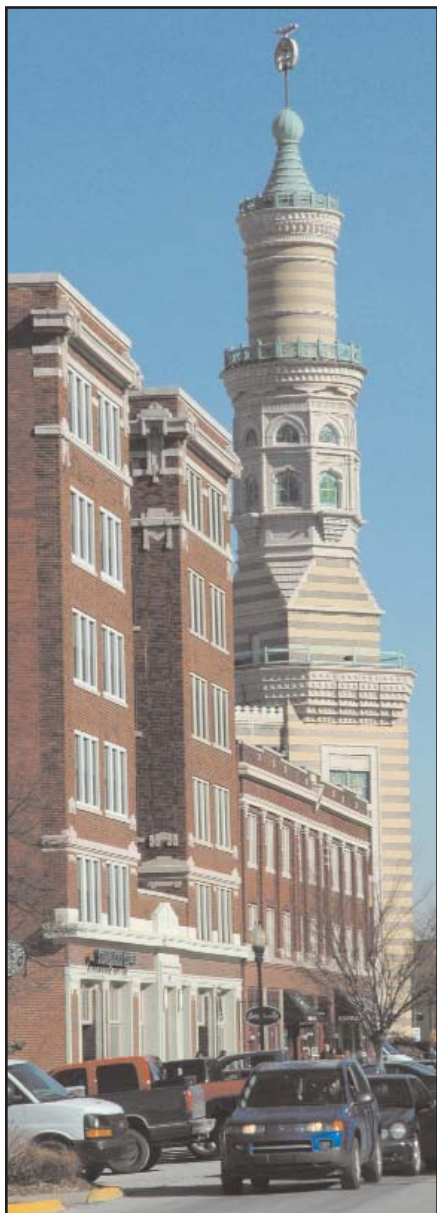




Urban Times

ARCHIVES



▲ The booming activity along Mass Ave can also portend potential development headaches. Without the expanded district, 72% of the buildings on Mass Ave have no protections.

This document contains these stories from past issues of Urban Times:

☐ FROM MARCH 2006:

Page 2: New district will protect Mass Ave, while updating Chatham Arch needs

☐ FROM DECEMBER 2005:

Page 5: Plan taking shape to create historic preservation district which would also include area between corridor and I-65

From March 2006:

New district will protect Mass Ave, while updating Chatham Arch needs

THE CHATHAM ARCH NEIGHBORHOOD ISN'T GETTING ANY BIGGER.

But the historic preservation district is.

And it's gaining an ampersand: The Chatham Arch & Massachusetts Avenue Historic Preservation District, which will be unveiled to stakeholders at a public meeting Monday, Feb.27, in the Athenæum.

If all goes as scheduled, the new-and-improved plan will go to the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission in April. If passed, the plan would represent the efforts of two groups working closely with Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission staff:

❑ The Chatham Arch Neighborhood Association, which got permission from the IHPC in 2004 to update its original 1982 plan in light of the changing pressures caused by the dramatic growth in and around the Chatham Arch historic district.

❑ Riley Area Development Corp., which had directed with Indianapolis Downtown, Inc., the creation in 2001 of the Massachusetts Avenue Commercial Development Plan.

One key recommendation of that plan was the implementation of historic preservation measures along the Avenue – a concept reinforced by the update of the Regional Center Plan that called for more historic protections of some of the city's key areas.

Mass Ave is such an area: 72% of the commercial corridor is totally unprotected. Only the 600 and 700 blocks are, because they lie within the boundaries of the Chatham Arch Historic Preservation District.

For several years, Mass Ave stakeholders have faced growing concern about inappropriate development and unwarranted demolition in the commercial corridor. Those fears have been heightened recently by word that Indianapolis Public Schools is entertaining offers for the former Coca-Cola bottling plant on the East End of Mass Ave – a building considered an Art Deco masterpiece and one of the many structures that has no protections against demolition.

Chatham Arch, meanwhile, had little interest in expanding its boundaries; likewise, there was little sense in removing the Mass Ave corridor from the existing district, leaving Chatham Arch as a two-part non-contiguous district.

For a while, the effort to reconcile the two initiatives focused on the creation of a Mass Ave historic district that would be compatible with, but not supercede, the two blocks that are part of Chatham Arch.

But officials at IHPC came up with a different approach, one that would avoid unnecessary repetition, expedite the Massachusetts Avenue designation process, and save an enormous amount of time for IHPC staff:

One district for two communities.

IHPC preservation planner Emily Mack stresses that the single-plan approach need not change the way the Chatham Arch Neighborhood Association operates, nor the boundaries it defines for itself.

“All a preservation plan does is, within that boundary, give IHPC the authority to review and approve projects,” said Mack, who has helped steer the effort in conjunction with a subcommittee of Chatham Arch and Mass Ave volunteers.

“It has nothing to do with neighborhood boundaries,” she said, pointing out that neighborhoods choose to define their own boundaries.

Mack praised the neighborhood organizers who have embraced the effort.

“This was a unique opportunity for neighborhoods to work together,” she said, “and they are. The Chatham Arch and Mass Ave folks have stepped up to the plate and worked together. They have done an excellent job.”

Chatham Arch resident Meg Storrow said the neighborhood is very appreciative that the IHPC was flexible and willing to work on the parallel planning process for the update to the Chatham Arch historic plan and the new Mass Ave historic district.

“The East End of Mass Ave is very important to Chatham Arch,” said Storrow, who chaired the effort called the Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan. “We realize that as development pressures increase, the Mass Ave historic district protections will enable all involved to see an increase in property values and associated development quality.

“We are excited about the future of our neighborhood and its strengthened relationship to Mass Ave that will be result of this joint planning process,” Storrow said.

It was those development pressures that led Chatham Arch to reevaluate its own plan, which among other deficiencies contained no guidelines for commercial buildings despite the significant commercial zone within its boundaries.

The updated Chatham Arch plan features more specific recommendations for land use and zoning, reflecting the current conditions in the neighborhood and anticipating future development.

Mack stressed that the new preservation plan does not treat all areas of the new preservation district with the same brush stroke. This is especially true of one piece of the proposed Chatham Arch & Massachusetts Avenue Historic Area Preservation Plan: the area north of Michigan Street between College Avenue and Interstate 65 – largely dominated by warehousing.

Most of the buildings in that zone area are not historic, considered in historic preservation terms to be “non-contributing.” Mack stressed that those properties would be mostly unaffected by the implementation of the historic preservation district – until the existing buildings become vacant or are torn down.

“As long as those buildings exist,” she said, “there are much more lenient design guidelines for those properties.” IHPC Administrator David Baker and Mack were in the process of making one-on-one visits with property owners in that zone to allay any concerns they might have.

Looking at the map, however, Mack said that leaving that eastside zone out would “create a void between Chatham Arch and Lockerbie Square.”

- Bill Brooks

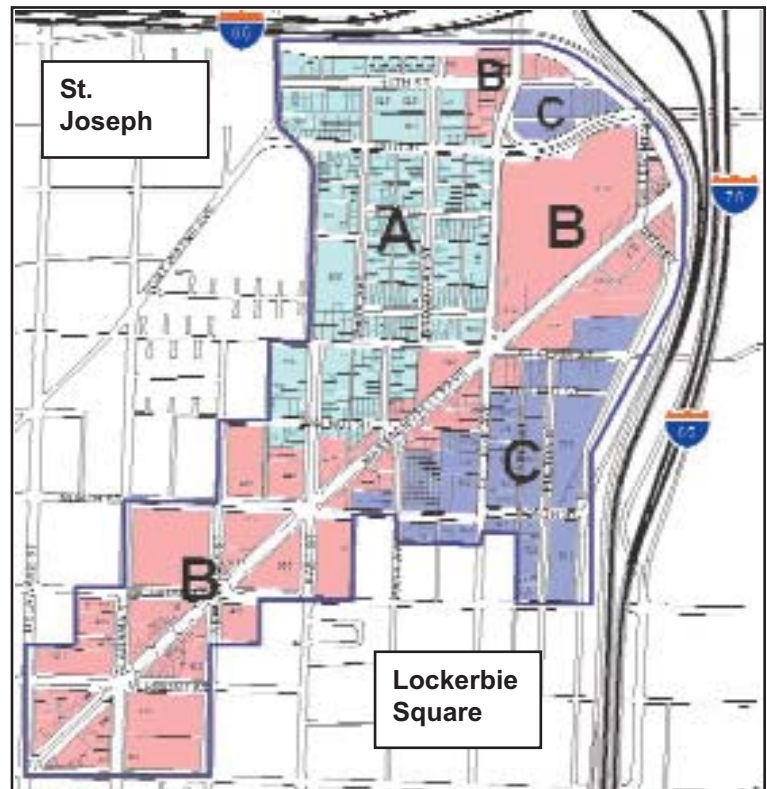
A unique new district

THE EXISTING CHATHAM Arch district comprises a large section of the new Chatham Arch & Massachusetts Avenue Historic Area Preservation District, which stretches from the mouth of Mass Ave at New York and Delaware streets to the East End of Mass Ave at Interstate 65.

The proposed district represents a new approach for the Indianapolis Historic Preservation District, which oversees 11 historic districts and four conservation districts, all of which - unlike this latest effort - have boundaries consistent with previously defined, homogenous neighborhoods.

Distinctive buildings within the proposed new historic preservation district include the Hammond Block “flat-iron” building at the corner of New York and Delaware streets, the Murat Centre, the Athenæum, the historic Sears building that now houses O’Malia Food Market, and the former Coca-Cola bottling plant now owned by Indianapolis Public Schools and considered a prime site for redevelopment.

The new historic preservation plan is the result of efforts by city historic planners, Mass Ave. stakeholders and Chatham Arch’s Strategic Neighborhood Action Plan, chaired by Meg Storrow. She also took part in the Mass Ave subcommittee chaired by Lockerbie resident Ed English. That group included several other Mass Ave stakeholders and Chatham Arch residents. ■



The new Chatham Arch & Massachusetts Avenue Historic Area Preservation District is made up of (A) the residential area, which includes all of the current Chatham Arch district; (B) commercial areas; and (C) the “adaptive reuse area” composed largely of existing buildings not considered historic.

From November 2005:

‘HISTORIC’ MASS AVE

Plan taking shape to create historic preservation district- which would also include area between corridor and I-65

AFTER TWO YEARS OF MEETINGS, PLANNING and consensus-building, the end may be in sight for the Massachusetts Avenue committee working to bring historic preservation status to the commercial corridor.

Not that the group has quite the consensus it sought, however.

The good news is that only 21 percent of the property owners in the proposed historic preservation district are opposed to the plan that would place their property under the jurisdiction of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission.

The not-so-good news is that a larger percentage – 38% – have failed to respond to any of the numerous outreach efforts made by the group pushing this proposal.

Edward English considers that 38% to be in the “yes” column, based on the fact that people who are opposed to such a plan are invariably moved to take action.

English, a Lockerbie resident, is chair of the workgroup, a subcommittee of the Mass Ave Financial Gathering Committee, which in turn is part of the ongoing effort to carry out the provisions of the Mass Ave Commercial Development Plan, an effort steered by Indianapolis Downtown, Inc., and Riley Area Development Corp.

The Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission – IHPC – is satisfied to the point that it gave the subcommittee permission earlier this fall to continue its work. English’s work group is now in the process of cataloging the 115 parcels included in the historic preservation plan, and making recommendations about future zoning.

That last element – zoning – is most probably on the minds of the 13 property owners who are against the plan. They believe historic preservation status will have a negative affect on future uses of their properties.

English, however, believes such fears are misplaced. He pointed out that the vast majority of objectors own property that is not historic at all. Creating an historic preservation district would not affect how those properties are currently operated.

Most of those “non-contributing” buildings sit in an area just off Mass Ave – north of Michigan Street and between Mass Ave and Interstate 65.

Mark Porteous, a Chatham Arch resident who has served on the Mass Ave work group, would tell every naysayer to check with the utility company officials he talked to as part of the subcommittee’s research. He said the two utility companies that have property in the proposed district had no problem with the change.

“They didn’t need to be ‘sold.’ They know developments will start and that, once the guidelines are in place, their money will have a good return.”

He said the utility representatives’ thoughts were more about the growth that historic preservation status will spur. They know that the move will spark more condominiums and more restaurants – and that they’ll have to provide more services to the area.

Porteous pointed out that development will boost the tax rolls, as he envisions one-story warehouses eventually being sold to make way for taller, mixed-use developments, even high-rises.

He also conceded that historic preservation status means more hassles for property owners. “But you get a lot stronger project,” he said. “Nicer, more well-thought-out – and you’re protected from what might happen across the street.”

David Andrichik, who owns two buildings on Mass Ave and has operated the Chatterbox Jazz Club for 23 years, is equally enthusiastic.

“The greatest concern for existing property owners should be the potential of new development adjacent to or near your own property,” he said. “Having a governmental body with ultimate control – and with an overlay of historic preservation – is long overdue. This really should have been done 20 years ago.”

Porteous, who owns an engineering and architectural consulting firm, pointed out that the historic preservation plan being developed for Mass Ave is not a one-size-fits-all document. Properties in the different blocks, as well as in the warehouse zone near the interstate, will be subject to different guidelines.

English pointed out that the 600 and 700 blocks are already within the Chatham Arch Historic Preservation Plan. The proposed historic preservation plan will also treat the East End and West End of Mass Ave as being clearly distinct of each other.

Said Porteous, "If a building is 'non-contributing,' the guidelines will not be as strenuous. But if you do own an historic building, this will help make sure that something can't happen next door to hurt you."

English and Porteous share the opinion that those opposed to the plan have yet to fully understand how it works.

"They just aren't taking the time to learn about it," Porteous said. "If they did, they would realize their property value is just going to go up."

English said one of his main concerns going into the project was the future of the former Coca-Cola plant that is now owned by Indianapolis Public Schools and used as its main school bus depot. That concern has been heightened by the recent announcement by IPS that it would entertain proposals to sell the facility.

"The Coca-Cola property is worth saving, without a doubt," English said, but he said most of the buildings in the warehouse area are clearly not historic and clearly not worth saving.

"Nobody is going to try to save the Mayflower warehouse," he said, "or try to make them leave." But he said that, one day, each of the warehouse owners will make the same decision that similar businesses have in or near downtown. "That's when the new parameters will kick in," English said.

Proponents of the historic-preservation district also note that moving to IHPC control actually represents less red tape, because the designation would take Mass Ave properties away from "Regional Center" control. The group is promoting IHPC as 'one-stop shopping' because the commission acts as the zoning board as well as overseeing historic

preservation.

One document used to promote the plan emphasized that property owners actually get more "say" about prospective development projects that may affect their own property.

"Under the Regional Center plan, property owners only receive notification if an adjacent property owner requests a rezoning or a variance," the document noted. Within IHPC territories, however, "adjacent property owners also receive notification of new construction, rehabilitation, demolition and site development projects." As part of that process, property owners also have the opportunity to review architectural plans, attend public hearings and voice their support – or remonstrate against – proposed development projects.

With continuing work being funded by grants from the Mass Ave Community Development Corp., the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee and Regions Bank, English hopes to have the proposed Mass Ave Historic Preservation District Plan ready for public review before the first quarter of 2006 is over.

Looking at the numbers, English believes it can be correctly construed that 79% of the property owners can be considered to either support or not oppose the plan. That includes the 36% who gave a formal "yes," plus another 5% who have issued a formal "no position" response. That latter category includes IPS, which in what is considered a critical move agreed not to oppose the plan.

"We are trying to make sure what happens on the Avenue is going to be compatible with what is happening in Chatham Arch and Lockerbie," English said. "We are not trying to kick anybody out before they are ready to leave."

■



▲ The Athenæum, called Das Deutche Haus when it was built in 1894, is home to the YMCA, the Rathskeller Restaurant and American Cabaret Theatre. The now-thriving historic venue was on precarious ground in the late 1980s, but thanks to Historic Landmarks Foundation and the not-for-profit Athenæum Foundation is now a neighborhood anchor.

The former Coca-Cola bottling plant, ► now the Indianapolis Public Schools transportation facility, is cited as one of the many historic buildings in the Mass Ave corridor that has official protections against potential demolition.

