

# PARKLAND

## PRESERVATION DISTRICT

### A Brief History

#### COMMERCIAL HUB

The Parkland Business District developed as the commercial hub of one of Louisville's most prestigious nineteenth-century suburbs. Originally located outside the city limits and far from city stores, Parkland needed its own commercial center. As the demand for convenient services grew, so did the business district.

#### OVER ONE THOUSAND LOTS TO AUCTION

Parkland began in 1871 as a rural community. Local real estate developers subdivided 342 acres into 1,072 lots and sold them at auction. The developers widely advertised the event and nearly 2,000 people arrived to bid at the auction. Many businesses in the city closed so that employees could attend. Despite the wide interest, however, few people built homes in Parkland until the 1880s when newly constructed streets and mule-drawn streetcars made the area more accessible.

#### CAREFULLY-MANAGED GROWTH

Within the next decade development rapidly increased. Elegant mansions, built by Louisville's wealthy families, began to line the streets. By the end of the decade, five churches served the spiritual needs of the community. On Dumesnil Street, between 28th and 26th Streets, the new commercial district housed a Masonic Temple, various groceries, and general merchandise stores. As Parkland grew, community leaders sought to maintain it as a desirable place to live. The Mayor and Town Council, all Masons, enacted ordinances to regulate activity within the town. Regulations prohibited drinking establishments, disorderly conduct, and factories with malodorous fumes.

#### DEVASTATING TORNADO

Strictly guided by its community leaders, Parkland continued to thrive until disaster struck in 1890. A tornado, one of the most powerful in the history of Jefferson County, hit the town on March 27th and destroyed most of its buildings. Unable to rebuild itself, the town agreed to annexation by the City of Louisville in 1894. By the turn of the century, however, residents had not only rebuilt but also expanded Parkland. Many of the beautiful nineteenth-century mansions, shotgun houses, and bungalows built during this time line Parkland's streets today.



View looking south on 28<sup>th</sup> Street looking South towards Dumesnil Street circa 1929. Courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

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#### *LITTLE AFRICA*

Not all of Parkland's residents, however, lived in large homes and enjoyed substantial wealth. Residents living in a section of Parkland known as Little Africa inhabited very modest structures. Located southwest of central Parkland, Little Africa was home to Parkland's African American families. It was one of the many all-black neighborhoods that developed during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Little Africa, in addition to California and Smoketown, grew as the city's African American population rose and a pattern of segregation evolved.

#### *AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKING CLASS*

In the early years, families living in Little Africa occupied wooden shacks and shanties. Eventually, families began to prosper as opportunities to work increased. In the Reconstruction years, African Americans worked as blacksmiths, wagon-builders, barbers, janitors, messengers, bartenders, and day laborers. Over time, families could afford to build or buy houses and living conditions began to improve. Organized efforts to better the quality of life for Little Africa residents began in the early twentieth century with the creation of the Parkland Improvement Club. Through the Club, residents laid cinder block walks, put up mailboxes, and improved city streets.

#### *PROSPEROUS TIMES*

Parkland, as a whole, continued to grow through the 1950s. As the electric streetcar and then automobiles made the community increasingly accessible, more families and businesses moved to the area. The

business district expanded as restaurants, drugstores, department stores, a Piggly Wiggly grocery store, and other businesses opened along Dumesnil. In 1930, the prosperous community inspired W. B. Washburn, an African American dentist, to construct a two-story office building in the Parkland Business District. Washburn hired the nationally recognized African American architect Samuel Plato to design the building. Known appropriately as the Washburn Building, the structure continues to house local businesses. By the 1950s, the business milieu included gas stations, theaters, bakeries, hardware stores, a bank, and a record store.

#### *RIOTS AND REBUILDING*

Many of these businesses left, however, when disaster once again struck Parkland in 1968. On May 28, 1968, in the midst of African Americans' fight for civil rights and in the aftermath of Reverend Martin Luther King's recent assassination, race riots broke out. Rioters vandalized Parkland's stores. Local residents, business owners, and city officials have since endeavored to rebuild the business community. Most notable was the designation of the business district as a local preservation district in 1984. The designation made financial incentives available to developers and spurred the renovation of historic structures.

While the Limerick Local Preservation District is commercial, it is surrounded by a National Register District of over four hundred residences. Efforts are being made to renew and strengthen both the physical and economic ties between these two commercial and residential districts.

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

- A forceful tornado hit Parkland late on the evening of March 27, 1890 and destroyed nearly all the homes and businesses. By the turn of the century, however, the residents had completely rebuilt the town.
- Developers first attracted residents to Parkland by providing mule-drawn streetcar service to and from the city. The mules' stable still stands on Dumesnil Street just west of the Masonic Temple.
- Boxing champion Muhammad Ali grew up in the Parkland community. Known in his childhood as Cassius Clay, Jr., Ali made his boxing debut on a local televised boxing program.
- Local architects designed the Prince Hall Masonic Temple, built circa 1923, in the Classical Revival style. In the 1980s, the Kentucky Heritage Council funded the renovation of the Temple.
- The building at 1220 South 28th Street is an excellent example of the vernacular commercial structures prevalent in the early twentieth century.
- In the 1960s, Louisville's first urban renewal efforts concentrated on rehabilitating deteriorated housing in Parkland's Little Africa.



## “Reading” Your Building— A Crash Course

Property owners planning to make exterior changes to a historic building should start by identifying the features and materials that give their structure its unique character, as well as its historic and non-historic elements. By taking the time to recognize and understand significant features, you will be much more likely to plan a project that is compatible with the original style of the building.

If, after looking over these guidelines, you would still like more information, the staff will be happy to arrange a pre-application meeting. Staff members can provide additional advice on the character of your building and how it relates to your upcoming project.

Learning to read a building and identify its significant elements is not complicated. Begin by thinking about and answering the questions below.

### STEP ONE

Identify the overall visual aspects of a building. Do not focus on the details, but on the setting and architectural context. Begin by working through the checklist below.

#### *SHAPE*

What is there about the form or shape of the building that gives the building its identity? Is it short and squat, or tall and narrow?

#### *ROOF AND ROOF FEATURES*

How does the roof shape or pitch contribute to the building’s character? Are there unique features like weathervanes, cresting, or cupolas?

#### *OPENINGS*

What rhythm or pattern does the arrangement of window or door openings create? Are there unusually-shaped window openings or distinctive entryways?

#### *PROJECTIONS*

Are there parts of the building that are character-defining because they project from the walls of the building like porches, cornices, bay windows, or balconies? Are there turrets, or widely overhanging eaves, projecting pediments, or chimneys?

#### *TRIM AND SECONDARY FEATURES*

How does window and door trim contribute to the character of the building? Be sure to consider the decoration, color, or patterning of the trim. What about secondary features like shutters, decorative gables, and railings?



#### *MATERIALS*

From a distance, what contribution do the color, texture, and combination of exterior materials make to the overall character of the building?

#### *SETTING*

What aspects of the setting are important in establishing the visual character of the site? Think about the building’s setback, alignment with adjacent buildings, plantings, fencing, terracing, and outbuildings, and its relationship to the street and alley.

### STEP TWO

Identify the character of the building at close range. Assess the color and texture of the building materials as they convey the craftsmanship and age that gives the building its unique appearance. Begin by working through the checklist below.

#### *MATERIALS AT CLOSE INSPECTION*

Are there one or more materials that have an inherent texture that contribute to the close-range character, such as stucco, exposed aggregate concrete, or brick textured with vertical grooves?

#### *CRAFT DETAILS*

Is there high-quality brickwork with narrow mortar joints, or hand-tooled or patterned stonework? Are there hand-split or hand-dressed clapboards or machine-smoothed beveled siding? Craft details, whether handmade or machine-made, contribute to the character of a building because they are manifestations of the time in which the work was done and of the tools and processes that were used.



The corner of 28<sup>th</sup> and Dumesnil Streets, showing the New Masonic Temple (top) and the Old Masonic Temple, which has been rehabilitated for a new use, courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

## Parkland— Historic Commercial Hub

The commercial district that developed to serve the growing community of Parkland emerged and flourished between the 1880s and the 1950s.

The majority of the remaining buildings within the Parkland Preservation District date to this era, and are strung along a roughly four-block area at the intersection of 28th and Dumesnil Streets. The district's street pattern is part of Louisville's urban grid.



### *BUILDING USE*

Owners constructed most of the district's buildings for commercial purposes, although some also contained upper-level residences. By the 1920s shoppers alighting from trolleys could patronize local bakeries, dry goods stores, meat markets, clothing stores, and dry-cleaning businesses within a four-block area. The old and new Masonic Lodges, which face each other across Dumesnil Street, served as the cornerstones that anchored the district. Their massive appearance continues to lend a sense of permanency and architectural presence to the neighborhood.

### *ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER*

The district's character embraces the ideals of substance and solidity. Many of the buildings present a forthright and utilitarian appearance. Restraint best defines the ornamentation of these buildings, although a range of stylistic modes can be seen by walking through the district, including Richardsonian Romanesque, Classical Revival, Craftsman, and Moderne elements.

### *BUILDING MATERIALS*

Brick is the dominant building material within the commercial district and is used both for cladding and for the decorative, geometric ornament seen in the upper facades and cornices. Stepped parapet walls add visual interest to the more modest one-and-one-half-story buildings. A limited amount of carved limestone ornament is also present in some of the more commanding buildings, such as the Masonic Temples and the Washburn Building.

### *DIRECTIONAL EMPHASIS*

Heights vary between one and four stories, often within one block. Unlike the cast-iron facades of West Main Street, Parkland's buildings emphasize horizontality, covering more ground in relation to their overall height. Continuous strips of storefronts, such as those that wrap the southwest corner of 28th Street and Dumesnil, reinforce the appearance of horizontality.

### *VACANT LAND*

The loss of numerous buildings has contributed to the gradual disintegration of the district, undermining established relationships between buildings. In the past, buildings lined the sidewalks, creating a dense corridor of business enterprises. Storefronts created a feeling of unity within the district. Now, there are many "missing-teeth," and surface parking lots visually compete with the remaining buildings. Vacant lots dissolve the sense of separation between commercial and residential areas, because there is no perceptible transition between the two—no sense of entry into this commercial center.

### *COMPATIBLE CONSTRUCTION NEEDED*

Streetscape improvements, such as street tree planting, new paving, and fencing of parking areas, are measures that mitigate these losses somewhat. Commercial properties should be constructed on vacant lots; but care must be given so that the styles and materials are compatible with existing buildings and reflect historic site and architectural patterns. Such action is needed in order to restore a measure of the vitality and character that this district once possessed. Fortunately, revitalization efforts have preserved important anchor buildings, restoring them to new uses. These buildings can provide an armature around which a new service-oriented commercial district may evolve.



## *CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES*

### **Site**

- lacks overall cohesiveness and is weakened by the loss of historic building stock;
- requires additional build-out on vacant lots; and
- should establish a clearer relationship to surrounding residential areas.

### **Facades**

- possess a sense of mass and solidity; and
- have a horizontal emphasis.

### **Storefronts**

- have a tripartite organization of bulkheads, plate-glass windows, and transoms;
- create a sense of horizontality along the sidewalk; and
- contribute to the creation of a pedestrian-scaled environment.

### **Windows**

- provide a sense of rhythm to a facade, punctuating the mass of masonry walls;
- are wood, double-hung sash with a variety of glazing configurations; and
- are accented by brick flat arches, stone lintels and sills, and decorative surrounds.

### **Ornament**

- is generally restrained;
- derives from classical sources; and
- tends toward the geometric rather than the organic.

### **Roofs**

- are flat or have a very shallow pitch; and
- are often concealed by decorative parapet walls.

### **Secondary Facades**

- generally lack ornamentation; and
- have taken on a new importance due to the reorientation of parking and circulation patterns.

### **Streetscape**

- has been enhanced through tree planting and decorative paving;
- continues to be overwhelmed by surface parking lots; and
- needs to regain a sense of enclosure through the build-out of vacant lots.

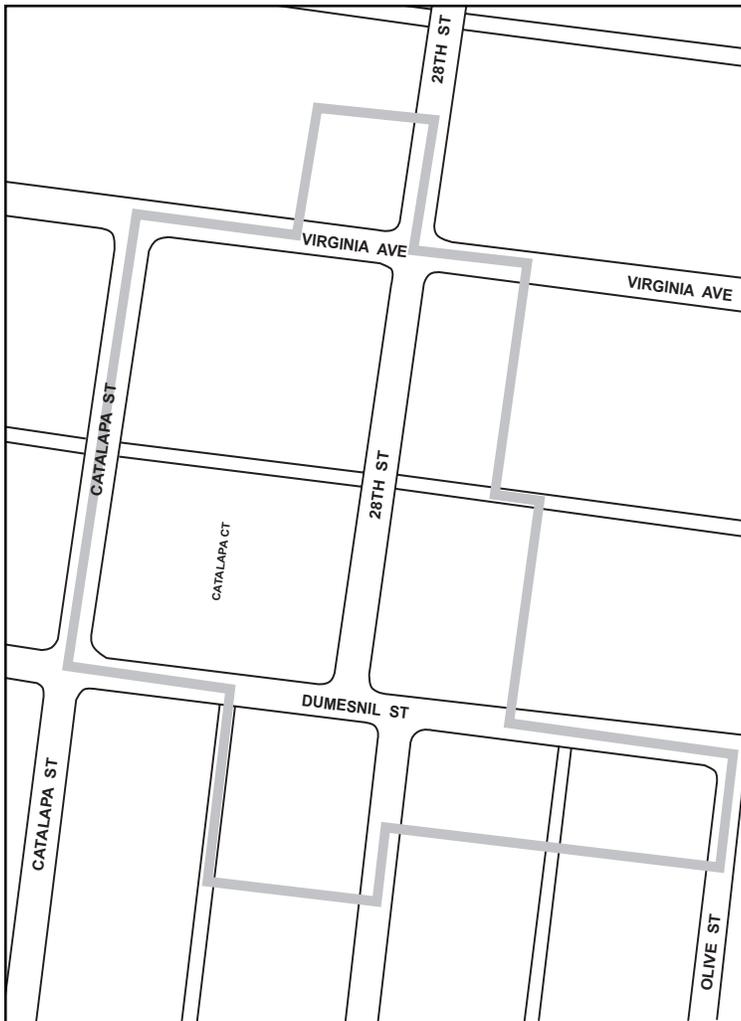
**SITE**



**WINDOW**



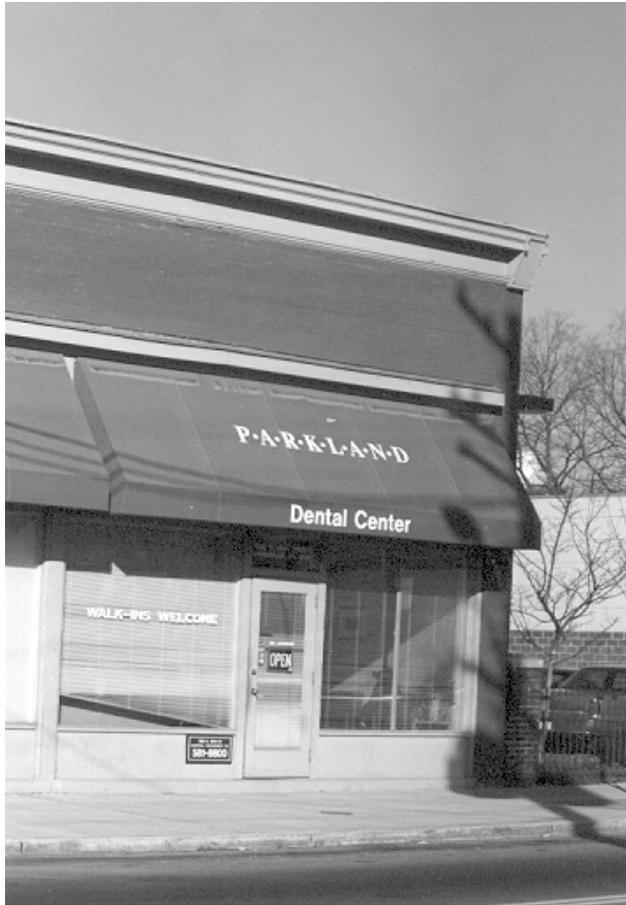
**PARKLAND PRESERVATION DISTRICT**



**STOREFRONT**



**SIGNS AND AWNINGS**



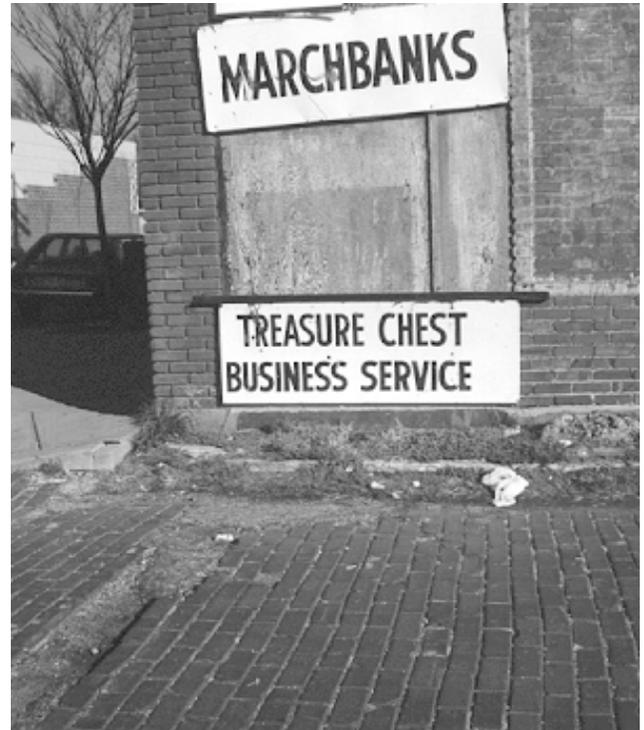
**STREETSCAPE**



**FACADE**



**PAVING**





*Northeast corner of 28<sup>th</sup> and Dumesnil Streets, now replaced by a parking lot, courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.*

## Preservation Principles

Outlined below are a number of guiding preservation principles that are modeled after the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Reading through these principles will help you begin to think about how you can carry out your upcoming project in a way that both enhances your historic building or site and preserves its character-defining features.

### *RELATIONSHIPS*

When evaluating the appropriateness of a given project, the structure, the site, and their relationship to the rest of the district should be given careful consideration.

### *USE*

Historic structures within a local preservation district should be used for their originally intended purpose or for an alternate purpose that requires minimal alteration to the building and site.

### *ALTERATIONS*

Repair is always preferred over replacement. When replacement is necessary, materials should replicate or match the visual appearance of the original.

A high level of craftsmanship distinguishes structures within local preservation districts. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques should be preserved whenever possible.

Removal or alteration of historic fabric compromises the original character of a building or site and should be avoided.

Properties, however, do change over time. Those alterations that have become historic in their own right should be maintained as a record of a resource's physical evolution.

### *NEW CONSTRUCTION AND ADDITIONS*

Additions should be designed to minimize impact to historic fabric and should be compatible with the main structure in massing, size, and scale.

New, infill construction should be designed so that it is compatible with its neighbors in size, massing, scale, setback, facade organization, and roof form.

New construction and additions should also draw upon established stylistic elements to create a sympathetic design that is clearly of its own era.

### *TREATMENTS*

Chemical and physical treatments should always be as gentle as possible, since harsh methods like sandblasting can irreversibly damage historic fabric.

### *ARCHAEOLOGY*

Historic sites often contain archeological resources, which should be protected and preserved whenever possible. If artifacts are found, contact the Landmarks Commission for an assessment.