
METHODOLOGY

The Town of Amherst and the Amherst Historic Preservation Commission initiated the Updated Reconnaissance Level Survey of the Town of Amherst. This survey updates the *Reconnaissance Level Survey of Historic Resources*, Town of Amherst, Erie County, New York, 1997 by Bero Associates Architects.¹ The intent of the present survey is to identify and evaluate historic resources within the town so as they might be considered in future town planning and preservation planning. The current survey notes those properties included in the *Intensive Level Survey of Historic Resources*, Town of Amherst, Erie Country, New York, 1998 by Bero Associates Architects.²

The Updated Reconnaissance Level Survey of the Town of Amherst “has been financed in part with federal funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute recommendation of endorsement by the Department of the Interior.”³ The project has also received partial funding from the Town of Amherst. “The activity has been administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.”

The current, updated survey was conducted as a joint effort between kta preservation specialists, Buffalo, NY and Archaeological Survey, Buffalo, NY. The persons conducting the survey and involved in the historic research are all 36 CFR qualified. The resumes of the principal investigators are included in Appendix 6.

The *Reconnaissance Level Survey*, 1997, which serves as the base document for the current study, encompassed the entire incorporated Town of Amherst, including buildings, structures, sites and objects constructed prior to 1950. The current survey re-evaluates the properties included in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey*, 1997, and documents their existing condition. The current survey also includes properties constructed prior to 1951, and gives special consideration to significant post World War II neighborhoods. The survey was limited to above-ground historic resources. Prehistoric and historic archaeological sites were outside the project scope.⁴

¹ This survey will be referenced as *Reconnaissance Level Survey*, 1997 in this document.

² This survey will be referenced as the *Intensive Level Survey*, 1998 in this document.

³ "This program receives Federal funds from the National Park Service. Regulations of the U.S. Department of the Interior strictly prohibit unlawful discrimination in departmental Federally Assisted Programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility operated by a recipient of Federal assistance should write to: Director, Equal Opportunity Program, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, P.O. 37127, Washington, D.C. 20013-7127."

⁴ Appendix 5 provides a list of *Reports of the Archaeological Survey* conducted in the Town of Amherst as a general reference archaeological resources within the town.

SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES

The selection criteria and guidelines, used in the evaluation of properties as historic resources, consider both the historic context and architectural fabric. The selection criteria and guidelines were based on the local criteria for the designation of landmarks under Amherst's *Local Law Establishing Regulations for Historic Preservation*⁵, and the National Register Criteria For Evaluation, which are contained in the National Park Service Publications: *National Register Bulletin, 15, Standards and Guidelines for Evaluation; Standards and Guidelines for Identification*⁶, and *National Register Bulletin, 24, Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*⁷.

There are five criteria for the designation of historical landmarks or historic sites as defined in Sec. 6 of the Town of Amherst's Preservation Law. Under Sec. 6 of the ordinance the Historic Preservation Commission may recommend designation of an individual property as a landmark if it:

- i. Is associated with the lives of individuals, or of people, or of events significant to the national, state, or local history; or
- ii. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, a period, or a method of construction; or
- iii. Represents the work of a master architect or designer or possesses high artistic values; or
- iv. Represents a significant or distinguished entity whose components may lack individual or special distinction; or
- v. Because of a unique location or singular physical characteristic, it represents an established and familiar visual feature in the neighborhood.

Under Sec. 6 of the ordinance the Historic Preservation Commission may recommend designation of a group of properties as a historic district if it:

- i. Contains properties which meet one or more the criteria for designation as a landmark; or
- ii. Is an area that represents several periods or styles of architecture typical of different areas of history; or

⁵ The local law establishing regulations for Historic Preservation is located in Chapter 121 of the Code of the Town of Amherst is available online at the Town of Amherst website at <http://www.amherst.ny.us>

⁶ The *National Register Bulletin, 15* is available online at the National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>

⁷ The *National Register Bulletin, 24* is available online at the National Park Service website at <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb24/>

- iii. Is an area that has several buildings of the same architectural period or style and thus constitutes a unified architectural streetscape consistency or a significant community uniformity of style; or
- iv. Is an area connected with significant events or cultural happenings or developments involving ethnic, religious groups or other groups of special historical interest; and
- v. By reason of possessing such qualities, it constitutes a distinct section of the Town of Amherst.

In order for a property to be eligible for National Register listing it must possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and:

- A. Be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

A rating system was established to provide a basis of comparison for the relative merit of properties on a town-wide and regional context. The architectural significance – locally, regionally and nationally; the architectural integrity; the integrity of the setting or context, and the historic significance – locally, regionally and nationally were all considered when evaluating a property. It should be noted that a local resource might be given a higher rating despite a loss of integrity if the resource is rare and not well represented in the town.

Each of the properties on the Annotated Lists (Appendix 1 and 2) has been assigned one of the following color codes:

- BLUE Extremely high architectural and/or historic significance. These properties would likely also meet the criteria for to be considered National Register eligible. A locally significant district. A resource that is rare and lacks individual distinction. All districts are considered Blue as are most farmsteads.

GREEN	Above average architectural and/or historical significance. May have some alterations that compromise the integrity such as replacement windows. Would possibly meet the criteria for to be considered National Register eligible.
YELLOW	Moderate architectural and/or historical significance. Has been altered, but still retains sufficient historic fabric to convey historic meaning. Important local resources. Would likely not meet the criteria for to be considered National Register eligible.

The color ratings are further qualified by the following designations:

- + More significant than the average property within its color category.
- Less significant than the average property within its color category.

RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY

The fieldwork, which was conducted in the winter and spring 2011, compares the existing condition of the historic resource to the condition, as documented in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* and *Intensive Level Survey, 1998*. The *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* identified 254 potentially significant historic resources – 245 individual properties and 9 historic districts. The *Intensive Level Survey, 1998* documented 76 individual resources or complexes that had been previously identified in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* report. The current survey also identifies resources not included in the previous surveys. The *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* divided the town into nine (9) distinct, geographically defined areas. These areas have been maintained in the current survey. The areas were field inspected to determine the existing condition of the previously documented resources, and to identify new historic resources. Alterations to historic fabric were noted.

All of the properties identified in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* that remain a historic resource, and the properties identified in the current survey were photographed and mapped following the *National Register Bulletin, 24, Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning* and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS-OPRHP) *Recommended Standards for Historic Resources Surveys*.

An overall area map, defining the location of each of the 9 Areas within the town, and individual area maps, which note the location of each resource by street address, are included in the EXISTING CONDITIONS discussion. Photographs of individual properties and representative properties from proposed districts are included in this report

(Appendix 4), and keyed by photograph number to the text. All of the individual properties, and the contributing and non-contributing properties in the proposed district are included in the GIS database submitted with this document.

The *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997* provided an identification number, and assigned a color code (blue, green or yellow) to each resource based on its relative historic and/or architectural merit. The color rating system has been maintained, and the criterion for each color code is defined above. The updated survey provides a numbering system that identifies the resource by location Area (1 through 9), type of resource (B - building, Si - site, St - structure, O - object, D - district), color code (B is blue, G is green, Y is yellow), whether the resource is a farm complex (F) and primary photo number. For example a residence (building) in Area 2, with a color code blue that is documented as photo 2-8 would be identified as: 2BB8. If the property is part of a farm complex it would be 2BBF8. If it is a Designated Local Historic Landmark the identifier has the prefix "L", for example L-2BY8. If the property is National Register eligible, the identifier would have the suffix "NRE", and if it is National Register Listed, the suffix would be "NRL". For example, L-2BG8-NRL, is a National Register Listed, designated Local Historic Landmark, in area 2, color code green, and documented by photo 2-8.

In order for the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997*, and the updated survey to work together as a comprehensive planning tool the "Annotated List of Potentially Significant Historic Resources" included in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997*, has been merged into this document, and altered where conditions have changed, or where new resources have been added. This comprehensive list is found in Appendix 1: "Annotated List of Potentially Significant Historic Resources". Appendix 2 provides, as a reference, an "Annotated List of Potentially Significant Historic Resources - New". The "new" resources were not represented in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997*. The properties listed in Appendix 2 are included in the comprehensive list found in Appendix 1. Appendix 3 provides the "Annotated List of Significantly Altered, or Demolished Resources". These properties were identified in the *Reconnaissance Level Survey, 1997*, and have since been altered and no longer retain sufficient period integrity; or they have been demolished. All of the lists identify the properties that were included in the *Intensive Level Survey, 1998*; properties designated as Local Historic Landmarks, and where applicable, the Unique Site Number (USN) of properties that have inventory forms on file at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYS-OPRHP), and their National Register eligibility status. National Register Listed properties are also identified.

The HISTORIC OVERVIEW provides a narrative description of the trends, and themes associated with the town's development. A number of primary and secondary sources were used to construct this story, however one of the most useful resources is a historic map. The historic maps prove a timeline that trace development - the construction of roads and buildings - to further an understanding of Amherst as a suburban town, and the architectural fabric⁸ which accommodated that development over time. The maps and

⁸ Architectural fabric considers stylistic trends, materiality and construction technology.

existing historic material fabric tell a physical tale, which is expanded upon by historic research. The historic maps consulted are listed, and briefly described, in the HISTORIC MAP ANALYSIS section.

GIS MAPPING & DOCUMENTATION

As a final component of the survey, each historic resource was mapped in GIS, and linked to a photograph with information including address; year built; contributing/non-contributing structures in districts; Local Historic Landmark Status; and National Register eligibility/listing data where applicable.