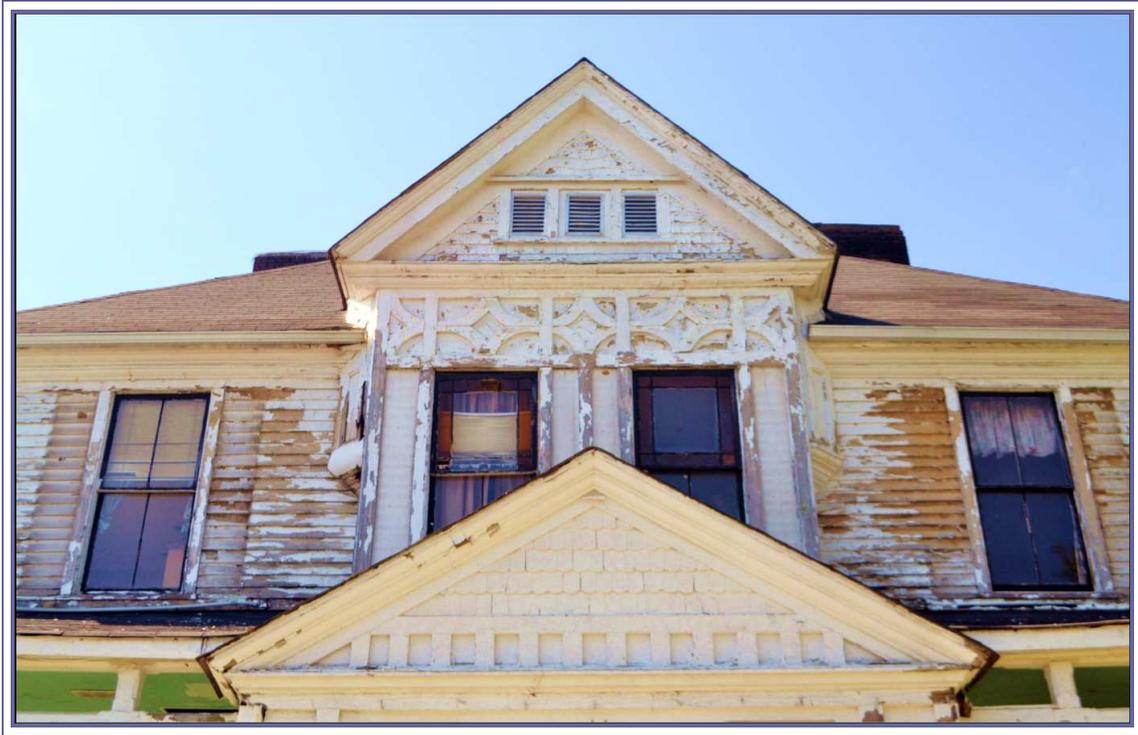


# PRESERVATION 2013

*Report to the Mayor*



*Knoxville-Knox Metropolitan Commission*  
*April 2014*

**2013 Historic Zoning Commissioners**

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Submitted to:  
***Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission***  
*April 10, 2014*

***Knoxville-Knox County Historic Zoning Commission***  
*April 17, 2014*

***Knoxville City Council***  
*May 2014*

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# State of Historic Preservation in the City of Knoxville 2013

The City’s Charter, as amended in 2002, requires that an annual report on the state of historic preservation within the City of Knoxville be reviewed by the Metropolitan Planning Commission and presented to the City Mayor.

## Historic Zoning District Overlay Background

In 1991, residents of Mechanicsville joined forces to create the city’s first residential H-1 historic district overlay. Old North Knoxville followed suit in 1992. The establishment of those districts were followed shortly thereafter with those for the Fourth & Gill, Edgewood-Park City and the Market Square historic districts. Another form of overlay zoning, designed to protect historic buildings from demolition and assure new construction is compatible with the existing, is called a *Neighborhood Conservation Overlay* (NC-1) which designates the Tazewell Pike, Scenic Drive, Fort Sanders, Fairmont Park, and Gobbler’s Knob/Sherrod Road districts. Individual historic properties are also afforded protection under the historic zoning overlay.

## Historic Zoning Commission Design Review

The Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission and MPC staff reviewed 127 requests for Certificates of Appropriateness (COAs) over the calendar year 2013, a slight increase over the previous year’s 120. The Fourth and Gill Historic District led the way with 46 applications. Market Square and Mechanicsville COA applications doubled. There were six denials of applications, of which three were revised and ultimately approved.

District	COAs Reviewed
Fourth and Gill H-1	46
Old North Knoxville H-1	25
Market Square H-1	16
Park City-Edgewood H-1	10
Old Mechanicsville H-1	10
Ft. Sanders NC-1	6
Individual properties H-1	6
Concord NC-1	3
Tazewell Pike NC-1	1
Gobbler’s Knob NC-1	1

## **ADAPTIVE REUSE PROJECTS**

### **Medical Arts Building 603 Main Street**

The Medical Arts Building, located at the corner of Main and Locust streets, was restored on the exterior and renovated on the interior during 2013 for conversion to 49 residential apartments and three retail spaces. Built in 1930, it is on the National Register of Historic Places.

The ten-story Gothic Revival building with distinctive terra cotta detailing was originally constructed as an office building for physician and dentists.

Grace Capital Group bought the building in 2006, but a failing economy caused interest in commercial tenancy to wane. A PILOT incentive approved by the Knoxville City Council in May 2013 finally facilitated redevelopment. The CBID Board approved a grant of \$155,000 to support the project.



*The distinctive arched entry of the Medical Arts Building.*

**Walker-Sherrill House 9320 Kingston Pike**

The owner of the antebellum (c. 1849) Walker Sherrill House, developer Bill Hodges, made substantial progress in 2013, addressing accessibility issues with the approval for a rear addition. The adaptive reuse focuses on preserving the most important components of the house while adaptively reusing it as leased office space.



*The Walker House and family (c. 1849)*



*Exterior repairs are in progress on the Walker-Sherrill House – fall 2013.*

**Westwood 3425 Kingston Pike**

A historic overlay was approved by City Council in August 2013 for the Westwood Mansion. Known for its Queen Anne / Richardsonian-influenced architecture as well as its serpentine brick wall along Kingston Pike, Westwood is one of three houses built by three generations of the Armstrong family. It was the home of John and Adelia Armstrong Lutz.

A “use-on-review” was approved by MPC to allow the house and property to be used for offices for a museum and regional historic preservation center. Preserving Historic Westwood will be the catalyst for a comprehensive, transformational plan that provides a permanent home for preservation and the resources required to rescue and protect other historic places across the region.

Knox Heritage received the house as gift from the Aslan Foundation in 2012 and raised the \$1.1 million in capital needed to restore the house and add a wing to provide for accessibility and restrooms. Knox Heritage recently celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the house’s grand opening.



*Grand-opening day (photo by Amy Smotherman Burgess of Knox News Sentinel.)*

**The Standard Building 416 W. Jackson Avenue**

The former the Standard Wilson Glass Company warehouse on Jackson Avenue was adaptively reused and opened in the spring of 2013 as an event venue. The project was a joint effort by Dewhirst Properties and Greg Usry of New York after David Dewhirst and Mark Heinz purchased the building in 2011.

The building had been abandoned, was seriously deteriorating and was threatened with demolition by the former owner. It was successfully marketed during the latter part of 2013 (with the success continuing today) as a location to host a wide variety of events on a consistent basis. This renovation will serve as a catalyst for continued preservation-minded development and redevelopment of Jackson Avenue.



*The Standard Building at 416 W. Jackson Ave. is a successful events center.*

**Knoxville High School Building (H-1 Overlay) 101 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

In November 2012, the Knox County School Board passed a resolution to surplus the former school building, located at 101 E. Fifth Avenue, effective June 30, 2013. In November 2013, the County Commission approved a proposal from Family Pride and Southeastern Housing for the property's adaptive reuse to 100 independent living units for seniors. After some opposition from nearby residential neighborhoods, it was clarified that the units would not be limited to low-income renters, and that the available developer tax credits would be passed on to residents.

Since the facility will include amenities such as full meal service and a wellness center, some citizens were concerned that the residents would not be active patrons of nearby shops, restaurants and services. However, the developer's representative said the building would also provide transportation services to nearby businesses and services.



*Historic Knoxville High School (photo credit: Knox Heritage)*

## **DEMOLISHED OR THREATENED PROPERTIES**

### **710 and 712 Walnut Street – Demolished**

In September 2013, St. John's Episcopal demolished the 1920s buildings they owned at 710 and 712 Walnut Street. The buildings were not listed on the National Register, but were determined eligible. St. John's leadership debated with the City's Downtown Design Review Board and Knox Heritage for two years over the right to demolish the buildings, citing reasons that they were not economically feasible to rehabilitate. The demolition would facilitate St. John's desire to improve access to their parking lot at the rear of the church.

This debate sparked discussion on the authority of the Downtown Design Review Board to review proposals for demolition. Ultimately, the City's Law Department's research determined that the Downtown Design Review Board does not have the authority to deny demolition due to lack of state enabling legislation. The Downtown Design Guidelines were revised to reflect this change, and now only post-demolition conditions are reviewed and regulated in the Downtown Overlay District.



*710 and 712 Walnut Street formerly to the adjacent north of St. John's Cathedral  
photo source: KNS Property Scope)*

**2724 E. 5th Avenue – Demolished**

The rare and unique “airplane” Craftsman house was located within the Park City National Register Historic District (but not within the H-1 overlay) and was sold to the City of Knoxville in 2008 through a Clerk and Master's Deed in the amount of \$4,930.46 for delinquent taxes. After the redemption period, the property was recorded in January 2010.

Neighboring property owners complained to the City that the deteriorating house constituted a nuisance. In August 2013, after being surveyed by Knox Heritage and two potential contractor/buyers who declined purchase, the house was approved by City Building Inspections to be demolished. The lot is to be marketed through the City’s Homemaker Program.



*2724 E. 5th Avenue was located within Park City National Register Historic District.*

**Peter Ritter House 2610 Fairview St./Washington Pike – Demolished**

The Queen Anne house was one of the last of the 1880s/early-1890s country estates left along Washington Pike and in north Knoxville. The Victorian-era house is significant because it epitomizes the country suburban house of turn-of-the-century Knoxville.

In 1887, Peter Ritter had an ad in the front of the City Directory for his establishment: “Fine Chewing & Smoking Tobacco” cor. Gay & Clinch.” The 1890 City Directory indicates Peter Ritter residing on “Washington Road” immediately adjacent to then “Edgewood Heights.”

The property was condemned in October 2008 due to nuisance complaints and structural deterioration. In November 2008, the owners obtained permits to repair the house. However, the boarded-up house appeared on the City’s Better Building Board agenda in 2013. The property had no overlay zoning protection and was ultimately demolished.



*The now demolished Peter Ritter House on Washington Pike and Fairview Street.*

**Findley House 515 Scenic Drive NC-1 – Demolished**

The 1929 Findley House was an excellent example of Tudor Revival and was located within the Scenic Drive Neighborhood Conservation District (NC-1) with Sequoyah Hills. It had been vacant for several months, and had been without utilities for several years. The west side (rear) of the building, which was wood construction covered in siding, had collapsed, along with the interior floors. The front of the house structure, sheathed in brick was all that remained. The structural members, beams, and joists were severely damaged.

The Historic Zoning Commission approved demolition by the owner in December 2013. The new buyer proposes to build a new single-family residential house, with some components alluding to the original structure. The Commission will review proposals for new construction on the site.



*The Findley House was vacant for years prior to its demolition.*

**H. E. Christenberry House 3222 Kingston Pike – Threatened**

The exuberant 1920s Craftsman house is threatened due to pressure of potential multi-family development for this desirable site with a commanding vista over the Tennessee River. The house is exemplary in its elaborate Craftsman style and distinctive detailing. It has very few, if any alterations on the inside and out. However, it was not included in the Kingston Pike National Register Historic District due to its compromised context due to the development by churches on either side of the house.

The owner of the house applied for a demolition permit in December 2013 which has been approved. RP-Planned Residential is the requested zoning to accommodate 28 housing units on the site.

However, more recently a potential buyer has expressed interested in rehabbing the house for offices, and building residential units to the rear of the house. The Sequoyah Hills Homeowners' Association is opposing the development due to concerns which include increased traffic congestion and the change in existing character created by multi-family housing.



*The Christenberry House at 3222 Kingston Pike is threatened by future development.*

**Pryor-Brown Parking Garage 314 W. Church Avenue – Threatened**  
Pryor Brown, an entrepreneur, was a pioneer in transportation services, and launched one of Knoxville's first automobile taxi companies from this site. Built between 1925 and 1929, the Pryor-Brown Garage was Knoxville's first multi-level parking garage and is one of the oldest remaining parking garages in the country.

After an unsuccessful request for a CBID grant, Royal Properties, the owners, applied in June 2013 to demolish the building and use the site for surface parking. The owners hoped to derive income from the vacant lot while they considered plans to build an office tower on the site. They have also asserted that the garage is in poor condition and unsalvageable.

In late 2013, the Downtown Design Review Board (DDRB) had moved to deny the demolition. The City Law Department determined that no state enabling legislation existed to empower that authority upon the DDRB.

Regarding the site's post-demolition use as a surface parking lot, the MPC denied Royal's use-on-review request and the denial was supported by City Council on appeal. A lawsuit was filed by the owner over that decision. However, there is recent consideration for the building's sale to developers who may be interested in retaining the building.



*The Pryor-Brown parking deck garage*

**1302, 1308, and 1312 White Avenue Fort Sanders NC-1 –Threatened**

The Tennessee State Building Commission authorized the University of Tennessee to purchase and demolish three historic Queen Anne houses in the Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District if necessary to make way for a classroom/laboratory building.

In the 2001 Master Plan for the long-term development of the UT campus, the university agreed not to encroach into the Fort Sanders residential neighborhood. However, in UT's 2011 Master Plan, the subject properties were identified as being within a potential expansion area. University officials have not ruled out moving the houses as a compromise, but that strategy can be hazardous to the structure and results in the inability to obtain Federal tax credits for renovations. The use of eminent domain to acquire the properties has also not been ruled out by the university.

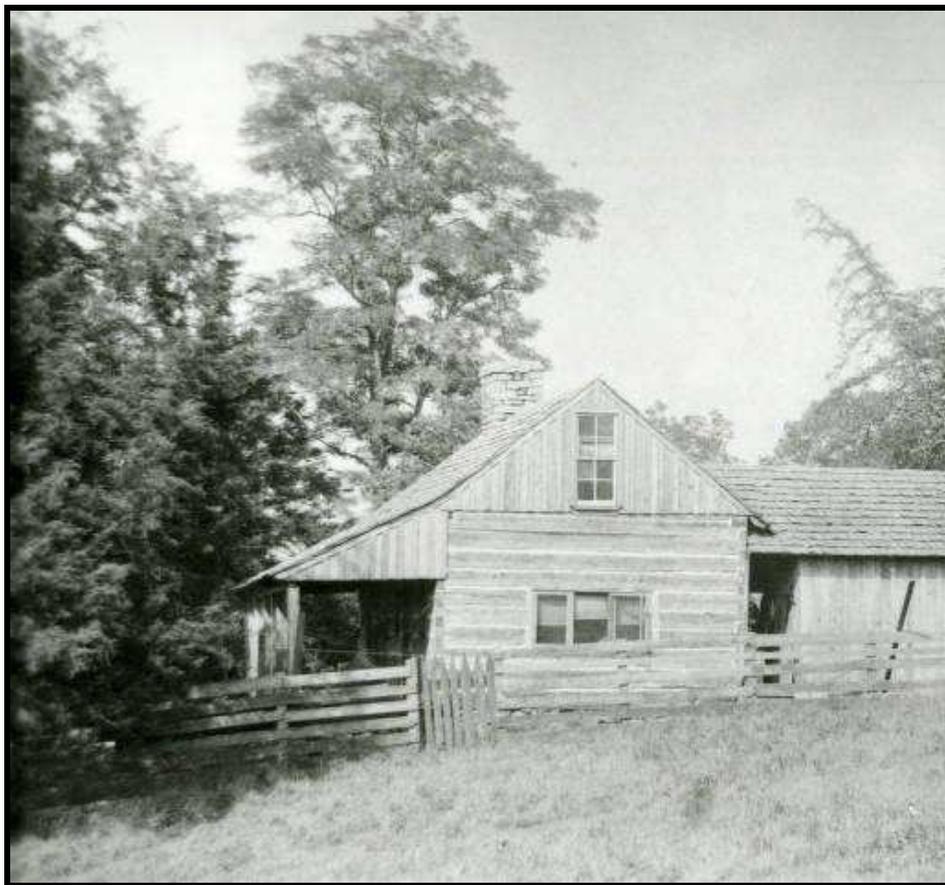


*1300-block White Avenue houses in Fort Sanders Neighborhood Conservation District*

## NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATIONS

**The Mead Marble Quarry at Ijams Park** was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for local and statewide significance for its contribution to patterns of marble processing, and extraction, and rail-related transportation in Knox County. The marble industry was an important sector of the regional economy from about 1838 to 1963. The quarry stands as an example of industrial production and transportation in the East Tennessee marble industry during its greatest period of national significance (1890-1940).

The pattern of development at this early quarrying site, the first known opening for the extraction of marble on the south side of the French Broad River, served as a prototype for the growth of the industry in the area. The East Tennessee marble industry is nationally significant for its contributions to building materials use in civic architecture.



*Building at Meads Quarry, circa 1895, photographer unknown.  
Photo Courtesy of McClung Photograph Collection, Knox County Public Library.*

**The Ross Marble Quarry at Ijams Park** is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for local and statewide significance for its association with the East Tennessee Marble Industry during its greatest period of significance (1890-1940). The marble industry was once an important sector of the regional economy from about 1838 to 1963.

By the early 1850s, the varicolored marble quarried in East Tennessee began to be sought by architects and patrons for public buildings, such as state houses, court houses, and custom houses, after it was chosen for the interiors of the Tennessee State Capitol and the United States Capitol “Extensions.”

The Ross Marble Quarry contributed to the second phase of industry growth, in which the modern marble industry developed primarily in the Knoxville area.



*From John M. Ross. Knoxville Tenn. Shipped July 8th 1913.” Thompson Brothers Photographers  
Photo courtesy of the McClung Historical Collection, Knox County Public Library*

## **Recommendations for Action 2014-2015**

### **New recommendations:**

- Apply for Historic Preservation Fund Grant from Tennessee Historical Commission to update the Historic Resource Survey
- Apply for Historic Preservation Fund Grant from Tennessee Historical Commission to expand Old North Knox H-1 Overlay

### **In progress to implement 2012 recommendations:**

- Consultant selected to assist with update of design guidelines to address new construction trends relative to items such as solar technology, new building materials, window replacement, accessory and structures
- Window Repair Workshop with national restoration expert Bob Yapp scheduled at Westwood for May 31, 2014
- Documentation of Baxter Street Mill houses for possible National Register nomination

### **Recommendation still needing to be addressed:**

- Examine staffing needs to strengthen code enforcement for compliance with Historic Zoning Overlay regulations as a way to reinforce the private sector's rehabilitation efforts and encourage investor confidence. Strengthening code enforcement also promotes equitable compliance requirements among owners.
- Establish funds sufficient to alleviate the "demolition-by-neglect" status of at least one significant building annually. The demolition-by-neglect process is most accurately described as "proactive preservation."