

CITY OF NEW ALBANY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

December 19, 2006

CITY OF NEW ALBANY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DISTRICTS

MANSION ROW
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT
SINCE 1999

DOWNTOWN NEW ALBANY
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT
SINCE 2002

CEDAR BOUGH PLACE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT
SINCE 2002

SPRING STREET
HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICT
SINCE 2003

Mr. Ted Heavrin
President
Floyd County Board of Commissioners
311 Hauss Square
City-County Building, Room 214
New Albany, IN 47150

Re: Silvercrest Hospital

Dear Mr. Heavrin:

The New Albany Historic Preservation Commission (NAHPC) is a volunteer branch of the City government that works to preserve New Albany's rich, nationally recognized historic heritage. The NAHPC consists of nine voting members, an *ex officio* city advisor, and a contracted historic preservation expert. The NAHPC meets monthly at the City-County Building to review Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) applications for properties located in our four historic districts (Mansion Row, Downtown, East Spring Street and Cedar Bough Place). In addition to our administrative functions, we also work to actively promote preservation and revitalization-related activities throughout the City.

The NAHPC is concerned with comments made about the Silvercrest Hospital Historic Site in a recent (12/13) *Courier-Journal* article titled "Floyd Youth Center Debated." The article references the pending determination of whether the site is "historic." The term "historic" refers to the site as being *eligible* for the National Register of Historic Places. Contrary to the sense of dread portrayed in the article, being listed on the National Register has many benefits.

The National Register is the official list of significant places in our local, state, and national history. Listings on the National Register (sites, buildings, districts, structures, and even objects) provide our community with a material connection to the past. It is these connections that make New Albany a distinct and special place. Besides the honor and prestige of a listing, National Register designation affords owners of listed properties the opportunity to access investment tax credits for certified rehabilitation work. In some cases, federal rehabilitation grants are also available, particularly if a government or non-profit entity is involved in the ownership.

The tax credits are by far the key tools for making rehabilitation projects feasible. There are both federal and state tax credits available equaling 20 percent of rehabilitation costs for qualified work for income-producing properties that are certified historic buildings. By participating in both programs, a net subsidy equaling 40 percent of qualified rehabilitation costs is potentially achievable. A non-profit entity such as the County could potentially

partner with a for-profit developer who could benefit from the tax credits as part of a rehabilitation project for Silvercrest.

In order to qualify for the tax credits, all work must meet the federal Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. These Standards, while demanding, do offer a degree of flexibility for adaptive re-use of historic buildings. It would be premature to dismiss use of the Standards without a thorough investigation of their applicability within the context of the County's proposed plans for the building.

The Courier-Journal story indicated that the historic status of the Silvercrest site was being evaluated. In fact, Silvercrest has, in fact, already been designated as being National Register-eligible. The *City of New Albany Interim Report*, published in 1994, identified 10 structures in the potential district as being contributing – meaning that as a district, they are eligible for nomination.

Architecturally, four of the original Art Deco-style buildings were noted as being “among the finest in New Albany.” Historically, the site is noteworthy as a Public Works Administration project completed in 1940, at the end of the Depression Era, and clearly represents an outstanding example of workmanship from that time period. At that time, it was a state-of-the-art facility that treated patients suffering from tuberculosis, also known as consumption.

Given the historical significance of the site, it is our hope that vigorous attempts will be made to adaptively re-use the buildings by the County or another governmental agency. Should this not occur, steps should be taken to market the property for re-use through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process prior to any plans being made to raze structures. The Preservation Commission can even offer assistance in marketing the property by listing it on HistoricNewAlbany.com, a website created through a collaboration of state and local preservation-minded organizations specifically to market historic properties in New Albany.

Our Commission strongly urges state and county officials to engage in dialogue with city officials, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, and local preservation organizations in the evaluation and possible reuses of the Silvercrest Hospital Historic Site. New Albany's historically and architecturally significant sites and structures are worth more to the long-term strength and viability of the community preserved, reused, and intact rather than preserved as photographs and fading memories.

Respectfully,



Ted Fulmore

Chair, New Albany Historic Preservation Commission

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