



WILDWOOD

January 27, 2022

MEMORANDUM

To: Wildwood Historic Preservation Commission Members

From: Department of Planning and Parks

Re: Request to Remove the Historic Asset Marycliff from Wildwood Historic Register (**Ward Six**)

Cc: The Honorable James R. Bowlin, Mayor
The Honorable City Council of Wildwood
Steve Cross, City Administrator
John A. Young, City Attorney
Rick Brown, P.E. and P.T.O.E., Director of Public Works
Melanie Rippetoe, Assistant Director of Planning and Parks
Travis Newberry, Senior Planner

BACKGROUND

The City of Wildwood has had a strong commitment to historic preservation since its inception. In 1996, the City Council formed an advisory commission to assist in beginning a program of education, preservation, protection, and restoration of historic assets. In 1999, the standing Historic Preservation Commission was approved by ordinance of the City Council and has been meeting regularly since that time. A unique component of this ordinance was the City Council made the process for considering nominations of important and significant historic properties, buildings, and structures to be voluntary in nature, rather than a mandatory approach utilized by many other communities across the region and the State of Missouri.

Over the last twenty-five (25) years, thirteen (13) properties have been added to the City's Historic Registry by their owners through this voluntary approach. The list of these thirteen (13) historic assets is as follows:

1. **Andrew J. Kern House** >>> Built in 1898, and located at 2541 Pond Road, this former home is now the location of Higher Focus Photography.
2. **Kern Service Station** >>> This location originally housed a blacksmith and wagon shop, which was established around 1893. The current building was constructed in 1925 and is located at 17301 Manchester Road. It became a service station in 1930, when Manchester Road was part of the original Route 66.

3. **Glencoe School - Post Office** >>> Built around 1871, this building was the Glencoe School. The building then became the Glencoe Post Office, which operated there until 1991. Since that time, the property has been a private residence. It is located on the corner of Old State Road and Rue de LaSalle.
4. **Jaeger Farm Log Cabin** >>> Private log cabin built in 1890.
5. **St. Onge - Gimble Log Cabin** >>> Private log cabin built in 1873.
6. **Stovall's Grove** >>> Built in 1935, Stovall's Grove has been a dance hall and tavern for many years. The property is located at 18720 Stovall Lane.
7. **Annie Rickard House** >>> A private residence constructed in 1941 on Manchester Road.
8. **Hencken Place (Wildwood Historical Society)** >>> Originally, a house constructed in 1852, with several outbuildings. The property became a toy factory and store, and today is the home of the Wildwood Historical Society. The property is located at 18750 Highway 100.
9. **Old Pond School** >>> One-room schoolhouse constructed in 1914, acquired by the City in 2001, with its restoration completed in 2006. This property is located at 17123 Manchester Road.
10. **Ben Baumer House** >>> Private residence constructed in 1891.
11. **Second John E. Schnarr House** >>> Historic building on Historic Route 66 that is located at 16941 Manchester Road. It was built in 1929.
12. **The Cottage in Wildwood - Dingley Bungalow** >>> Historic dwelling, built in 1918 and located at 2550 Eatherton Road, which was home to Harold & Eunice Koch until 1956.
13. **Marycliff** >>> Historic building built in 1905 as the summer home of The Carr Family. Currently, a family retreat lodge owned by the Marianists.

Each of these properties have a site-specific, designating ordinance that stipulates the requirements an owner must consider relative to the asset and its use and/or any alterations or changes. These ordinances also set parameters for a number of other items as well, which, if considered or requested, initiates a Certificate of Appropriateness process. This process is intended to ensure that, if the property owner initiates a request to alter a registry asset, the changes do not necessarily cause it to lose its character and role in the community where it is located. With a project submitted, the Historic Preservation Commission is required to review it relative to the ordinance that placed it on the register and ensure it complies therein. The review uses generally accepted standards of the U.S. Department of Interior – National Park Service for the particular nature of the project to preserve the integrity of the asset. These standards are also included in the designating ordinance.

While designation to the Wildwood Historic Register does initiate an additional layer of review, when alterations or changes are proposed, *it also allows property owners the opportunity to utilize their buildings, structures, or areas to a greater extent possible than normally allowed under their current Master Plan land use category or zoning district designation, as an incentive for their preservation, protection, or adaptive reuse.* This flexibility is achieved through the Historic Fifth Land Use Category that is part of the City's Master Plan. Future use of a historic property or area is premised on the surrounding land use pattern, access, utility service, and the sites' natural features, while providing a true community benefit.

REQUEST

The petitioner, **The Marianist Province of the U.S., c/o Merle Wilberding and Chris Conard**, has submitted a request to the Historic Preservation Commission to remove the historic asset of Marycliff Residence (formerly Woodcliff), a family retreat lodge located at 4000 State Route 109, from the City's Historic Register (Ordinance #2475) (see attached background materials related to its designation). The petitioner has informed the Commission the original plans to renovate and preserve Marycliff are no longer feasible. During the Public Hearing before the Commission on December 2, 2021, the petitioner's presenters noted that no final plans were in-place for the property, and a comprehensive plan was being discussed for the facility in a conversation that continues to be on-going. It was indicated by the presenters that a final decision on the property would consider its historical significance to the community, as well as its natural features.

The owners, in this instance, are entitled to remove the property from the list, given the designation was not in conjunction with a historic zoning district or overlay, nor did it include the granting of economic or regulatory incentives.

HISTORY OF THE ASSET:

The history of this property is intertwined with its surroundings, which is the Historic Glencoe Area and the Meramec River Valley. The community of Glencoe has a long history, first as a location where Native Americans camped and used this area as a river crossing for their migratory way of life, followed by the trappers and other adventurers. Thereafter, the area was discovered by business interests and became a center for lumber production and stone mining. These industries ultimately led to the extension of the railroad line from the St. Louis Area to Glencoe and beyond. The advent of the railroad brought many changes to the area, which included the wealthy residents from City of St. Louis using it for retreats, vacation homes, and recreation, a time period called the "Clubhouse Era."

The Marycliff Residence (formerly the Woodcliff Residence), the primary subject of this request, was built in 1905 and first utilized by the Carr Family, as their country retreat. The Carr Family was a noteworthy family in St. Louis. Peyton Carr was the grandson of James Yeatman, a very historical figure in early St. Louis history, while Peyton's mother was Angela Yeatman Carr, depicted as the heroine in Winston Churchill's national bestseller (1900), "The Crisis." Josephine Keylor Carr's father was President of the United Elevator and Grain Company, and Peyton Carr succeeded him. Josephine sold the property to the Brewsters & Malsters Benevolent Association in 1944, which then utilized it as a clubhouse. In 1949, the property was again sold to its current owner, and utilized as a Novitiate, a provincial lodge and residence for the Marianist Brothers.

This structure was constructed with both native materials from the area itself and other types that were imported from around the globe. The stone that forms the base of the building is native, while a limestone variant was employed for the cedar shingles that make up the facades of the main building. Upstairs, within the structure, is a chapel designed by world famous artist Brother Mel Meyer, SM. Brother Mel created an estimated 10,000 pieces of art throughout his life, with his work consisting of metal sculptures, frescoes, acrylic paintings on canvas, and handmade paper and textiles. Fifty (50) of his art pieces are at the Marianist Retreat and Conference Center.

In addition to the main structure, there are two (2) outbuildings on the property, one of which was constructed prior to the Marycliff Residence. A large, concrete patio area is installed to the south of the building, which the Carr Family used for a tennis court. An arbor was ultimately added to the eastern and southern borders of it. Other improvements to the property include a sculpture garden (dedicated to Brother Mel and contains thirteen (13) sculptures created by him), Stations of the Cross, trails, meditation location, and a picturesque walk to the original entrance upon a path that winds along the Meramec River, which is bordered by a stone wall, and features a stone bridge and the original stone entrance markers.

The Marycliff Residence, and a portion of the area surrounding it, was added to the City's Historic Register in 2019. At that time, the representatives for the Retreat Center noted their desire to become a more visible part of the Wildwood community, with the purpose of the designation to build awareness of the historic asset and its role in the history of the area.

After careful consideration, involving expert consultants and State liaisons, of the thirteen (13) criteria set forth by the **United States Department of Interior – National Park Service** for historically significant properties, the Historic Preservation Commission determined that **nine (9) of the following items were met** (see attached report for more detail) and unanimously recommended approval of its designation to the City Council, which then authorized the designation:

- Its character, interest or value is part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the community, County, State, or country;
- Its overall setting is part of a collection of buildings, elements, or objects where the overall collection forms a unit;
- It has the potential to be returned to an accurate historic appearance regardless of alterations or insensitive treatment that can be demonstrated to be reversible;
- It is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the community, County, state or country;
- It embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type valuable for the study of the period, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;
- It embodies the design, detailing, materials or craftsmanship that renders it architecturally significant;
- It has a unique location or singular physical characteristic that makes it an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City;
- Its character is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including, but not limited to, farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity, or architectural significance; and
- It is suitable for preservation or restoration.

ANALYSIS:

The heritage of the Meramec River Valley and Glencoe Area still very much exists today. Expertly identified as historically significant and currently endowed with a legal standing locally, the Marycliff Residence is uniquely situated as a potential cultural heritage tourism destination, a use that would capitalize on area assets and the property's own unique features and history.

Cultural heritage tourism, as defined by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, reflects “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present,” is a \$171 billion a year industry. Eighty-one (81) percent of U.S. tourists are considered “cultural tourists,” with historic places and museums ranking as top choices for activities at a destination (66%). Cultural heritage tourists seek authenticity and will pay more for distinctive lodging¹.

The property is conveniently located along State Route 109, and in proximity to a number of local and regional attractions, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Numerous parks and trail networks, containing the Al Foster Memorial Trail, which is accessed directly from the property and forms a riverside greenway that connects to Bluff View Park, Castlewood State Park, and also Belleview Farms, a future 100-acre park. This general area contains world class mountain biking trails, conservation areas, and panoramic views of the Meramec River Valley;
- Wabash, Frisco & Pacific Railroad, a miniature railroad attraction celebrating the area’s rail heritage;
- Hidden Valley Ski Resort;
- Equine-Assisted Therapy, an organization dedicated to providing therapeutic horseback riding activities for individuals with disabilities in the St. Louis Area;
- Rockwoods Reservation, the state’s earliest conservation area and home to geological wonders, a retired rock quarry, alpacas, and a historic remnant of a lime kiln;
- A segment of the original Route 66, with several legacy businesses and restaurants, and a future Route 66 Roadside Park;
- Six Flags St. Louis; and
- Six (6) listed landmarks on the National Register for Historic Places, including one (1) historic district.

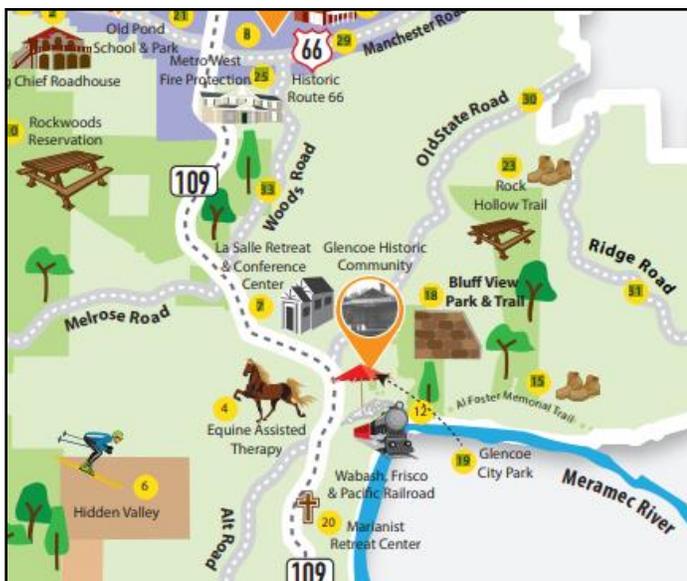


Figure 1: Area Landmarks and Attractions (see attached for full 2021 Points of Interest Map)

¹ Insider Exclusive: Heritage Tourism: Facts & Figures (2018). American Bus Association. Accessed on 12/28/2021 at [Insider Exclusive: Heritage Tourism: Facts & Figures « American Bus Association \(buses.org\)](https://www.buses.org/insider-exclusive-heritage-tourism-facts-figures)

As a complement to this agglomeration of community attractions and assets, the City of Wildwood has been committed, since the time of its incorporation, to preserving the character and aesthetic of this area, which it does through its land use policies, innovative regulations, strategic land acquisitions, pursuit of community designations and certifications (such as “Urban Night Sky,” “Tree City USA,” and “Green City”), quality recreational programming, community involvement and leadership via boards and commissions, and commitment to the development of a world class parks and trails system. The Marycliff Residence is therefore surrounded by a NU Non-Urban Residence District land use pattern, which involves large lot, primarily residential properties that have a three (3) acre minimum area in association with them, as well as a substantial number of parks and trails, as previously noted. City regulations, in-place today, are designed to protect the urban forest and tree canopy, the night sky from light pollution, scenic vistas, and otherwise reduce or prevent the effects of development on the environment. In addition, the City regularly advocates for the preservation of the State Route 109 Corridor, opposing development that threatens the natural landscape surrounding it.

In recent years, the Historic Preservation Commission has undertaken several initiatives to further develop a “sense of place” in Wildwood and elevate the area’s historical significance in service to its community and economic development value. These efforts include:

- Establishment of eleven (11) historic community markers, including one (1) recognizing the Historic Glencoe Community,
- Continued design and development of a local Points of Interest and Scenic Roads Map (see attached),
- Overseeing the design and development of a Wildwood History Book, to be published in 2022 under the Missouri Bicentennial endorsement (in partnership with the Wildwood Historical Society), and
- Promotion of the Original Route 66 Corridor through Wildwood, including new signage and the design and development of a proposed Route 66 Roadside Park.

In keeping with the City’s values, the Wildwood Department of Planning works in partnership with the Historic Preservation Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), community organizations, and private property owners to protect the cultural and historic fabric of the area. One tool at its disposal is the aforementioned Historic Fifth Land Use Category, offering greater flexibility in developing a highest and best use of these types of significant properties sensitive to their roles in the history of the area. In the past, the Department has engaged in discussions with potential developers of historic properties that explored higher densities, in exchange for a commitment to the preservation of the assets involved. In this case, more creative use typologies compatible with the surrounding area could be considered, along with zoning incentives.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

The petitioner has requested the previous designation of this asset/property to the City’s Historic Register be rescinded and no longer in place upon the Marycliff Residence. As developed in this report, the petitioner had hoped to raise funds to create a new service location for its religious mission. However, between the pandemic and the inability to raise the needed funds to reach its desired goal, the plan has been delayed, and this historic asset is being rethought by the province’s leadership. While

this rethinking of the building and associated property is underway, the petitioner believes the register designation complicates the process and decisions that may result from it.

Although the City is obliged to allow the petitioner to rescind the designation, the Department is reticent to fully endorse this request, but must always first advocate for code adherence. The allowance for the removal of the asset is part of the voluntary nature of the City's overall preservation process. Accordingly, the Department is recommending the Historic Preservation Commission support the petitioner's request in this regard. This recommendation does not preclude the asset's addition onto the City's Historic Register at a future point if circumstances should allow for such to occur.

It is important to note this historic asset is something very special and unique. Any placemaking professional or urban planner (or avid traveler for that matter) can testify to this point: what makes a place "special" is its uniquely defining features, particularly those that tell the story of a place and connect people with its spiritual essence and evolution. In today's world of mass-production and rapid growth, these defining features are increasingly disappearing from the landscape. Once they are gone, they are gone forever. Wildwood has such a feature to preserve, which is an important component of its cultural fabric, perhaps even transforming it into a use that could weave all surrounding efforts in the Glencoe Area together into a cohesive whole.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If any of the Commission Members should have comments or questions regarding this information, please feel free to contact the Department of Planning and Parks at (636) 458-0440. A presentation is planned on these matters at tonight's meeting. Thank you for your consideration of this information and discussion of the same.