

# Seneca officials submit new historic district guidelines

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**SENECA** — City Planner Tamy Sanford submitted the planning and development office's proposed new guidelines for Seneca's historic and design review districts to the city's Planning Committee Monday for review.

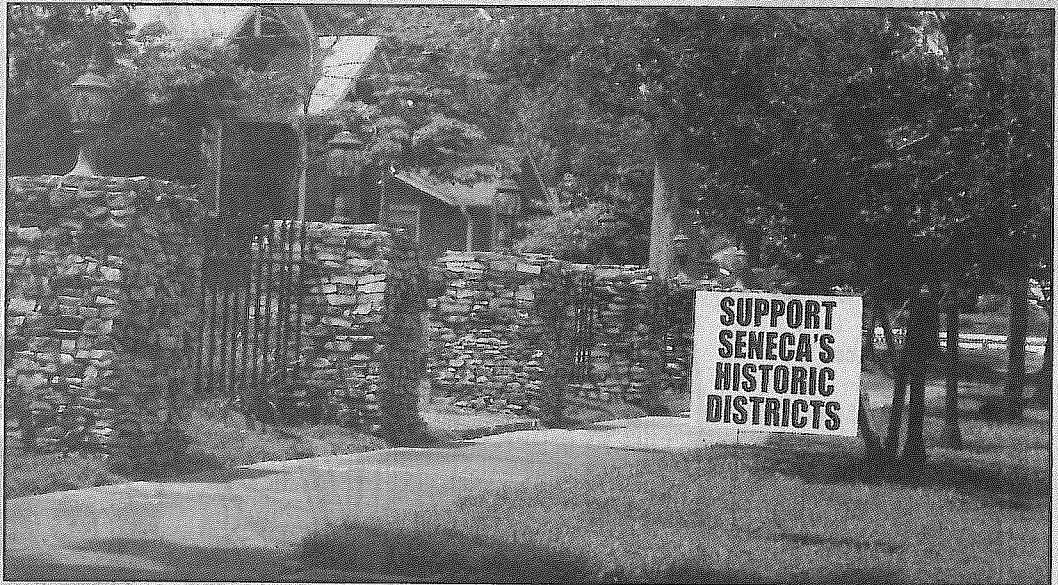
Seneca's historic district and its broader design review district were first brought to the city's public attention in February 2008, when local developer Spencer Wilson was given a municipal court citation and fined \$500 for violating a stop-work order that had been issued due to Wilson's failure to comply with board of architectural review (BAR) guidelines for a home he'd renovated. The 203 E.S. 2nd St. home was within the design review district.

Sanford said the new guidelines are not necessarily less stringent, but simply better defined.

"The significant change here is that these guidelines give measurable criteria and eliminate much of the ambiguity," Sanford said. "The guidelines we have now are more generalized."

The guidelines for historic preservation and conservation were originally enacted in August 2000.

The new guidelines maintain a historic district and a conservation district that "appear similar to historic districts in character," but have less demanding criteria.



Andrew Moore/Staff

**Historic homes line Fair Play Street in Seneca.** The city of Seneca's planning and development department submitted a new draft of guidelines Monday to govern its historical and design review districts.

The plan clearly delineates a design review process through a flow-chart diagram, illustrating a four-step process by which one may alter his or her home within the districts.

The first step requires obtaining an application and hearing date, as well as a conference with the planning staff to review the scope of the work to be done on the property. After that, a certificate of appropriateness (COA) application must be completed, after which the staff will evaluate the submission and document any changes that may be needed.

A public hearing with the BAR is then scheduled. Denied applications may be appealed.

The details of the new

guidelines provide clearly documented rules, such as policies stating that historic fences 50 years or older cannot be altered or moved, and that side yard fences placed from the street to a distance of 10 feet beyond the public façade cannot exceed 48 inches.

Walls of solid masonry construction within the front setback are permitted up to 24 inches in height, while deteriorating walls must be rebuilt using original materials or materials that match the original as closely as possible.

The guidelines also specifically detail façade styles, porch and roofing styles and their appropriateness within the historic period of the rest of the home being renovated.

Planning and development staff looked at other communities' historic districts to get an idea of how to better meet the needs of Seneca's downtown area. Such communities included Columbia, Greenville and Florence. The process for the re-draft began in February 2008.

The proposed new guidelines will soon be posted on the city's Web site, [www.senescasc.us](http://www.senescasc.us), Sanford said. The new draft is just beginning its journey through the city's approval process.

"The Planning Committee will make a recommendation to City Council," Planning and Development Director Ed Halbig said of the next stages of the plan. "It will then have to pass through two readings in council."