



**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

*Planning Division*

**m e m o r a n d u m**

**TO:** Historic Preservation Commission

**FROM:** Rebecca Bird, Planner

**DATE:** March 27, 2009

**SUBJECT:** T-Mobile USA, Inc. Donation for Historic Preservation Activity

---

On March 19, 2009, the City of Urbana received a letter from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) with a donation for \$5,000 for Historic Preservation activities in Urbana. The donation, from T-Mobile, is intended to mitigate the adverse effect from the construction of a radio tower on a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. IHPA has reserved the right to approve how the money is spent.

The University of Illinois built a radio tower for WILL Radio at 1106/1110 W. Main Street in 2007 to replace an existing radio tower whose signal was going to be blocked by a new apartment building. The University did not apply for or receive zoning approval from the City of Urbana to erect the new tower. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires the University take into account the effect of their undertakings on historic properties via a public process. The Warm Air Research House is located one block from the new radio tower at 1108 W. Stoughton Street and is listed on the National Register. Constructing the new radio tower should have triggered the Section 106 review process.

T-Mobile requested a Special Use Permit from the City in early 2008 to allow them to locate nine antennae on the WILL radio tower. The issue was not raised at that time about Federal or State review for effects on historic resources. Shortly thereafter, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency became apprised of the situation. According to IHPA, the donation from T-Mobile constitutes adequate mitigation for the previously non-compliant radio tower adjacent to the Warm Air Research House.

**Historic Preservation Activities**

The donation is to be spent on preservation activities in Urbana. According to the letter from Anne Haaker that accompanied the donation, the “donation is provided to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission for the sole purpose of carrying out a distinct preservation action in Urbana such as a survey or National Register nomination.

## **Preservation Directives from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan**

### ***Goal I.0 Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana's established residential neighborhoods.***

#### *Objectives*

- 1.1 Promote the organization of neighborhood groups to help advocate for neighborhood preservation and enhancement.*
- 1.2 Encourage investment in older properties to help maintain their appearance and long-term potential.*
- 1.3 Promote the improvement of existing structures through the enforcement of property maintenance codes.*
- 1.4 Promote established neighborhoods close to campus and the downtown as attractive places for people to live.*
- 1.5 Ensure appropriate zoning in established neighborhoods to help foster the overall goals for each unique area.*

### ***Goal I2.0 Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique.***

#### *Objectives*

- 12.1 Identify and protect neighborhoods and areas that contain significant historical and cultural resources.*
- 12.2 Pursue the establishment of historic landmark and/or historic district status for sites that have contributed to the history of Urbana.*
- 12.3 Encourage public/private partnerships to preserve and restore historic structures/sites.*
- 12.4 Promote and educate the public about the benefits of historic preservation.*
- 12.5 Preserve and maintain brick sidewalks and streets which are unique to Urbana's older neighborhoods consistent with the city's Brick Sidewalk Plan.*

### ***Implementation Strategies***

- *Update historic surveys of older neighborhoods in order to develop an inventory of historic resources.*
- *Study the feasibility of initiating a low-interest loan or grant/match program for exterior renovation projects on structures that have been designated as "historic" under the Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance.*
- *Designate downtown Urbana and portions of West Main Street (where appropriate) for historic district status.*
- *Designate civic buildings that contribute to Urbana's history for landmark status.*

## Possible Preservation Projects/Programs

Below is a list of possible preservation projects/programs:

1. *Historic Resource Surveys.* When the City Council adopted a demolition delay ordinance in November 2007, the list of properties subject to the 45-day delay in the issuance of a demolition permit was comprised of properties for which the City had a historic resource survey as well as properties in selected blocks of East Urbana that were identified by Councilmember Roberts which had not yet undergone historic resource surveys. The donation could be used to do a partial reconnaissance survey of this area in East Urbana, generally bounded by Urbana Street on the west, the railroad tracks on the north, Lynn Street on the east, and Illinois Street on the south, and then intensive surveys of properties of greater historic significance. The 2005 Urbana Comprehensive Plan also identifies updating historic resource surveys as a strategy to “Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique” (Comp Plan, p 91).
2. *Historic Recognition Grant Program.* In February 2007, the Urbana City Council and the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission held a joint meeting to discuss historic preservation in Urbana. The City Council then directed staff to work on a recognition grant program and/or a revolving loan program. Both the grant and the loan programs are listed in the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan, p 92) as strategies to “Preserve and enhance the character of Urbana’s established residential neighborhoods” and to “Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique.” The grant program would provide matching grants for the rehabilitation of locally-designated historic landmarks and properties in historic districts. The T-Mobile donation could be used to set up and provide seed money for such a program. As this program is not a survey or a National Register nomination as IHPA suggests, this program would need approval from IHPA.
3. *Revolving Loan Program for Historic Properties.* As with the grant program above, this program also has a policy basis in both the Comprehensive Plan and by City Council direction. A revolving loan program would provide low interest loans for the exterior rehabilitation of landmarks and properties in historic districts. This program would take more staff time to set up and require a larger amount of seed money to start, but the money would then be paid back into the program, unlike with a grant program. An additional issue with this program is that \$5,000 would not provide sufficient capital to start the program and additional funding would be needed. As with the grant program, City staff would need to confirm with IHPA that a loan program would be an acceptable project.
4. *Downtown Historic District.* The Comprehensive Plan identifies pursuing a historic district for the historic part of downtown Urbana as being an implementation strategy to further the goal of ‘Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique’ (Comp Plan, p 92). The donation could be used to pursue a historic district designation for the downtown area. If there were sufficient property owner support, the district could be

locally-designated. If there were not sufficient support, the district could be National Register-designated, which would qualify property owners for a federal income-tax credit of 20 percent of rehabilitation costs for income-producing properties.

5. *Designate Civic Buildings as Landmarks.* Pursuing landmark status for civic buildings that contribute to Urbana’s history is an implementation strategy in the Comprehensive Plan to “Preserve the characteristics that make Urbana unique” (Comp Plan, p 92). The T-Mobile donation could fund a study of civic buildings such as the courthouse, the library, schools, churches, etc. and pursue landmark designation or National Register listing where appropriate.

### **Other Preservation Projects**

The above-listed projects and programs have a policy basis from the Comprehensive Plan and other City Council directives. However, the following are also possible projects that the Historic Preservation Commission could recommend for the T-Mobile donation:

- *National Register District for West Urbana Neighborhood*
- *Research and recognition of Urbana’s Noble, Pulitzer, and other award winners who have made substantial contributions in their fields*

### **Recommendations**

The Historic Preservation Commission should discuss the historic preservation activities listed above and provide a recommendation to City Council of one or more preservation projects (top choice should be indicated) that should be funded with the donation from T-Mobile.

Attachment:            Letter from IHPA



**Illinois Historic  
Preservation Agency**

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • [www.illinois-history.gov](http://www.illinois-history.gov)

March 18, 2009

Alice Novak, Chair  
Urbana Historic Preservation Commission  
601 W. Delaware  
Urbana, IL 61801

Dear Ms. Novak:

Please find enclosed a check to the City of Urbana, Historic Preservation Commission from T-Mobile in the amount of \$5,000.

This check is provided to mitigate the adverse effect of construction of a radio tower behind the Warm Air Research House by the University of Illinois. The tower was constructed without the requisite approval required by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. This action was discovered when T-Mobile sought to co-locate cellular phone antennas on the tower. As such, they found it in their best interest to provide mitigative relief on behalf of the University.

This money is provided to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission for the sole purpose of carrying out a distinct preservation action in Urbana such as a survey or National Register nomination. We reserve the right to approve the action or product to ensure the money is spent for historic preservation purposes. Please inform us as soon as the Commission decides how the money will be spent.

If you have any questions, please call me at 217/785-5027.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker  
Deputy State Historic  
Preservation Officer



**Illinois Historic  
Preservation Agency**

FAX (217) 782-8161

1 Old State Capitol Plaza • Springfield, Illinois 62701-1512 • [www.illinois-history.gov](http://www.illinois-history.gov)

Champaign County  
Urbana

Telecommunications Antennae, Radio Tower Installation  
1110 West Main St.  
TRILEAF-200153  
IHPA Log #011011608

March 18, 2009

Mary Crowl  
T-Mobile USA, Inc.  
8550 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., #100  
Chicago, IL 60631-3201

Dear Ms. Crowl:

Thank you for the donation to the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission. This will constitute adequate mitigation for the previously non-compliant radio tower immediately adjacent to the Warm Air Research House. This property, at 1108 Stoughton, is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In our opinion, the act of T Mobile co-locating on this tower will now constitute a no adverse effect on this National Register property.

Sincerely,

Anne E. Haaker  
Deputy State Historic  
Preservation Officer

c: Don Johnson, FCC  
Melvyn Skvarla, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Alice Novak, Urbana Historic Preservation Commission