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Historic Preservation Efforts Continue Thanks to \$20,000 Grant

Executive Walsh Emphasizes Importance of Preserving Rural Landscape in Will County

Rural properties in Joliet and Troy Townships will soon be getting an in-depth look for their historic value, thanks to a \$20,000 grant awarded to the Will County Land Use Department's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). According to Amy Munro, Will County Historic Preservation manager, the federal funds made available through the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) will go toward an ongoing project that evaluates and identifies historically significant buildings and structures in the County.

As part of the initiative, the effort includes an intensive survey that provides a "careful evaluation" of historic rural properties within unincorporated Will County. Serving as an update to a county-wide reconnaissance survey in 1988, the survey provides comprehensive information on all historic properties, while assessing eligibility for local landmark status and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Developed to meet IHPA's program requirements, the survey project will also inventory existing structures for future study; provide background on significant architectural styles and rural structures common to the region; and offer context history regarding the area's overall development.

"Preserving our history and culture is vital to Will County - and as a lifelong farmer, I know for a fact that some of the best historical visual reminders can be found in our rural landscape," said Will County Executive Larry Walsh. "Because of this generous grant, we can continue to move forward in recording our history, while monitoring and preserving the County's changing landscape during a time of unprecedented growth."

While the historic aspect of rural Joliet and Troy Townships is the main focus of the newly awarded \$20,000 grant, Will County has engaged in detailed surveys of rural buildings and structures that are more than 50-years-old since 1999. The HPC plans to survey the County in its entirety, Munro adds, but due to time and funding, the intensive surveys have been conducted in stages. Each township survey project takes approximately one year to complete. Currently surveys for Du Page, Frankfort, Green Garden, Homer, Lockport, Manhattan, New Lenox, Plainfield and Wheatland Townships have been completed by Will County.

“With this survey we can provide a better understanding of the historic context of each individual township and Will County as a whole,” said Munro. “The information will not only provide recommendations on what is historically significant, but will help us to make informed decisions. The survey provides information valuable for developing plans and policies to protect our historic buildings and cultural landscape – not only now, but in the future as well.”

Will County was one of 12 governmental entities that received the Certified Local Government grant for 2008 – and it received the highest amount of funding than any other. Administered by IHPA, these federal funds were specifically earmarked for public preservation and development - and awarded on a matching basis. Up to 70 percent of the project costs are paid by the federal government, with local funds making up the remainder of the project's cost. Along with the \$20,000 grant to the Will County Historic Preservation Commission, other awards included: \$7,000 (Aurora); \$15,000 (Belleville); \$4,480 (Carbondale); \$7,000 (Chicago); \$14,000 (Glen Ellyn); \$5,424 (Glenview); \$5,649 (Ottawa); \$2,095 (Quincy); \$5,810 (Rock Island); \$4,442, (Rockford); and \$1,362, (Urbana).

“I am very pleased by the amount of the grant. It allows our Historic Preservation Commission to carry on with its very important work of preserving our past for future generations,” said Curt Paddock, Director of the Will County Land Use Department. “We have a dynamic group committed to this effort and I applaud them for their hard work.”

All survey projects are conducted by qualified professionals that include architectural historian, historical archeologist, or an architect who meets the federal Professional Qualifications Standards. Following Joliet and Troy, the next two projects are prioritized to include Channahon and Jackson Townships.

For more information contact **Amy Munro(815-774-3364 and amunro@willcountylanduse.com)** or go to www.willcountylanduse.com/HPC.