

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

1.1 PROJECT SUMMARY

This Intensive Level Survey of Selected Resources in the Town of Amherst, Erie County, NY, is the report of CBCA's evaluation and documentation of selected resources identified by the Town from previously-identified significant historic resources. This project was jointly overseen by the Amherst Planning Department, the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission (AHPC), and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

By way of background, the Town of Amherst had commissioned a Reconnaissance Level Survey update in 2011 that was performed by kta preservation specialists. The purpose of this Intensive Level Survey was to follow some of the recommendations made in the 2011 Reconnaissance Survey, which identified 65 new blue-rated individual properties and 6 new historic districts that were never included in previous historic preservation surveys. This survey examined two of the six identified potential districts, Albion Avenue and Alberta Drive. In addition, this project required CBCA to update 76 of the 18-year old Intensive Level Survey of Historic Places (Bero Associates, 1998) Historic Resource Inventory Forms with current photographs and notations on any significant alterations since then.

1.2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this project were and to both advance and update information on selected historically significant properties to help the Town decision makers regarding land use and landmark designation. In the Town of Amherst, local and/or national designation provides protection to vulnerable properties by way of a zoning overlay which requires a design review process. Design review helps guide and manage proposed exterior changes and offers protection from inappropriate alterations and incompatible new construction. Results of this survey work will be used by most Town departments, including the Planning and Building Departments, in assessing permits, rezoning and other changes that could affect a property's significance. The properties and districts which are the subject of this Intensive Level Survey are all considered "blue rated," which is the highest valued attributed to a property in the Reconnaissance Survey. With detailed information in the intensive-level survey, the Town will be able to designate more properties in the future on the local and national level.

1.3 PROJECT FUNDING

This Intensive Level Historic Resources Survey of the Town of Amherst, Erie County, NY has been financed in part with Federal funds from a National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Certified Local Government Grant received through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Bureau of Community Preservation Services. This survey was also funded in part by the Town of Amherst.

1.4 PROJECT TEAM

Clinton Brown Company Architecture pc (CBCA) was contracted by the Town of Amherst to provide specialized historic preservation consulting services to prepare this Intensive Level Survey. The CBCA project team members meet or exceed the Secretary of the Interior's "*Professional Qualification Standards* (36 CFR Part 61). The project manager was Jill Nowicki, CBCA Historic Preservation Specialist. The CBCA project team also included Gina DiBella, Clinton E. Brown, FAIA, Alma O'Connell Brown, Katherine Mahoney, and Trevor Maclin. See principal resumes in Appendix 1: CONSULTANT RESUMES.

CBCA gratefully acknowledges the roles of Ellen Kost, Associate Planner, Town of Amherst; Megan Brinton, Chair, and members of the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission; and James Finelli of the NY SHPO Survey and Certified Local Government Program (CLG) Unit in leading and facilitating the success of this project.

1.5 PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This methodology statement is prepared as part of the project tasks. It outlines the research sources identified, field strategies, context development approach, and decision-making structure for the project. It includes the selection criteria used to identify surveyed properties. All project tasks and products are intended to meet the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) and National Park Service (NPS) criteria, methodology, and current standards for Historic Resource Surveys.

The survey area encompassed those properties within the Town of Amherst that were selected by the Town from properties identified in previous surveys. After a visual review of those resources, this survey identified current conditions of those resources, potentially significant historic resources, especially potential resources for local and/or State and National historic designation. Based on the buildings identified in the historic resources survey, recommendations for further research and historic designations are made.

The CBCA project team worked in full cooperation with the Town of Amherst projects leaders, especially Ellen Kost, Associate Planner, Town of Amherst; Megan Brinton, Chair, Robert Marcus, Paul Redding, and other members of the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission; and James Finelli of the NY SHPO Survey and Certified Local Government Program (CLG) Unit.

The CBCA consulted with Cynthia Van Ness, MLS, Director, Library and Archives, The Buffalo History Museum; Jennifer Nickeson, PhD, Director of Education and Museum History, Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village; Kathy Howe, Coordinator, SHPO Survey & Certified Local Government Program (CLG) Unit, who had authored a previous survey of Amherst; Chana R. Kotzin, PhD, Community Archives Project Directory, Jewish

Buffalo Archives Project; David Sherman, Amherst Town Historian; and staff in the Grosvenor (Local History) Room at the Central Library of the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library.

1.6 HISTORIC RESOURCES FIELD SURVEY

In general, buildings that are a minimum of 50 years of age are considered historic. The current survey was limited to above-ground historic resources which could be viewed from the street. Prehistoric and historic archaeological sites were outside the scope of this study. CBCA prepared a survey area base map and then used the map in the field to locate and record significant properties.

According to the *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* bulletin issued by the National Park Service, as paraphrased by the SHPO, *Intensive-level surveys include historical research on the surveyed properties that provides the information needed for determining which properties (both individual properties and historic districts) are eligible for historic designations*, adding to the information previously developed in the reconnaissance level work.

Selection criteria and guidelines were followed to guide the selection of those properties within the specific survey area determined by the Town of Amherst and the SHPO, based on the National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation and the Town of Amherst landmark designation criteria (The Town is a Certified Local Government.)

It should be noted that though the primary motivation of the Town was to assess local landmark status, CBCA analyzed the surveyed resources for potential National Register of Historic Places eligibility, too.

The National Register Criteria are stated as follows:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or*
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or*
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or that represent a significant distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

Town of Amherst Local Landmarking Criteria:

- A. *Contains properties which meet one or more of the criteria for designation as a landmark*
- B. *Is an area that represents several periods or styles of architecture typical of different areas of history*
- C. *Is an area that has several buildings of the same architectural period or style and thus constitutes unified architectural streetscape consistency or a significant community uniformity of style*
- D. *Is an area connected with significant events or cultural happenings or developments involving ethnic, religious groups or other groups of special historical interest; and*
- E. *By reason of possessing such qualities, constitutes a distinct section of the Town of Amherst.*

Information collected in the field for each inventoried property was recorded for use in preparing comments and recommendations. The type of information gathered for the survey included a street address, site-building-lot (SBL) number, property/owner name (if known), architectural style, architectural and stylistic details, approximate date of construction, and notes on condition and integrity, if appropriate. All inventoried properties were photographed with a digital camera. All inventoried properties are presented in the report in an annotated list of properties (Section 3). An historical overview is featured in Section 2, and highlights of findings and recommendations are included in Section 7.

1.7 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Jill Nowicki, with assistance from the Town and SHPO, directed the historic resources field survey and managed the analysis and recommendations portion of this report. Based on field observations of the survey area as well as historic research, the analysis and recommendations sections provide a means for the identification of significant properties and recommendations for their recognition and designation. Based on National Register Criteria for Evaluation, these properties are recommended for local designations or for nomination to the State and National Register of Historic Places.

Recommendations include identifying those buildings, sites, structures, objects or historic districts (the general resource types eligible for the National Register) that appear to meet the National Register Criteria as outlined above. National Register Bulletin 16A: *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, issued by the National Park Service as a guide to understanding and completing nominations for the National Register of Historic Places, defines a building as “a resource created principally to shelter any form of human activity, such as house.” It defines a site as a

“location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure, whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological value regardless of the value of any existing structure.” A structure is defined as “a functional construction made for purposes other than creating shelter, such as a bridge.” Objects are defined as “a construction primarily artistic in nature or relatively small in scale and simply constructed, such as a statue or milepost.” An historic district is defined as “a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.”

Specifically, for the Town of Amherst, several individual buildings as well as historic districts have been identified as potentially National Register eligible. These properties appear to meet the requirements for nomination to the National Register, including being at least 50 years old and retaining integrity to the original building materials, design and architecture. CBCA has made these recommendations based on the National Register Criteria and our over 20 years of experience in this field, however the determinations of eligibility for the National Register are ultimately in the hands of the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service.

As a Certified Local Government, the Town of Amherst has the power to establish both individual local landmarks and local historic districts under Chapter 121, Historic Preservation, of the Town Code. Any building or district recommended as potentially National Register eligible could also be considered for local landmark designation by the Town and the Historic Preservation Commission, working closely with property owners. Local historic districts can also be submitted to the National Park Service for certification for tax purposes, making them potentially eligible for the New York State commercial and residential historic rehabilitation tax credit programs, should they fall within a qualifying census tract. For additional information on the tax credit programs, refer to <https://parks.ny.gov/shpo/tax-credit-programs/>.

The bibliography (Section 8) represents a working list of sources used in developing the historical and architectural overview, and those that were useful in documenting historical facts about the resources that were subject of the historic resource survey. Community involvement and participation were led by the Town of Amherst Historic Preservation Commission, particularly its Chair, Megan Brinton. CBCA principal Clinton Brown, FAIA, made a presentation to the Work Session of the Town Board at its regular meeting at the start of the project to describe the project process. There were good questions about the project and no concerns. He will make another presentation to the Town Board at the end of the project. No members of the community have provided any questions about the project.