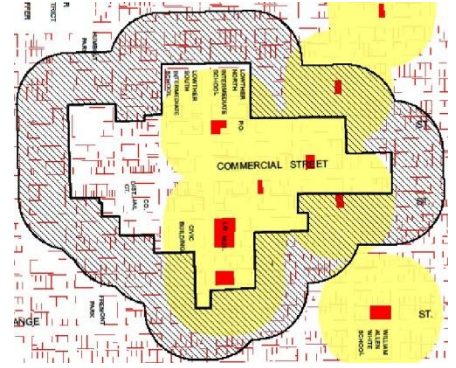


The Case for a Historic District- Part

2

As you might have guessed the formation of a Historic District includes a lot of details. More than a single article can cover... In Part 2 of "The Case for a Historic District", we will cover more basics and answer some of the more frequently asked questions during preliminary historic district discussions. We want to offer you a rational discussion and facts about Historic Districts and Historic Tax Credits while encouraging you to ask us questions, share your concerns and voice your opinion. In Emporia Main Street, we want to offer small businesses and property owners every resource possible, because we understand that small businesses employ 85% of all Kansans and represent a huge portion of our tax base. What's good for our existing businesses and buildings is good for all of us.



Does every building in a historic district have to be historic?- No. According to the State Office for Historic Preservation: *"The National Park Service requires that at least 51% of buildings in a district be classified as contributors- although a higher percentage of contributing properties is encouraged. Only contributors are eligible for rehabilitation incentives."*

Who decides if a building is contributing?- The State Office for Historic Preservation makes the final determination.

Does the public have the opportunity to comment on a Historic District nomination? YES!!! We don't want this project to sneak up on anyone... We will continue to talk about a historic district, listen to your concerns and answer your questions. According to the State Preservation Office: *"Once a National Register nomination is finalized, it must be reviewed and considered by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review. At least thirty days before the Review Board meeting when a nomination will be considered, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is required to notify all property owners and local governments and give them the opportunity to comment. If a majority of the property owners submit notarized objections, the historic district will not be listed in the National Register."* Furthermore, we will conduct public meetings and request support of local governing bodies prior to making any sort of application.

Where can I find more information about historic districts? Try these websites: The Kansas Historical Society- www.kshs.org , The National Park Service- www.nps.gov , The National Register of Historic Places- www.nps.gov/history/nr/index.htm and the National Trust for Historic Preservation- www.nationaltrust.org . You can also contact the State Historic Preservation Office, Kansas Historical Society, 6425 SW 6th Avenue, Topeka, KS 66615 (785) 272-8681 ext 240

What will this mean for local contractors? Potentially, a historic district could mean more resources available to building owners doing renovations. Those extra resources equal more construction jobs and more extensive construction projects. For example, facade projects (construction on the exterior front of a building) increased by 9% in Kansas downtowns after a historic tax credit funded project. New construction and building rehabilitations increased by 24% the two years following a historic tax credit funded project in selected downtowns. Dollars spent on new construction and building rehabilitations during the year of a historic project completion increased 157% in studied Kansas downtowns. More projects, more dollars spent and more resources available mean more opportunities for local contractors.

What will this mean for local jobs and local businesses? Because Emporia Main Street conducted extensive research of other Kansas downtowns that have utilized historic tax credit funded projects, we can provide you with the average impact experienced, but obviously results will vary. New businesses opening during the year of a historic tax credit funded project completion increased by 9% in comparison to the two years preceding the project completion in Kansas downtowns studied. In the same year, jobs grew 6% in studied downtown districts. Historic Tax credit projects also seem to have a stabilizing effect on a downtown. Businesses lost in the two years following the completion of a historic tax credit funded project dropped 42% in selected downtowns, and jobs lost dropped 36% during the same period. In

essence, these projects allow us to keep what we have AND add more jobs/businesses in a sustainable manner.

Are wage requirements for contractors attached to Historic Tax Credits, similar to wage requirements for government "stimulus" projects? No. The following explanation was provided by a tax credit expert: *"Historic tax credits are not subject to Davis-Bacon wage requirements - because technically you are not paying with government money, just getting a tax credit on the money you spend."*

So why are some people opposed to Historic Districts? People have the right to differing opinions. Most of the individuals spoken to by Emporia Main Street simply have heard different myths or misconceptions about Historic Districts or Historic Tax Credits and they are afraid that someone in the government will be telling them what to do or infringing on their property rights. However, when you study the facts, most people begin to understand that this program is designed to promote building maintenance and reward people for preserving buildings using quality materials and building techniques. People also begin to understand that all decisions are still made locally, and a process is designed to give people an opportunity to make their voices heard with their local governing bodies. There are a few people that just cannot visualize "development" as revitalizing existing buildings, but again, we have a tremendous example of what one project utilizing historic tax credits (the Granada Theatre) can do for an area (over \$7,000,000 in redevelopment in the immediate area since the completion of the theatre). Think about what we could create over most of a downtown... Think about what saving 25% through tax credits on a heating or cooling system could do for a business. Think about how much better an area would look if metal were taken off of a building exterior because incentives were available. Think about how many empty upper stories could be revitalized if building owners had access to tax credits. **Again, you can paint a building (Broadview Towers is right now), you can change building elements (ask some of our historic home owners like Deb Huth) AND you can have access to additional funding resources.**

In Part III of this subject, we will discuss how Historic Tax Credits can help local tax payers (this is definitely a WIN-WIN).

There are a lot more questions (and answers) we will cover in future articles, and more specifics about the proposed project that we will make available in the near future. What are your questions? What are your concerns? E-mail Emporia Main Street at main.street@emporia-kansas.gov or give us a call at 340-6430. Let's start a dialogue so we can choose the best way forward. With your help and your guidance, we may be able to offer property owners a new type of incentive to rehabilitate and maintain properties within the downtown area while offering a new "carrot" to potential building investors.

Do you have a question about the proposed Historic District? We want to talk to YOU! Contact Emporia Main Street at main.street@emporia-kansas.gov or give us a call at 620-340-6430.

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