

#### PART FOUR: SUMMARY

Montgomery Schuyler, in his 1895 commemorative piece on the life and works of Richard Morris Hunt, presented a succinct statement of the national significance of Newport's resort architecture:

The expansion of the Newport Cottage of 1855 into the Newport Palace of 1895 affords an epitome of the history of the United States for the interval and furnishes matter for the discourse of the social philosopher as well as of the architectural critic.

The time has come for this aspect of Newport's heritage -- so much a part of our national heritage -- not only to be recognized, but conserved. Newport's Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood retains many of the finest and most characteristic of the city's summer homes. The great palaces of the 1890's are not found here, but all that went before is presented to great advantage in this area: the relatively small Greek Revival style cottages of the 1830's, the wood and stone "villas" of the 1840's and 50's, the second empire mansards of the 1860's and early 70's, Stick Style and Queen Anne houses of the later 70's and 1880's. The beauty and history of this neighborhood merit preservation, and in order for the area to be preserved for the benefit of present and future generations, it must be protected.

In the past forty years changes have taken place in the Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road neighborhood which detract from its charm and historic integrity. There has been a fair amount of new construction, in-filling between the nineteenth century structures, which is visually disruptive. The greatest cause for alarm, however, is the unfeeling alterations to the original buildings which rob them of their character. Almost none of the major houses in the area are owner-occupied. Most have been converted to use as apartments. In some instances this has led to downgrading of the property.

## PART FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood has been entered on the National Register of Historic Places. Thus it has limited protection from potentially damaging federal funded or licensed projects. Additionally, by virtue of inclusion on the National Register, properties within the district are eligible for 50 percent federal matching grants for restoration work. Beyond inclusion on the Register, the following suggestions are worth considering as protective measures intended to preserve the architectural and historic integrity of the Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood:

(A) The present Newport Historic District should be extended east to include the Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road neighborhood. Legal zoning protection is necessary if any practical efforts are to be made to keep the area intact. A legally constituted local historic district zoning commission can guide new construction, control future subdivision of property, deter the destruction of the architectural character of building exteriors, and prevent demolition. Newport's current master plan specifically recognizes the appropriateness and value of preserving the city's architectural heritage. But only a concrete step like extending historical zoning controls can make that goal a reality.

(B) The desire expressed in the master plan to preserve Newport's heritage should be fully explored by a committee working with the City Planning Department to the end of producing other concrete implementation proposals to be presented to the City Council.

(C) The Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood should be added to the area of Newport designated a National Historic Landmark.

(D) The Historic District Commission might consider the possibility of substituting architectural detail fabricated from synthetic materials for decayed wooden sections. This would preserve the architectural character of buildings, while at the same time cutting down on the cost of maintenance.

(E) The one commercial district within the neighborhood -- northern Bellevue Avenue -- is basically an attractive street. It could be yet more attractive if its older buildings were renovated to maximize their architectural potential. This does not mean covering them with false "colonial" detail. What should be done would involve returning them to a condition resembling their original appearance. Just such an effort is currently planned for the Samuel Pratt House at 49 Bellevue Avenue. A real estate and insurance firm is restoring it. The structure as renovated will not only provide convenient working space, it will be an eye-catching advertisement for a firm deeply interested in the buildings of the city.

(F) Yet business interests located in the area are the major threat to buildings in the area in terms of demolition, and every effort should be made to coordinate preservation planning with the needs of the established business community. When the needs of a particular business are not appropriate to the character of the neighborhood the possibility of moving that business out of the area should be explored by the Historic District Commission working with the City Planning Department and the firm involved.

(G) The interiors of buildings within an historic district are not usually considered for preservation control, and for that reason frequently are not surveyed. The interiors of certain of the houses in the Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood are of such importance in the artistic and social histories of this nation, however, that consideration must be given to protecting the finest of these. This end may be appropriately accomplished by the purchase of deed easements, restricting alteration of the interiors.

(H) One or two of the houses in the area ought to be studied as possible house museums.

(I) A series of house tours of the neighborhood would make it better known and more fully appreciated.

(J) To the same end, identifying houses with markers bearing date and architect would make their history more accessible to passers-by and give them the prestige of being "plaque" houses.

(K) A walking tour guide to the area has been written, and may be found in Anne Randall's Newport: A Tour Guide. However, the convenient and less expensive set of guide-maps published by the Preservation Society of Newport County does not include a map of the Kay-Catherine-Old Beach Road area. A guide map should be developed for this neighborhood.

(L) As Newport is very much a city of neighborhoods, each concerned with its own doings, the interests of the Kay Street - Catherine Street - Old Beach Road neighborhood would be best served by formation of a group dedicated to its improvement and retention of its historic and architectural character.