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Great Challenges and Great Opportunity: Historic Preservation in Kennesaw, Georgia

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**Great Challenges and Great Opportunity:
Historic Preservation in Kennesaw, Georgia**

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Master of Public Administration

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Executive Summary

Kennesaw is a small suburban city located in the northern portion of Cobb County of metro Atlanta. The 2000 census put Kennesaw's population at 21,675, but July 2007 estimates put Kennesaw's population at 31,613 people.¹ Kennesaw operates under the Council-Manger form of government which consists of a Mayor, five Council-Members, and a City Manager. All Council-Members are elected City wide, and serve four year terms. The Mayor presides over the Council meetings, but can only vote in the case of tie. Each appointed Commission and Department has a Council liaison.² My internship allowed me to work closely with the Historic Planning Commission. The HPC consists of seven members who are appointed by the Council to serve two year terms.

I interned under Darryl Simmons, Zoning Administrator, in the Planning and Zoning Department. Our department works closely with the HPC to ensure all decisions compliment Kennesaw's Design Standards and Comprehensive Plan. My contributions to Kennesaw's historic preservative efforts have included a number of projects. For the Endangered Properties Project, I identified historic properties that have fallen into disrepair, and threaten the vibrancy of the Historic Districts. For the Plaque Project, I worked with Dr. Drobney of the Southern Museum to identify which properties are deserving of a historic plaque. I analyzed the Georgia Department of Community Affairs *Main Street City Program*, and gave a recommendation to the City. The City and the HPC will likely use my work as a resource for years to come.

¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Estimates 2000 and 2007."
<http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-4.html> {accessed April 20, 2009}.

² The City of Kennesaw, GA, "Historic Preservation Commission 2009."
<http://www.kennesaw.ga.us/index.asp?nid=393> {accessed April, 20 2009}

Section 1: Background on the City of Kennesaw

The ironic thing about Kennesaw is that the two places in the area that are most closely associated with Kennesaw, Kennesaw Mountain and Kennesaw State University, are located just outside of the city limits. Kennesaw has quite a bit of commercial property, but it primary serves as a bedroom community for Atlanta. Furthermore, Kennesaw's Central Business District lacks the vibrancy of nearby cities. Kennesaw, however, will be making a number of improvements to the CBD over the next few years. Kennesaw has developed plans to recreate the historic Lacy Hotel and open a library in the downtown area. Before 1887 Kennesaw was known as Big Shanty and during the Civil War era the Lacy Hotel was a prominent boarding house and restaurant.³ In 1864 Sherman burned the Lacy Hotel and every commercial building in Big Shanty, except the local blacksmith shop.⁴ The new Lacy Hotel Project is in the early design stages and the City is not considering moving forward until the budget situation improves. The Lacy Hotel Project is important to the revitalization of Kennesaw's CBD, but also at the heart of the challenge is improving the visual appearance of Kennesaw's Historic Districts. With the exception of the North Main Street Historic District, most of Kennesaw's historic property is zoned commercial and many of the properties have become blighted over the years. Currently, Kennesaw has twenty historic properties that are unoccupied. Despite Kennesaw's challenges the CBD has a number of things going for it.

³ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 3, sec. 3-1, 3-2, 3-3[2006]

⁴ Joe Bozeman, Robert Jones and Sallie Loy. *Images of America: Kennesaw*. [Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006], 1-2

The Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in downtown Kennesaw is quite a jewel. The building that houses the Museum is a former mill that was restored in the vernacular style typical of southern railroad towns between 1880 and 1920. The Frey family donated the building in 1972 so Kennesaw could have a permanent home for the General.⁵ The General is Kennesaw's most historic landmark. The General was stolen by Union spies in 1862 and the Confederate Army hotly pursued in what became to be known as *The Great Locomotive Chase*. The Museum consistently brings in students and tour groups into the downtown Kennesaw area and helps provide business for some of the attractive nearby shops. Unfortunately, there is very little to attract tourists other than the Museum. The downtown area has absolutely no nightlife and many of the businesses within the CBD are service oriented and close after regular business hours. Many of these businesses are not visually appealing and quite a few of them are located within the Historic Districts.

In my opinion many of the properties in the Historic Districts are in violation of local historic Design Standards, and could be subject to code enforcement. The argument could be made that the current City staff are being constrained by elected officials. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the elected officials fully understand the historic ordinances that they adopted, or if they would allow code enforcement to enforce the code to the fullest extent. Perhaps the clearest case of this is Dent Myers Civil War Surplus and Herb Shop in the heart of downtown Kennesaw. In 1976, Dent Myers opened his Civil War Surplus store. Arguably, he is Kennesaw's most famous citizen.⁶ Over the years, however, the Council has not shown the political will to allow City staff

⁵ Bozeman, Jones and Loy. *Images of America: Kennesaw*, 79-80

⁶ Bozeman, Jones and Loy. *Images of America: Kennesaw*, 113

to sanction Dent Myers. Perhaps things are changing in Kennesaw. At the April 6, 2009 Kennesaw City Council meeting a group of concerned citizens appeared to state their opposition to Dent Myers signage and store content. Because this only happened a few weeks ago, it is unclear what influence their testimony will have on Kennesaw's policy toward Dent Myers. City staff members have informed me that the low turnouts test the political will of the Council. Municipal elections in Kennesaw are held in off years and turnout is often well below 20% of registered voters. Only 13.9% of Kennesaw's registered voters cast ballots in the 2007 Municipal elections and only 16.9% of voters cast ballots in the highly controversial Mayoral runoff that followed in January of 2008.⁷ Because of this, a few concerned citizens speaking out at Council meeting can make a big difference in Kennesaw. Because the staff and appointed Commission members serve at the pleasure of the Council, they have to be aware of the political environment in Kennesaw.

Section 2: The Kennesaw HPC and Background on the Historic Districts

The Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission or HPC is an appointed board that serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and the Council. They are given the right to approve or disapprove of Certificates of Appropriateness applications. Certificate of Appropriateness applications or COA applications are required for a property owner within Kennesaw's Historic Districts to make changes to their property. Kennesaw HPC decisions, however, can be challenged and overturned before the Mayor and the

⁷ Cobb County Board of Elections, "Election Results," <http://www.cobbelections.org/electionresults3.asp> {accessed April 20, 2009}.

Council.⁸ The HPC has a specific protocol that they must follow during the review process. At Kennesaw, Dr. Jeff Drobney of the Southern Museum reviews the COA applications and makes recommendations to the HPC, but the HPC makes the final decision. The HPC must make sure non-design issues such as zoning and land use are addressed with the City. This ties the HPC directly to the Planning and Zoning Department at the City. Furthermore, the issue of notices and signage must be addressed. Before each meeting the HPC must review COA applications to make sure they are complete. The HPC should also visit the properties that are under review.⁹ These steps will ensure that the HPC makes proper decisions on COA applications at their public hearings. In the past the HPC at Kennesaw has not always followed the protocol properly, but the current HPC is efficiently and effectively processing COA applications.

I have been called upon to research the HPC file and a number of historic records and what I have uncovered is that political decisions from decades ago have affected the ability of the City government and the HPC to carry out necessary actions. This has created problems that will be difficult to solve. The lack of uniform code enforcement over the years has allowed property owners within the Historic Districts to do things that are not historic in nature, and detract from the character of the area. I have suggested to the Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Chair some possible solutions, but these solutions would be politically controversial. I have suggested they study the policies of Rome, GA. Rome has clear historic zoning policies, and the Rome website provides excellent resources for homeowners that live in their historic district. Rome clearly states

⁸ The City of Kennesaw, GA, "Historic Preservation Commission 2009." <http://www.kennesaw.ga.us/index.asp?nid=393> {accessed April, 20 2009}

⁹ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 1, sec. 1-6 [2006]

the rights of homeowners in the historic districts.¹⁰ Rome's website is a best practices example for historic websites. Notably, Rome has clear policies for owners of non-contributing properties.

Non-contributing properties within a historic district, must still maintain certain standards. A non-contributing property is a property that is located in a historic district that is historically insignificant. In 2007, Kennesaw adopted their Design Standards, but non-contributing properties are not being forced to comply. Many of the property owners within the Historic Districts have no clue that they live in a Historic District. In order to clear this up the Council would have to allow the City staff to send out letters to all property owners in the Historic Districts informing them of their location. Furthermore, they would need to allow staff to strictly enforce the ordinances. This would be a very controversial political decision, because many home owners and business owners in the Historic Districts have never been forced to follow historic preservation guidelines.

An example is an owner of a 1950s style ranch home that is located next to a historic late nineteenth century Queen Anne cottage would still have to abide by certain standards. The ranch home is non-contributing, but the property owner must comply with the Design Standards.¹¹ Based on my interpretation of the Design Standards a considerable number of non-contributing properties are in major violation. Balancing the regulation of contributing and non-contributing properties is one of the biggest challenges that all historic preservation commissions face.

¹⁰ The City of Rome, GA, "Historic Preservation FAQ." <http://www.rome.ga.us/faq.asp?TID=0&searchTerms=district> {accessed April, 20 2009}

¹¹ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 4, sec. 4.1.4.12[2006]

Historic properties are those properties deemed by the Kennesaw HPC to be contributing to the character of the Kennesaw Historic Districts. Such properties are the most regulated properties within the Historic Districts. Kennesaw, however, does not have any properties that are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The General is individually listed, but the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History as a structure is not individually listed. The Historic Districts as a whole are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It should be noted that including historic districts in the National Register does not protect them. In most states takes local ordinances that protect the historic districts.¹² Of course, individual listings in the National Registry are protected, and often municipalities are not given the option of protecting these properties. An example would be a site like Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. The University of Virginia, as well as the city of Charlottesville could make the decision to level it, but they would not have the right to enforce such a decision. Furthermore, local historic districts that are listed in National Register are not protected by the federal government. Likewise, a municipality could have historic ordinances regardless of whether or not the properties were listed in the National Register. The bottom line is local ordinances are what protect most historic districts.

Camp McDonald was a Confederate training camp in the heart of what is modern day Kennesaw. Camp McDonald is one of the five local historic districts in Kennesaw. There are sketches of Camp McDonald, and the City is fully aware of the location, but the District has no remaining historic significance, at least from a structural standpoint. Because Camp McDonald has lost all of its historic character, I would recommend the

¹² Department of the Interior, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1992

City consider develop the remaining land in order to raise badly needed revenue, or preserve the remaining open land for park space.

Camp McDonald is listed in the National Register, but it is effectively lost to history. Adams Park and a number of sports fields are on the location of the Camp. A historic purist would want to see the Camp McDonald restored, but this is not politically possible or even practical. I would not recommend that Kennesaw close Adams Park and turn it into a Civil War site. Secondly, I do not think the National Park Service would be interested in recreating Camp McDonald. Furthermore, there is property on the Camp McDonald site that could be developed into commercial real estate. The other Historic Districts have retained some of their character and should be the focus of Kennesaw's preservation efforts.

The Cherokee Street Historic District is perhaps the greatest challenge for the HPC, but it has the most potential. The Cherokee Street corridor, which was once the principle wagon trail into the center of Kennesaw, is still at the heart of Kennesaw's Central Business District. Creative business owners have made good use of some of the historic buildings, and the recent Fullers Chase residential development is quite attractive, but many of the properties along Cherokee Street detract from the character of the Historic District as a whole. Non-contributing properties can be the undoing of a historic district if they are not properly regulated. Because many of the non-contributing properties on Cherokee Street have very unattractive signs, and have poorly landscaped grounds they detract from the character of the District. As you travel away from the downtown area on Cherokee Street the area gradually loses its historic significance.

Many of the properties near the center of the town are in excellent condition, but a number of the properties are endangered. It is not hard to see why some of the historic properties have fallen into disrepair. Many of the properties have become residential rental properties.

The Big Shanty Historic District is in the heart of what is historic Kennesaw. Kennesaw was originally known as Big Shanty, but the City incorporated as Kennesaw in 1887. Kennesaw does not have a lot of historic buildings in its downtown area, and it does not have a classic southern square. The center of town, however, has a number of historic and attractive structures. The Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History and the historic train depot are perhaps the most notable structures in the Big Shanty District. As mentioned earlier the Lacy Hotel project is in the early planning stages. The City wants to bring more people into the Central Business District, and they hope this project will spur new development in the CBD. Kennesaw wants more business, but they are having a difficult time addressing the biggest challenge to downtown revitalization.

I briefly mentioned Dent Myers earlier, but I think the problems with his property are one of the biggest threats to historic preservation in Kennesaw. It could be argued that his property is in violation of Kennesaw's Design Standards. There are different opinions at the City on whether Myers practices are grandfathered in, or in direct violation. In January, I was sent by the City of Kennesaw to take pictures of Dent Myers property, and beyond HPC violations he could be in violation of a number of building codes. At this time, I am not sure what the results of my field work will be. The front of

Wildman's store and the actual content of the store are quite controversial, but it will be difficult for Kennesaw to shut down or fine Wildman based on content. I photographed the back entrance to Wildman's property, and I think it could be in violation of safety codes. In the 1980s Myers attached a steel staircase to the front of his property that is not complimentary to the surrounding architecture and it is currently in disrepair. I have recommended that the HPC address the Council about Dent Myers, but I suspect the reason for this inaction is purely political. In my final report to the City, I stated that Dent Myers is likely in violation, and that I feel his presence downtown is having a very detrimental effect on the Central Business District. The building next to Dent Myers property is vacant, and the parcel next to the Whistle Stop Café is a used car lot. Across the street from the car lot is the Eaton Chiropractor Office. Dent Myers' property and the lack of businesses that operate after regular business hours are the biggest challenges to Kennesaw's efforts to revitalize its downtown.

The smallest and perhaps the most charming of Kennesaw's Historic Districts is the Summers Street Historic District. There are a number of eyesores in the District, and I will probably recommend that Kennesaw consider removing some of the properties from the Summers Street Historic District. I do not mean physically removing them. Some properties on Summer Street have lost most of their historic significance. Much of the development on the fringes of the Summers Street Historic District has adversely affected the historic character of the District. Furthermore, a number of properties in the Summers Street area have been lost to neglect over the years, and others are currently endangered. Summers Street, however, has a number of properties that are very appealing and have great potential for commercial development.

The Historic Preservation Commission is currently reviewing all of the properties in the Summer Street Historic District to determine which properties are contributing and non-contributing.¹³ They plan to finish this in one year, but I do not understand why it should take that long. If they take one year on each District it could be as long as five years before the City has officially determined the designation of each property. I hope the HPC will choose to expedite this process. I was able to do a preliminary designation of all of the Historic Districts in Kennesaw over the course of a few weeks. Kennesaw has seventy properties that are regulated as historic, but my findings are that nearly one third of the properties have lost their historic character. A number of structures in Summer Street fall into this category. Most of the Historic Districts face a number of challenges, but one District has far more positives than negatives.

The North Main Street Historic District has the most attractive and well preserved properties in all of Kennesaw. Unlike Cherokee Street, the North Main Street historic is mostly residential, and does not have as many non-contributing properties threatening the very character of the district. The North Main Street Historic District also includes a few other adjacent streets, and it borders the Camp McDonald and Big Shanty Historic Districts. Perhaps, the biggest challenge to the North Main Street district is the number of vacant properties. I have encouraged the City to enforce the Design Standards to the T on North Main Street. These properties are very attractive and crucial to the success of the Historic District as a whole. Like the other Districts, the North Main Street Historic District has a number of properties that I would consider endangered and/or demolition by neglect.

¹³ The City of Kennesaw, GA, *Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Minutes* February [2009].

Demolition by neglect is sometimes hard to determine. The strict definition of demolition by neglect is the intentional neglect of a historic property that will lead to the property being condemned.¹⁴ Some property owners purposely allow their historic properties to fall into disrepair so they can get them condemned. In some central business districts this would allow them to sell the parcel for new development. Some people have this intention, but others cannot afford to make the necessary improvements to the property. In Kennesaw the Historic Preservation Commission chair has recommended that the City enforce demolition by neglect on a number of these properties. The City staff, however, seem unwillingly to enforce demolition by neglect. The staff is not negligent in my opinion. I think strictly enforcing demolition by neglect would result in major headaches for the City. All citizens who feel they have been aggrieved by a decision of the Historic Preservation Commission have the right to appeal before the City Council. As evidenced by the inaction on Dent Myers the City Council would likely support the property owner. According to the City staff most of the endangered historic homes in Kennesaw are owned by people with limited financial resources. The Kennesaw First Baptist Church group has volunteered to provide labor for owners of endangered historic properties, but the city does not have money to provide supplies. The situation, however, is currently being addressed by the City.

I will make a suggestion in my final recommendations to the City that they set aside twenty to thirty thousand dollars per year for aesthetic improvements of endangered properties. This is not an unprecedented recommendation. The city of Douglas in extreme southeastern Georgia sets aside twenty thousand dollars per year for historic

¹⁴ Dan Becker, "Establishing a Demolition by Neglect Ordinance," *The Alliance Review*, February/March 1999 1.

district maintenance. I was informed by the staff that such a recommendation will probably not be approved by the Council, but I at least want to put forth the idea. I am working a proposal that would allow the City staff to provide grants to indigent homeowners in the Historic Districts to provide minor landscaping, and paint assistance for endangered properties. The question of fairness came up when I first put forth this idea, but I responded that these historic properties don't just belong to the owners they belong to the city of Kennesaw. Kennesaw has lost a number of properties over the past twenty years. I have informed the City staff that I think at least ten of Kennesaw's seventy historic properties are endangered. I have also expressed concern that the Design Standards the City adopted in 2007 are not being uniformly enforced.

Section 3: Kennesaw Historic Design Standards

Chapter one of the Design Standards introduces the goals of the City, and the mission of the Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission. It makes note that ADA standards must be met before addressing historic standards. Chapter one clearly states the channels in which property owners within the Historic Districts must go through in order to make changes to their property.¹⁵ Historic property owners in Kennesaw are well aware of this, and most HPC meetings begin with Certificate of Appropriateness applications. The current Kennesaw HPC is accurately enforcing the standards as it applies to recent COA application. The directions are very clear and easy to digest for a homeowner. Furthermore, the HPC should be able to provide pre-planning advice to the property owners before they go through the design process. Chapter one of the Design

¹⁵ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 1, sec. 1.6[2006]

Standards clearly lays out the procedures as well as the process of appeal.¹⁶ Property owners who feel they have been aggrieved by the Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission have the right to appeal to City Council.

Chapter two covers the principles for preservation, as well as infill construction and redevelopment. Infill construction often occurs in downtown areas when developers wish to build additional stores between existing buildings. The new construction must compliment the existing structures. Infill construction is typically not allowed on properties that are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Kennesaw, however, does not have many structures that would be eligible for such a listing. Furthermore, the City of Kennesaw has only a handful of historic buildings in the downtown area. Kennesaw also lacks a classic southern square and downtown.

Kennesaw has one redevelopment project that I would consider a best practices example for other cities to study. The Fullers Chase development was a project where an innovative developer moved some existing old homes into the Cherokee Street Historic District that complimented the surrounding homes in the District.¹⁷ This development also included new housing that was complimentary to the architecture of the District, and has produced quite a bit of property tax revenue for the City. I would advise Kennesaw to seek out other such developments as part of its Comprehensive Plan. Kennesaw's Historic Districts needs new complimentary development, as well as improvements to existing properties.

¹⁶ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 1, sec. 1.7[2006]

¹⁷ Bozeman, Jones and Loy. *Images of America: Kennesaw*, 64

Chapter three of the Design Standards is an overview of the visual character of Kennesaw in the historic sense. Kennesaw has a few Civil War era buildings, and Big Shanty's first landmark the Lacy Hotel was open during the decade prior to the Civil War. Another major landmark of this period Camp McDonald has lost nearly all of its historic significance. The modern Southern Museum is not Antebellum in architectural sense, but it houses the cities most famous landmark "The General." The City has preliminary plans to recreate the Lacy Hotel, so Kennesaw will be putting more emphasis on this period of the its history. Architecturally, however, most of the city's historic properties are not antebellum in nature.

Kennesaw was not a stereotypical antebellum town in the sense of Milledgeville or Madison. In fact, Kennesaw was not even incorporated until 1887, and the town was much more of a railroad outpost than a symbol of the antebellum south. Most of the architecture is vernacular in nature, and most of the historic properties that survive are built in the southern vernacular styles of the 1880-1920 time period.¹⁸ This is important because any new construction that seeks to recreate Kennesaw's past should not be antebellum in nature. The new development should be southern vernacular to truly reflect Kennesaw. Kennesaw was not the home of wealthy planters or a bastion of antebellum architecture. Kennesaw or Big Shanty as it was once known was a working class railroad town. With all that said, I have not seen much evidence that Kennesaw fancies itself as an antebellum city. The design of the new way finding signs accurately reflect a turn of the century southern railroad town, more so than a center of the

¹⁸ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 3, sec. 3.2, 3.3[2006]

plantation economy of the antebellum period. I give the City high marks on understanding its place in history.

Chapter four of the Design Standards gives guidelines for residential construction. Kennesaw needs new construction in its Historic Districts, because this will be as big a part of the revitalization of the CBD as improvements to existing historic property. Many of the concepts from chapter one are revisited in chapter four, but in greater detail. I think the Historic Preservation Commission, City staff and the Council should have a meeting to discuss chapter four of their Design Standards. The Design Standards are very clear, and concise. One thing jumps out at me is the signage issue, as well as the fence and landscape guidelines.¹⁹ This should be a focus area of the City moving forward.

Chapter five covers nonresidential construction within the Historic Districts. This chapter covers landscaping, sidewalks, as well as green space guidelines. Furthermore, this chapter includes what types of trees and shrubs to plant. This aspect of the Design Standards is very critical for Kennesaw because many of historic properties are located in the Central Business District, as well as the Downtown Development Authority zone.²⁰ Many of Kennesaw's historic properties are commercial properties and, since so much of the area is zoned commercial, nonresidential construction will be a key part of Kennesaw's revitalization of its CBD.

¹⁹ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 4, sec. 4.1 [2006]

²⁰ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 5, sec. 5.1[2006]

Chapter six of the Design Standards covers rehabilitation of nonresidential buildings. A key concept is that historic buildings were designed with the pedestrian in mind. This chapter goes into great detail about parking lot regulations, as well as period friendly landscaping.²¹ I will note the Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission, as well as the City staff, are doing an excellent job of enforcing the standards put forth in chapter six. My principle concern is the improper regulation of non-contributing properties. I have looked at a number of COA applications that address this very issue. The HPC has a clear policy on this, as well as on standards for new construction. One of the key issues in any construction in the Historic Districts, whether it is new construction, rehabilitation, or work on non-contributing properties is the choice of proper materials.

Chapter seven of the Design Standards covers residential rehabilitation design guidelines for Kennesaw's historic property. It should be noted that interior design is not regulated by the Kennesaw HPC. Only individual listed historic properties of great significance are subject to interior design regulations. Kennesaw does not have such properties within its Historic Districts. The permitted materials within the Historic Districts are: brick, hard plank, limited use of textured concrete block, wood siding, and wooden shingles.²² The prohibited building materials are: plan concrete block, mirrored glass, metal siding, and vinyl siding. It should also be noted that chain link fences are prohibited on contributing and non-contributing properties. Vinyl fencing is also prohibited. This is true even if the fencing style is much like traditional wooden fences. Vinyl is an unacceptable building material. This chapter also covers: porches and

²¹ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 6, sec. 6.1[2006]

²² The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 17, sec. 7.1, 7.2[2006]

entrances, windows, roofs, chimneys, dormers, as well as, foundations, mechanical systems and additions.²³

I have looked through years of documents, and I have found little evidence that owners of existing non-contributing properties are going through proper channels. I have brought this to the attention of the City staff and the HPC. The fact that these ordinances and previous ordinances have not been uniformly enforced has led to quite a bit of confusion. This problem did not start with the current incarnation of the Kennesaw HPC. The current HPC seems anxious to correct the mistakes of the past and move forward. I have not spoken with any past members of the HPC, but from what I gather the current HPC has some of the most proactive members in Kennesaw HPC history. They have brought a number of problems to my attention, and I am working with them to make the Historic Districts better. My Plaque Project has helped the HPC to expedite the production of historic plaques for Kennesaw's historic properties.

Section 4: Historic Plaque Project

I was called upon by the HPC at the March meeting to photograph and evaluate the plaque worthiness of properties with signed right of entry agreements, as well as those without signed right of entry agreements.²⁴ The City sent out letters to all historic property owners requesting the right to install plaques. The City has installed fifteen plaques as of April 23, 2009, but in my opinion the HPC and the City made a few mistakes. According to local historians, a number of the plaques that have already been

²³ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, ch. 7, sec. 7.3[2006]

²⁴ The City of Kennesaw *HPC Minutes*, March 2009

installed bear the names of families who never lived in the homes. The poor record keeping in the area around the turn of the century has already affected the Plaque Project. In some cases, it is impossible to get an accurate record from that period. According Dr. Drobney at the Southern Museum, as well as local historian Joe Bozeman-co-author of *Images of Kennesaw*, some of the deeds from Kennesaw's period of significance only show the owners of the parcel. Furthermore, previous audits of the historic properties have produced incorrect information. According to fourth generation Kennesaw resident Joe Bozeman, a number of the homes that bear the name Skelton and Gibson have never been occupied by members of those families. Moving forward, I have recommended to the HPC that they consult deeds, previous reviews of the Historic Districts and perhaps most importantly Kennesaw's old families.

My Plaque Project has reduced the number of properties that the HPC will have to review. I have taken photos of every property in the Historic Districts. I have confirmed that fifteen plaques have been installed, and that one of the plaques was stolen. My project also solved the mystery of the Lewis plaque. One of the historic markers was left at City Hall, and I traced it to 2913 South Main Street. Along with Dr. Drobney, I reviewed the remaining properties and we made recommendations to the HPC. We recommended that ten of the properties that have signed right of entry agreements should be denied plaques. We also informed the HPC that of the property owners who have not signed right of entry agreements, nearly half own properties that are not plaque worthy. Of the seventy properties that are currently regulated by the HPC as historic twenty five could be classified as non-contributing or historic obscured. Historic obscured properties are properties that have been modified so much that have lost most of their historic

significance. My work with Dr. Drobney has allowed the HPC to focus on the properties that really matter. Of the first round of plaques that were produced, two went to properties that were not plaque worthy. One such property the Bennett House is historic, but it has fallen into such disrepair that I would consider it endangered.

Section 5: Endangered Properties Project

Previously I discussed the idea of demolition by neglect. Kennesaw does not have a specific ordinance for this, but it is suggested in the National Trust's historic guidelines. The Weeks House on North Main Street is a property that is in violation of HPC Design Standards, but the City sanctioned the homeowner by declaring his property unsafe. I would recommend in the future that the City consider adopting a demolition by neglect ordinance as laid out by Dan Becker Director of Historic Preservation in Raleigh, NC. Becker states clearly that if your state allows for "home rule" you have the right to establish a demolition by neglect ordinance. Becker goes on to say that the lack of a strong demolition by neglect ordinance can result in the loss of historic property, especially if the area is being threatened by development.²⁵ I recommend that Kennesaw consider adopting a demolition by neglect ordinance in the future, but it is not an urgent matter because developers are not anxious to build new structures in the Historic Districts. Moreover, Kennesaw's general building codes prevent property owners from occupying, or renting out unsafe buildings. My recommendation to the HPC and the City is that general building codes be used to force historic property homeowners to make necessary improvements. The City, should however, approach each case on an individual

²⁵ Dan Becker, "Establishing a Demolition by Neglect Ordinance," *The Alliance Review*, February/March 1999 1

basis. Indigent homeowners who live in endangered historic homes and cannot afford to make the necessary improvements should be treated with compassion. As mentioned earlier, the First Baptist Church in Kennesaw has offered to help low income homeowners in the Historic District make the necessary changes.

I have classified five historic properties within the Historic Districts as endangered and I have recommended that the City mail letters to the property owners requesting they make the necessary changes. The City must uniformly enforce the codes as much as possible, but each case has to be looked at individually. A developer with an endangered property should be approached in a different manner than an indigent homeowner that uses an endangered property as their primary residence. I have recommended to the HPC that they approach these cases with caution. In the past, the HPC has come in too strongly and intimidated property owners. The City staff has also recommended the HPC allow for them to contact owners of endangered historic properties by letter, and allow them to visit the property and find out the owners circumstances before threatening them with fines. Many of the commercial properties in the Historic Districts are vacant. There are only two or three endangered properties that serve as the primary residences.

Section 6: Main Street Project

I was called upon by Darryl Simmons to evaluate the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Main Street City Program. I based my analysis on the current budget, and political situation at the city of Kennesaw. The Main Street Affiliate City program has its pros and cons, so I had to do an in-depth analysis of whether it was the

right program for Kennesaw. This work gave me practical insight into the relationship between state agencies, and local government. Whether or not the city of Kennesaw will act upon my recommendation, I fulfilled some of the learning objectives required in this course.

The Main Street City program gives affiliated cities a valuable marketing tool, and it qualifies the city for special advice and resources from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development.²⁶ A number of cities in the area namely Cartersville and Acworth have attained the Main Street City designation, and their downtown areas are very vibrant. It is hard to say if attaining Main Street City status has greatly benefited Cartersville or Acworth, but it shows their commitment to downtown development. Becoming a Main Street City is not an easy or cheap task. I had to consider that when I made my recommendation to Darryl Simmons. Kennesaw has three options. It can try to attain Main Street City designation. It can become a part of the Main Street Affiliate City program, or it can take no action at all. The Main Street Affiliate City program does not give a city the Main Street City designation, but it does allow a city to use some of the program resources without making the full commitments for becoming a Main Street City.²⁷ My analysis for Darryl Simmons was in-depth, and included a final recommendation that I feel was the best fit for Kennesaw. Below is the report I submitted to Darryl Simmons

²⁶ Georgia Department of Community Affairs, "Main street/Better Hometown."
<http://www.mainstreetgeorgia.org/selectionprocess.aspx> {accessed April, 20 2009}

²⁷ Georgia Department of Community Affairs, "Main street/Better Hometown."
<http://www.mainstreetgeorgia.org/selectionprocess.aspx> {accessed April, 20 2009}

There are definitely pros and cons to becoming a Georgia Department of Community Affairs Main Street City or a Main Street Affiliate City. Because of this, the city of Kennesaw should carefully consider if the programs compliment the City's Comprehensive Plan. Main Street City designation would be an excellent marketing tool for the city of Kennesaw, and it would likely help Kennesaw in its attempt to increase tourism, and the overall vibrancy of the CBD, but becoming a Main Street City not a simple process. The nearby cities of Cartersville and Acworth have attained Main Street City status, so it would be in the city of Kennesaw's best interest to research the impact that becoming a Main Street City has had on our neighboring cities.

There are, however, many requirements to gain Main Street City status, and this would require a substantial financial and administrative commitment from the city to gain Main Street City status, and maintain the status. On the other hand, The Main Street City Affiliate City program does not require a major financial commitment, and it would be possible to transition from a Main Street Affiliate City to a Main Street City when the city is ready to make the financial and administrative commitment. The Affiliate program, however, would not provide the city of Kennesaw with the amount of services and resources the Main Street City program would provide.

The process to become a Main Street Affiliate City is not complicated; however, it does not give Kennesaw the right to designate itself as a Main Street City. Kennesaw would have to contact the DCA Main Street Affiliate City program and request they send a representative out to visit Kennesaw. The City would need to demonstrate that they are following the Main Street 4 point plan. The current activities of Kennesaw and the

Downtown Development Authority would likely satisfy this requirement.²⁸ A representative from the DCA would be able to give advice on this during the site visit. After the representative visits, the City would be required to send a letter of commitment signed by the Mayor and some of the staff. A sample of this commitment letter can be found on page twenty of the Main Street Georgia PDF file. It is very straight forward. The forth step is the DCA representatives will confirm the candidate city's qualifications.

When Kennesaw is confirmed, the City would have limited access to the resources offered Main Street Cities. Kennesaw would have access to DCA design assistance. Additionally, the City would be allowed to participate in the DCA office of Downtown Development Authorities regional meetings and the City would receive discounts rates for ODD Main Street City sponsored trainings on things such as economic development, historic preservation, grant writing and design assistance. To sum it up, the City would get the fringe benefits of being a Main Street City,²⁹ and be able to decide if it is cost effective and/or worthwhile for Kennesaw to become a Main Street City. Kennesaw would also be able to learn firsthand how becoming a DCA Main Street City has benefited other cities in our state. In the next two paragraphs I will explain in detail what the benefits of becoming a Main Street City, and the challenges of gaining such status.

²⁸ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, Appendix A-33, A-34 [2006]

²⁹ Georgia Department of Community Affairs, "Main street/Better Hometown."
<http://www.mainstreetgeorgia.org/selectionprocess.aspx> {accessed April, 20 2009}

Main Street City status would provide Kennesaw with a number of valuable tools and resources. When a city becomes a Main Street City it will receive special advice and consultation from DCA on funding opportunities. While they do not guarantee more grant money or access to below market loans, I would assume that Kennesaw would be given preference over non-Main Street City applicants. That is kind of implied in the description. The DCA would also offer free, or highly reduced workshops on economic development, historic preservation and grant writing just to name a few. Main Street Cities also receive special access to other valuable educational tools for their staff. Furthermore, DCA staff would also provide ad-hoc assistance and their expert design teams would provide their services at free or highly reduced costs. An example would be if Kennesaw chose to purchase and redevelop a historic property the DCA would send in a historic design specialist to help with the project. The DCA would also provide support on how to secure a grant and preferential loan money for the project. While they cannot guarantee specific results they will support your efforts to the best of their ability. City staffers would also get the opportunity to attend special DCA Office of Downtown Development meetings.

Becoming a Main Street City is a six month to two year process, and my initial analysis is that Kennesaw could not become a Main Street City in less than one year. I will not name all of the requirements, but a few of the requirements will involve a major commitment. Perhaps the biggest change Kennesaw would have to make is the addition of a Downtown Manager who spends seventy five percent of their time working on downtown development. The DCA requires the downtown manager to have an office that is visible in the downtown area. Furthermore, DCA requires that the downtown

manager be a professional, and receive compensation that is comparable to downtown managers of DCA Main Street Cities in the region. Kennesaw would need to look at what Acworth and Cartersville are paying downtown managers and staff to get an estimate. Also, the City would have to create a board to oversee the Main Street City Program. It is possible, however, that the Kennesaw Downtown Development Authority would qualify, or least be used to form such a board. We would have to inquire from a DCA representative during their initial visit if that is a possibility. The City staff would also be required to attend mandatory meetings, and the City would have to send compliance reports each year to the DCA in order to maintain Main Street City status. The process would require a huge commitment from the City, but overall I think gaining Main Street City status would be beneficial to Kennesaw.

In closing, I would recommend that the city of Kennesaw consider becoming a Main Street Affiliate City. This process could be started by calling the Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development, and setting up a visit from one of their representatives. After the initial visit the DCA ODD representative will make recommendations to the City in order to get in compliance with the standards for a Main Street Affiliate City. I suspect this will not require a dramatic change in Kennesaw's current polices, or require the use of City funds. The next step is the Mayor would need to send a letter of commitment to the DCA ODD. Once this is confirmed Main Street Affiliate City status would be granted to the city of Kennesaw. As I mentioned earlier Kennesaw would only receive fringe benefits from the program, but it would help the City gauge if attaining the Main Street City designation is a worthwhile endeavor.

I will get word in the coming months on whether or not the city of Kennesaw will go forward with my recommendation to apply to be a Main Street Affiliate City. As I stated in the report I think Kennesaw could benefit from the resources the Georgia Department of Community Affairs provides with this program. Kennesaw would get valuable advice on historic development, grant proposals, and the city staff would have access to valuable workshops on historic preservation, economic development and environmental awareness.

Section 7: Best Practices Website Project

In addition to my analysis of the Main Street City program, Darryl Simmons also called upon me to compile a list of city websites for Kennesaw to use as best practices examples for Kennesaw's new webpage. I searched for cities that had similar characteristics to Kennesaw. The cities that I focused on were historic southern towns that have become bedroom communities for burgeoning cities. I chose cities that have populations between twelve and forty thousand people, which have a strong commitment to historic preservation. I chose the cities of: Culpeper, Virginia; Manassas, Virginia; and King's Mountain, North Carolina as best practices examples for Kennesaw to follow.

Culpeper, Virginia is located about forty miles outside of Washington D.C, and like Kennesaw it is a traditional southern town, that became a bedroom community for a large city.³⁰ Culpeper like Kennesaw has experienced enormous growth this decade. In 2000, Culpeper had a population of 9,700, but the 2007 Census estimate puts Culpeper's

³⁰ The City of Culpeper, Virginia <http://www.culpeper.to/> {accessed April, 20 2009}

population at 13,497.³¹ Culpeper like Kennesaw is located near a number of Civil War battlefields. I recommended Culpeper's website, but I also made note of the fact that Culpeper did a good job of promoting Civil War tourism without glorifying the Confederacy. The same could be said about Manassas, Virginia.

Manassas is located about the same distance from the center of D.C, as Kennesaw is from downtown Atlanta and, like Kennesaw and Culpeper; Manassas is located near a number of Civil War battle sites. In 2000, Manassas had a population of 35,360 but the 2007 Census estimate puts Manassas at 36,089.³² The Manassas city website accents the city's history, but also gives the image of a diverse and vibrant community that embodies the spirit of the new south.³³ I also think the city of Kennesaw could learn a lot from these cities on the historic preservation front. Culpeper, in particular, has been promoted by National Trust as a best practices example for historic preservation ordinances. Manassas does an especially good job of promoting Civil War tourism, and their photography and general site layout is very appealing.

I also suggested King's Mountain North Carolina, because it is an ex-urban bedroom community of Charlotte that is located near a national battlefield park.³⁴ Of course, Kings Mountain was the site of a Revolutionary War battle, but the city still has a number of similarities with Kennesaw. In 2000, Kings Mountain had a population of

³¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Estimates 2000 and 2007." <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-4.html> {accessed April 20, 2009}.

³² U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Estimates 2000 and 2007." <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-4.html> {accessed April 20, 2009}.

³³ The City of Manassas, Virginia <http://www.manassascity.org/> {accessed April 20, 2009}

³⁴ The City of Kings Mountain, NC <http://www.cityofkm.com> {accessed April, 20 2009}

10,353, but the 2007 Census estimates put Kings Mountain's population at 11,046.³⁵ I suggested to Darryl Simmons that the city of Kennesaw look at these cities I mentioned for other ideas beyond web design. Kennesaw's sister cities seem to have innovative programs, and thriving historic tourism industries. Kennesaw has a lot of potential, but the local Civil War sites, and the current Historic Districts are not attracting a lot of tourists to the area. The main draw is the Southern Museum, but many of the tourists that are coming to the Museum are not putting much money back into Kennesaw's economy. Of course, there are a number of attractive shops around Kennesaw, but Kennesaw is not attracting as many people to its downtown as neighboring Cartersville and Acworth.

Cartersville and Acworth have far less historical significance than the city of Kennesaw, but they have more classic main street areas, and their central business districts are thriving. I also included Cartersville and Acworth websites for the City to review, and as I mentioned earlier I included Rome's historic preservation ordinance page to the city staff, as well as the HPC. Rome has the best HPC guidelines page that I have seen, and their FAQ page answers any conceivable question a property owner in their historic districts might have. Overall, Rome has many best practices examples that Kennesaw could follow.

Section 8: HPC Recommendations

I have learned a lot from Darryl Simmons that I could not learn from scholarly book or article. The other employees at the City have been very welcoming, and helpful to me from day one. Admittedly, most of my work will be felt years down the road, but I

³⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population Estimates 2000 and 2007." <http://www.census.gov/popest/cities/SUB-EST2007-4.html> {accessed April 20, 2009}.

feel like I am gaining valuable insight each day that I am at the city of Kennesaw. Over the next few pages I will summarize my suggestions. First and foremost, I will address the Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission and my concerns about non-contributing properties. The HPC is very concerned about a few minor issues with historic property owners, but the non-contributing properties are threatening the character of the Historic Districts. The HPC has really improved over the four months that I have been here. Of course, I cannot take full credit for the HPC's improvement, but hopefully they will use my research as resource for years to come.

I have written an entire paper on the historic preservation challenges that Kennesaw is facing, but most of my suggestions are already included in the Design Standards, and grant programs. I think the grant programs that the City offers for façade improvements of historic properties in the CBD, and the programs the HPC has for façade improvements of residential homes in the Districts are more than adequate.³⁶ From what I have gathered many of the property owners are unaware that such programs exist. The City sends out letters, but it is unclear how many people are actually reading the letters and researching the programs. The City had a number of historic property owners attend a recent historic workshop. That is a positive first step. As I mentioned in an email to the HPC Chair Cindi Michaels, I think it is very important for the HPC to improve communications between the HPC and the homeowners. I have suggested that the HPC bring more of their concerns to the City Council, rather than the City staff. Many of the requests for action that the HPC has would be very controversial, and would likely cause citizens to file grievances with the Council. What the HPC needs to

³⁶ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, Appendix A-31, A-33, A-34 [2006]

understand is they will be much more powerful if they get the community behind them. If they encourage people living in the Historic Districts to contact their City Council, and attend more HPC meetings they will be a much more effective entity.

My field work over the course of my internship has yielded substantial results and has definitely expedited many of the HPC's projects. I completed the task of inspecting all of the historic plaques that have been placed in the Historic Districts for accuracy and I determined which sites have not received plaques or have missing plaques. I also made preliminary assessments on properties in all of the Historic Districts to determine if each property is contributing, non-contributing, endangered, or historic non-contributing. The HPC would not be able to formerly recognize my preliminary assessments, but my assessments could serve as a guide for their long term plans. The HPC has made it a goal to access one District a year, but this process could take several years, and I think this is very inefficient. It is my sincere hope that my work will help expedite the process.

Section 9: Grant Research and Recommendations

I have made a number of criticisms of the HPC, but the group is really coming into its own. From all accounts the latest incarnation of the HPC is the most effective group in the history of the HPC. The current group has come up with a number of innovative ideas that will promote historic preservation in the Kennesaw. An HPC member came up with an idea to do a Christmas tour of homes in the Historic Districts Kennesaw. Also a member of the City staff has done preliminary research on a year round self-guided walking tour. I think these are wonderful ideas, and such plans should be expedited. Of course, the funding for a self-guided walking tour may not be in the

budget for several years, but I have researched a number of grant proposals. I asked and received grant proposals applications from the city of Brownville, Nebraska, and Roswell, Georgia.³⁷ From these proposals I wrote a summary about how Kennesaw could emulate the grant proposals to meet their needs. Through Preserve America, Kennesaw can receive matching funds for the implementation of a self-guided historic district walking tour. The grant would include money for way finding signs, maps, and development of a DVD on Kennesaw to show at the Visitors Center. I think such a program would be very compatible with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Whether or not Kennesaw uses my grant proposal idea, I gained valuable experience about how the grant process works. My correspondence with grant writers from Roswell, Georgia and Brownville, Nebraska was very educational, and fulfilled a number of my learning objectives.

I have presented a number of ideas to the City about how they can improve their Historic District, but my main suggestion is they learn more about the ordinances they already have on the books and better promote existing grant programs. I think it would be productive in the City staff, HPC and the City Council got together for a Historic Preservation work session. This would give all of the decision makers the opportunity strenuously go over the current historic Design Standards, and what they can do to better enforce the ordinances which are on the books. I would suggest the City determine all of the violations, but send out letters to all of the property owners, especially non-contributing property owners, and inform them of their code violations. I would not

³⁷ United States National Park Service "Preserve America Funded Projects"
http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/download/Full_Grant_list.pdf{accessed April 20, 2009}.

suggest fining people because the codes have not been properly enforced for decades. I would suggest a 2 year grace period for non-endangered properties to get in compliance with the Design Standards. The sign code violations would be especially controversial because many local businesses are struggling, but long term, this has to happen.

I would also suggest that the City send out a number of letters informing citizens of grant programs that are available to them from the City, and the Downtown Development Authority. Of course, the City might have to wait until the fiscal situation improves, but I think the biggest problem with the grant programs are that many of the property owners are unaware these resources are available to the them. Not all of the rehabilitation financial incentives require City funding.³⁸

The *Georgia State Income Tax Credit Program For Rehabilitated Historic Properties* allows owners of residential and commercial properties alike to take up to a \$5000 dollar tax credit for rehabilitation projects. The Federally funded *Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit (RICA)* provides tax incentives to historic properties that are being used for commercial property. The *Georgia State Preferential Property Tax Assessment Program for Rehabilitated Properties* freezes property taxes for certified rehabilitation for up to eight years. Locally the City has some great programs, but at the moment not one property owner is taking advantage of them. The *Kennesaw Façade Improvement Grant Program* allows up to \$100,000 for exterior improvements in the areas administered by the Kennesaw Downtown Development Authority. The *Kennesaw Historic Preservation Grant Program* allows grants for up to 50% of a property owner's

³⁸ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, Appendix A-26 [2006]

exterior improvement and provides matches up \$10,000.³⁹ The City informed the property owners who attended a recent workshop of these incentives, but letters and perhaps more important face to face contacts will be required to fully educate the public. I was informed by the City staff that some of the historic property owners refused to sign right of entry agreements for plaques because they feared it would give the City more power over them. Moreover, the grant programs could seem too good to be true, so I think it is important that the City staff, as well as the HPC, visit homeowners and explain to them the incentives that are available to them to improve their properties.

Section 10: Conclusion

In closing, I think Kennesaw has a number of challenges, but Kennesaw also has a lot of things going for it. Kennesaw has a relatively well educated and mostly middle income population. Kennesaw has a relatively low crime rate and high performing public schools. Of course, Kennesaw has some eyesores, but the City has the potential to revitalize these areas. While I think the governance of the Historic Districts could be better, the City has a number of great resources available. The Southern Museum is very attractive and the proposed Lacy Hotel project downtown will likely increase the number of visitors to Kennesaw's downtown area. Plans are already in motion for part of the project, which includes a walkway from the train depot to the other side of Main Street. As I have alluded, Kennesaw needs to enforce what it has on the books and do it in a non-heavy handed manner. I suggested Kennesaw give non-contributing properties up to two years to make necessary changes. I hope that my work

³⁹ The City of Kennesaw, GA, Kennesaw Historic Preservation Commission Design Standards, Appendix A-26 [2006]

here will resonate for years to come. I think my recommendations would greatly benefit historic preservation in the city of Kennesaw.