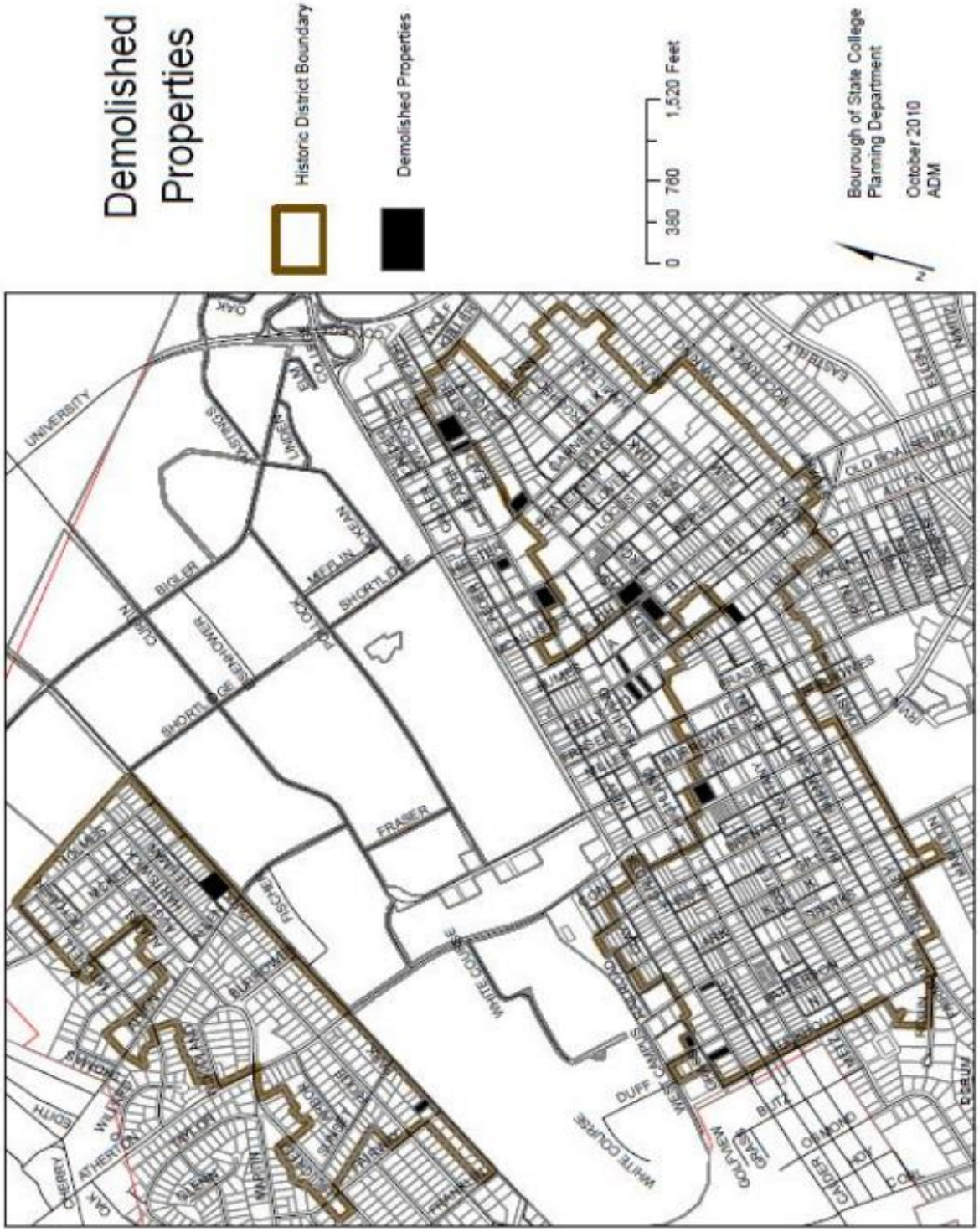
- *Coordination with the Planning Commission*- The HRC provides feedback to the Design Review Board and the Planning Commission when required.

<u>Continued Tasks and Future Projects</u>

- *Public Education and awareness*- The Commission has worked to provide information by discussing potential projects and holding meetings on these projects. Efforts can be taken to ensure that citizens of the community learn about the historic districts located in the Borough. Education of the architectural and geographic history can stimulate sentiments of pride, leading to a stronger sense of community. The Borough recognized May as Historic Preservation month on the Borough web page. This resulted in local television coverage of our contributing buildings.
- *Mid-Century Inventory*- Houses built between 1945 and 1960 are of great interest to the Borough's historic preservation efforts. During the period following World War II, from 1946 to 1966, the Borough experienced great expansion in its populations, as well as its landscape and buildings. The homes and architecture created during this period will continue to be reviewed for consideration as contributing properties. Staff has not been able to make progress on this project due to limited time available to devote to this effort.
- *Walking and House Tours*- Organized tours of specific historic houses and walking tours of historic neighborhoods will create increased appreciation of architectural historic site. This appreciation can raise advocacy of the citizens in favor of historic preservation. If the commission is willing, they can assist with future tours. None are known at this time.
- *Historic House Plaque Programs*- Plaques for historic households help in educating and raising awareness for preservation. Planning staff aids property owners in researching historical information on the structure. The text for the plaque, which contains the historical information of the structure, is then approved by the HRC. Approval of applications for properties within the Holmes-Foster/Highland and College Heights District will be reviewed.

- *HRC Website*- The website, a part of the State College Borough website, will experience continued updates, creating a learning environment for those interested in the history of the Borough.
- *Joint HRC/IFC Projects*- Many fraternity houses have historic significance. With that in mind, when the opportunity presents itself working with the IFC to promote preservation and schedule house tours is in our best interest. Being that fraternities are often engaged with the community, working closely with the IFC can have multiple benefits in regards to creating a safe and walkable environment. This is no longer an active project for the commission.
- *Advise property owners*- Advice will be given to owners who submit demolition plans or enclosures of porches. Maps will also be updated in response to any contributing properties lost or demolished.
- *Continued Evaluation of Properties*- Properties that could potentially contribute to the existing historic districts will be reviewed and amended to the National Register Historic Districts.
- *HARB* – The new Board in 2017 is anticipated to continue work on this effort after review by the PHMC.

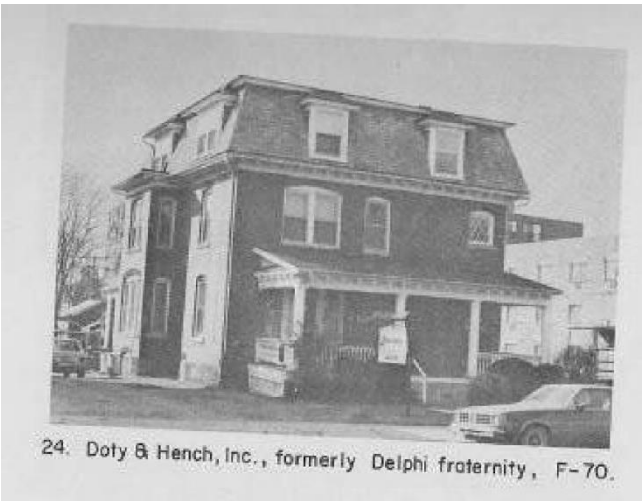
Appendix A


Demolished Properties
Historic District Boundary
Demolished Properties
0 380 760 1,520 Feet
Bourough of State College
Planning Department
October 2010
ADM
N
UNIVERSITY
BIGLER
SHORTLOCK
MERLIN
FRASER
WHITE COURSE
DUFF
BLITZ
GRAY
COLLEGE
CALDER
OAK
CHERRY
EDITH
ATHERTON
WILLARD
HOLMES
BURROWS
FISCHER
EAST
WEST
CAMPUS
PARKING
GARDEN
PLACE
OLD MAIN
ALLEN
EASTMAY
MAYNARD
WALNUT
PENN
FRANKLIN
FOREST
PARK
BIG BOWL
LOCUST
LOCK
HILL
ROSS
ADAMS
BEAVER
HIGH
PRESIDENT
PATTERSON
BURROWS
WILLOW
ELM
LAMBERT
MCALLISTER
HOSPITAL
ROAD

List of Contributing Properties Lost

In 1995 there were 1005 properties listed in the Holmes Foster/Highlands and College Heights National Register Districts. In 2010, 15 years later, there are 981 remaining. The following is a list of losses within and outside of our historic districts that have been demolished since 1995:

1. 314 South Pugh Street - Doty & Hench House



Today

2. 301 South Pugh Street - John Henszey House – c. 1940, 2 story brick frame apartment complex, possible slate roof, Colonial Revival style

3. 319 South Pugh Street - Dr. Harry's House – c. 1910, 3 story, frame house with brick façade, asphalt shingle roof, Colonial Revival style

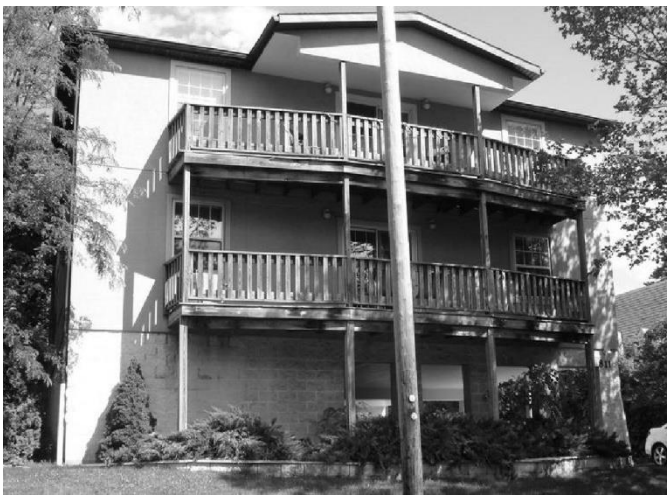
Today 301 and 319 S. Pugh Street

4. 236 South Allen Street - Robison House

5. 237 South Allen Street - Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity

6. 811 West College Avenue - Margaretta Way House – c. 1920 – 2½ story brick frame house, dormers, wooden shingle roof, Colonial Revival style

Today



7. 224 Locust Lane - Hillel House

8. 329 East Beaver Avenue - Sigma Tau Gamma Fraternity

9. 514 East Beaver Avenue - Single Family House – c. 1920 – 2½ story brick house

Today

10. 518 East Beaver Avenue - Abramson House – c. 1925, 2 story frame house, stone and clapboard siding, Dutch Colonial style

Today

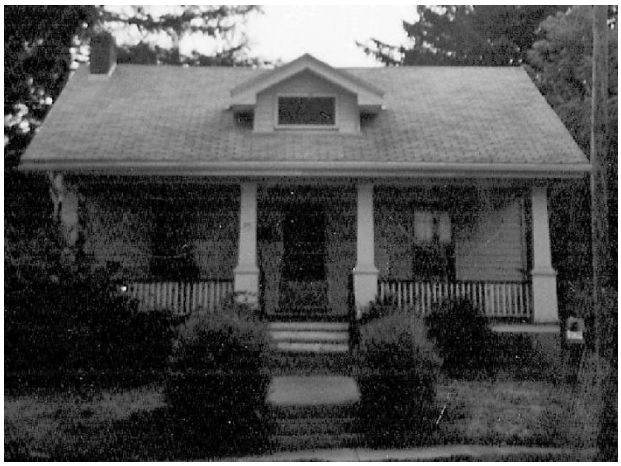
11. 524 East Beaver Avenue - Single Family House – c. 1925, 2 story brick frame house, Sears home, Tudor Revival style

Today

12. 530 East Beaver Avenue - Single Family House – c. 1935, 1½ story, brick frame structure, asphalt and slate shingle roof, Colonial Revival-Cape Cod style

Today

13. 241 South Atherton Street - Single Family House – c. 1922, 1 story frame bungalow, wood siding, Sears home (The Sunshine model)



14. 245 South Atherton Street - M.T. Lewis House – c. 1922, 1 story frame bungalow, wood siding, Sears home

Today 235, 241 and 245 South Atherton Street

15. 500 South Allen Street

Today

16. 121 N. Patterson Street

Today

17. 223 South Garner Street – Mildred Fowler House – c. 1925, 2 story Colonial Revival stone home

Today

18. 229 South Garner Street – Neil Fleming House – 1925, 2 ½ story Dutch Colonial wood frame home

Today

19. 700 West College Avenue – Earl Meyers – 1915, 2 ½ story Colonial Revival wood frame home

Today

20. 500 East Beaver Avenue – Benjamin Hanns – 1920, 2 ½ story brick home

Today

21. 445 West Park Avenue – Benjamin Hanns – 1920, 2 ½ story brick home

Today

22. 204 North Burrowes Street

Today

23. 113 East Park Avenue – Vernacular Queen Anne, 1905

24 & 25. 117 and 123 East Park Avenue – California Bungalow, 1923 and Vernacular, 1907

113, 117, and 123 East Park Avenue Today

26. 412 and 418 West College Avenue – 1948, Georgian and 1910, Vernacular

Proposed

APPENDIX B

In addition, to demolished buildings portion of buildings have been demolished. These have occurred for a number of reasons. The most common are repairs, improving living space or building expansion. Enclosing porches also requires advisory review by the Commission.

Below is a list of contributing buildings that had partial demolition activity or porch enclosure activity:

- 805 Holmes Street – remove room and garage
- 434 West College Avenue – enclose porch
- 230 South Sparks Street – remove porch pillars
- 218 Adams Avenue – porch enclosure
- 423 West Park Avenue – remove porch garage and small building wing
- 732 West Nittany Avenue – remove porch
- 804 West Fairmount – remove porch
- 617 Sunset Road – remove first story roof
- 720 West College Avenue – remove porch
- 139 North Gill Street – remove infill on porch (see photo below)
- 229 Locust Lane - remove entrance
- 517 West Park Avenue – alterations to the home
- 200 East Beaver – demolition of chimney