

## 'ALMOST LOST' TELLS GRASS-ROOTS SUCCESS STORY

Grand Rapids neighbors work together for historic preservation

TRAVERSE CITY (Mich.) -- Americans are hungry for good news from their cities, and here's a heartening example from the heartland, with mouth-wateringly beautiful photographs to pull you in.

*Almost Lost, Building and Preserving Heritage Hill, Grand Rapids, Michigan* begins like a suspense novel, with the startling declaration, "We almost lost it." Turn to a full-page, black-and-white photograph of wrecking cranes demolishing the 1888 Romanesque Revival, Grand Rapids City Hall. That image clearly demonstrates what was at stake when well-meaning urban renewal projects threatened the old houses on Heritage Hill.

Thanks to local advocacy groups and government recognition, Heritage Hill Historic District is saved -  
- for all kinds of residents.

"Variety" is a keynote sounded throughout the story, from diversity of architectural styles, home cost and scale, to diversity of residential population. Author Thomas Logan identifies and discusses 15 major architectural styles found on Heritage Hill. Many black-and-white and warm color photographs, along with contemporary and modern drawings, illustrate each style with both "grand" and "humble" examples. A generous complement of maps serves to guide readers through the historical terrain.

Thomas Logan and his wife Anne have lived in the Heritage Hill Historic District of urban Grand Rapids, Michigan for over 20 years. A background in regional planning and a long-standing interest in architecture made Tom an ideal volunteer historian for the area's annual home tour, and his book project grew out of these interests and experience.

The author notes that Heritage Hill is home to a variety of residents today. While celebrating the diversity of neighborhood residents, he does not shy away from difficult questions often ignored in purely celebratory local histories. He addresses objections that might be made to the use of government in preserving what unrestrained market forces might otherwise sweep away, and he acknowledges that "gentrification" of urban neighborhoods excludes many low-income families.

But he also points out that Heritage Hill is not a museum. It is a renewed and still living neighborhood, thanks to the energy of residents determined not to let it be lost. Cities--and citizens--across the United States have a lot to learn from this book.

*Almost Lost: Building and Preserving Heritage Hill, Grand Rapids, Michigan* (Arbutus Press 2004)

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