



Urban Times

ARCHIVES

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vote makes it official.

From July 2006:

IHPC favors plan to make Mass Ave an historic district

Commercial corridor to be part of an updated Chatham Arch district, pending MDC approval

THE MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE corridor is poised to become an historic preservation district, following a unanimous vote June 7 by the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission.

One final hurdle remains – a vote by the Metropolitan Development Commission, scheduled for June 21 after deadline for this issue of Urban Times.

A positive vote by the Metropolitan Development Commission would end a formal three-year effort spearheaded by Riley Area Development Corp. and Indianapolis Downtown, Inc., as part of efforts to carry out the Massachusetts Avenue Commercial Development Plan.

Almost lost in the newsworthiness of the Massachusetts Avenue protections is the fact that the effort is being wrapped around a significant update of the 24-year-old Chatham Arch Historic Preservation Plan.

The existing Chatham Arch district includes the 600 and 700 blocks of Massachusetts Avenue – but the new “Chatham Arch and Massachusetts Avenue Area Historic Preservation District” will be a significantly larger area, stretching from the southwest end of Mass Ave at New York and Delaware streets to Interstates 65 and 70 to the

Final approval comes on June 21

THE CHATHAM ARCH AND Massachusetts Avenue Area Historic Preservation District came into official existence on Wednesday, June 21, following a formal vote by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Development Commission.

With that vote, the new territory involved in the proposed district came under immediate purview of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission. At the same time, the previously existing Chatham Arch Historic Preservation District came under updated guidelines the Chatham Arch Neighborhood Association had sought to better cope with the burgeoning Downtown growth.

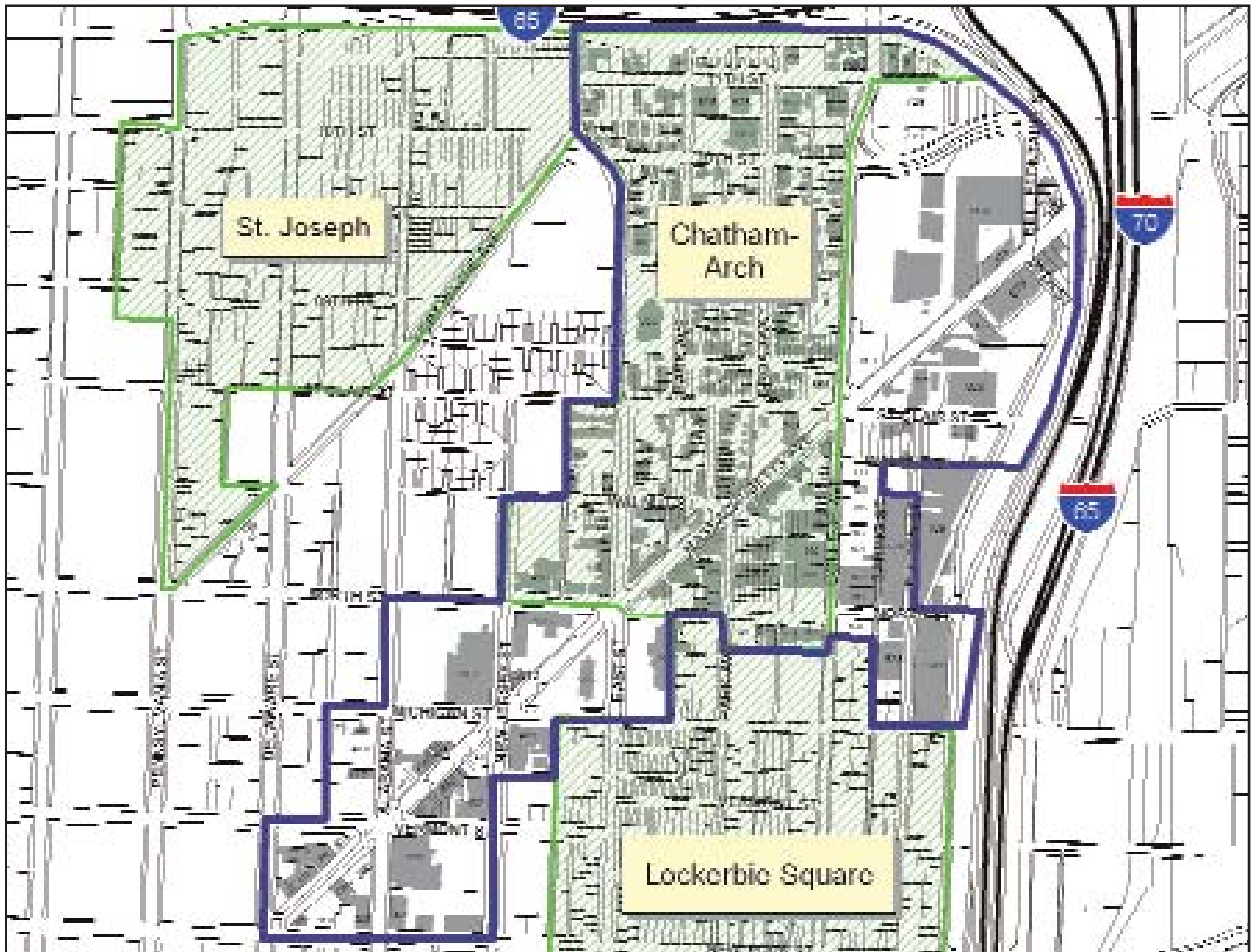
For more background, see other stories in the “Archives” section of www.brookspublications.com.

east and north.

Edward English, chair of the historic preservation committee, said the Mass Ave effort was launched to provide a uniform set of guidelines for the rapidly growing Massachusetts Avenue corridor, and to ensure that growth is compatible with the nearby Chatham Arch and Lockerbie historic districts.

A major target of the effort, English said, was the former Coca-Cola bottling plant, considered a great example of Art Deco design. Indianapolis Public Schools, which owns the facility, is now currently considering offers for the property’s sale.

Other landmarks within the new historic preser-



The new Chatham Arch and Massachusetts Avenue Area Historic Preservation District (outlined in blue) includes the existing Chatham Arch district along with the Mass Ave commercial corridor. The district also includes much of the area east of College Avenue and north of Michigan Street, but with far less-stringent day-to-day regulations in recognition of the lack of historic value of most of the buildings in that light industry and warehouse district. The territory is being included with a look ahead to the future; residential conversions have already begun in that area.

Other historic buildings in the preservation district include the Murat Centre, the Athenaeum (already protected through a covenant held by Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana), the Stout Shoes building and the Hammond Block flatiron building at the corner of Mass Ave and New York Street. Two historic churches – Roberts Park United Methodist and St. Mary Catholic – are not included within the district.

The recent boom along Mass Ave is also the major reason the Chatham Arch Neighborhood

Association engaged an update of its own historic preservation plan. Association leaders believed their plan needed to better address the changing pressures caused by the dramatic growth of the Mass Ave corridor.

The two efforts were originally separate, but were eventually combined to hasten ►► the process of bringing the Mass Ave corridor into the mix.

Supporters of the landmark proposal crowded into the IHPC hearing room, with brief comments

in support of the project coming from English; Chatterbox owner David Andrichik; Chatham Arch Neighborhood Association President Kim Lucas; Lockerbie Square People's Club Vice-President Pete Howard; and Terry Sweeney, vice-president of Indianapolis Downtown, Inc.

There were, however, two remonstrators.

Tim Collignon of Marsala Properties, LLC, asked that the 300 block be removed from the district because of the Metropolitan Development Commission's recent approval of a 10-level mixed-use building between the Masala building and the Hammond Block "flat-iron" building.

He also said he had never been contacted about the historic district proposal, despite the committee's report that it had made at least five attempts, by letter and telephone, to contact every property owner involved in the plan.

As for the 10-story building, IHPC administrator David Baker said IHPC had no authority to review such projects until the district status was established. He did say, however, that should any changes be made to that new project once the district is established, those changes would come within IHPC's jurisdiction.

For Ed English and other historic district supporters, the controversy surrounding the 10-story project is evidence of the need for additional protections for Mass Ave. They also point to the demolition of the Corinthian Baptist Church at North and Fulton streets as additional evidence that historic reviews are needed.

The other dissent came from the other end of the district. The objection by Haydon Hapak of Hogan Transfer

Storage Corp. was countered by IHPC administrator David Baker's explanation that the properties in that area east of College and north of Michigan Street, dominated by non-historic warehouses, were not subject to the same regulations as the historic structures in the heart of the district.

"We have really lightened up on day-to-day regulations" in that portion of the district, Baker said, noting the structures in question have no intrinsic historic value. He said those areas were being included to protect Lockerbie and Chatham Arch in the future.

"Someday – it could be 50 years from now – those buildings will go away and something else will be there," he said. "That's what we're concerned about."

In the final weeks of the process, in fact, a triangular zone along Interstate 65 was removed from the proposal. IHPC officials cited a "legal complication" for the action that removed the area east of Fulton Street between North and Walnut streets. Also removed was the tract of land at North and Fulton streets, the former home of Corinthian Baptist Church now being developed as condominiums.

The Chatham Arch and Massachusetts Avenue Area Historic Preservation District would become effective immediately upon approval by the Metropolitan Development Commission.

- Bill Brooks

IHPC's 'turf'

The addition of the Massachusetts Avenue corridor marks the third new territory for the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission since 2001.

There are 11 historic preservation districts – with Lockerbie Square becoming the first in 1967 and the Old Northside the second 12 years later.

Chatham Arch became an historic district in 1982; a comprehensive plan to revise that historic plan led to the expansion into the newly approved Chatham Arch and Massachusetts Avenue Area Historic Preservation District.

Historic preservation districts

- Lockerbie Square (1967)
- Old Northside (1979)
- Fletcher Place (1980)
- Chatham Arch (1982)
- Fountain Square (1984)
- Lockefield Gardens (1984)
- Herron Morton (1986)
- Wholesale District (1990)
- St. Joseph (1991)
- Woodruff Place (2001)
- Irvington (2004)

Conservation Districts

- Fayette Street (1995)
- Ransom Place (1998)
- New Augusta (1999)
- Cumberland (2005)

IHPC also has authority over eight individual properties, including the Hilbert Circle Theatre, the Kemper House at 1028 N. Delaware St. and the Ruskaup-Ratcliffe House & Store in Cottage Home. ■