



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Planning Division*

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

**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

**FROM:** Elizabeth H. Tyler, AICP, Director

**DATE:** May 18, 2007

**SUBJECT:** 504 W. Elm Street (Freeman House): Application for historic landmark designation, Case No. HP2007-L-02

---

**Introduction**

Historic Preservation Case No. HP2007-L-02 is an application by Brian Adams and Ilona Matkovszki to designate the property at 504 W. Elm Street (referred to as the Freeman House) as a local historic landmark. Erwin Goldfarb, c/o Campus Property Management, is the property owner. A Registered Preference against the nomination has been submitted by the property owner (copy attached). The petitioners have also submitted an application for designation of neighboring 502 W. Elm Street as a local landmark, and that application is being considered separately but concurrently.

The Urbana City Council should also be aware that the property owners have submitted plans to the City to construct three apartment buildings at 502 and 504 W. Elm Street. Construction of this project would involve the demolition of the two buildings under consideration for landmark designation. However, due to the landmark applications, Section XII-8 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance prohibits the issuance of demolition or building permits until the landmark applications are resolved.

Should the application for designation as a local landmark be approved, the owners would be required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for future exterior changes to the property, including any demolition.

At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on April 4, 2007, the Commission made a preliminary determination that the property qualified for designation as a local landmark under the following criteria (Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance):

- a) Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community;*
- b) Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history;*
- c) Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable*

*for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity; and*

- d) Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area.*
- e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.*

According to the Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance (Article XII-5.F.1.B), if an application is submitted by someone other than the property owner and the owner has submitted a Registered Preference against the nomination, the Historic Preservation Commission shall recommend the Urbana City Council approve or deny said application by a majority vote of the Commissioners then holding office. The property owner filed a Registered Preference against the nomination at the April 4, 2007 meeting. (Copy attached.)

At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on May 2, 2007, the Commission held a public hearing on the application. Eight people, including one of the applicants, spoke in favor of designating Freeman House a local landmark. One person, a representative of the property owner, spoke in opposition to the designation. Since this application first went before the Historic Preservation Commission on April 4, 2007, the Historic Preservation Commissioners and City staff have received approximately 35 e-mails and letters in support of the designation and two against the designation (both from the property owner's representative). At the close of the public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted six ayes and no nays to recommend to the Urbana City Council that the Freeman House be designated as a local historic landmark.

## **Background**

According to the application:

“Gus Freeman, owner of Urbana’s first movie theater, the “Princess”, had this Classical Revival house built by Edward Benton from the design of architect Joseph Royer in 1902. It is an excellent local example of the Classical Revival architectural style and the only such example of this style in Urbana. The integrity of the house remains, although by the 1950s it had been converted into apartments. Although modifications have occurred over time, mostly in the conversion of the house to apartments, many of these changes are historic and have in themselves gained significance.”

Based on extensive research and documentation in terms of the criteria for designation, the applicants state that the Freeman House:

- Has significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community;
- Is associated with an important person or event in national, state, or local history;
- Is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction, or use of

indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;

- Is a notable work of a master builder, designer, architect, or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area; and
- Is identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.

For detailed documentation on the property's history and significance, please refer to the attached application.

Under Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the proposed landmark must meet one or more of the following criteria for designation. Following each criteria (*provided in italics*) is analysis offered by City staff.

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community.*

When Gus Freeman purchased the lot on which the Freeman House was constructed, the local newspaper reported, "This is the highest price ever paid for a lot on that street. Mr. Freeman will erect a residence that will be a credit to the street." According to the application, the local papers reported the progress of the construction of the house, reporting that the Freeman's had hired Joseph Royer, the most prestigious architect in Urbana. The Freeman House has been part of the community since the turn of the century. It is a textbook example of the Classical Revival architectural style (also known as Neo-Classical Revival) and the only high style example in Urbana. The section of the application titled "Property Description" provides a description of the architectural features of the house. The house has significant value as part of the cultural and architectural heritage of Urbana.

- b) *Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history.*

The home was constructed by Gus T. Freeman, best known as the founder and proprietor of the Princess Theater, and his wife, Alice J. Busey, granddaughter of Matthew W. Busey, an early Urbana pioneer. The section of the application titled "Historical Significance" has a subsection on the Freeman family (page 8). The house was designed by Joseph W. Royer, a native of Urbana and a University of Illinois graduate in Civil Engineering. Royer, as Urbana's City Engineer, designed the Champaign County Courthouse, which was completed the year previously and brought him immediate recognition. Further discussion about Joseph Royer can be found in the "Notable work of a master builder..." section below.

- c) *Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity.*

As the application explains in detail (in the section titled "Architectural Significance"), the Freeman House is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style. The neoclassic movement had roots in Paris in the mid-1700's and spread as the design of choice for monumental buildings throughout Europe. In the United States the style was expressed most strongly through governmental buildings and monuments. In terms of residential architecture, the movement in the early 1800's manifested itself through the Greek Revival Style. Following the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and

the 1901 Pan-American Exhibition in San Francisco, a new wave of classically inspired architecture arose as the Classical Revival style, popular roughly during the period 1895-1940. Although most easily identified by the prominent use of massive columns, other features of the style include its simple geometric forms with monumental proportions, colossal pedimented porticos flanked by a series of pilasters, adherence to symmetry, a lack of arches, large single-light window sashes, and attic stories.

The second part of Criterion c) deals with integrity. The original house was constructed in 1902. The application does not document subsequent changes, but these obviously include small additions to the rear, including construction of an exterior stairway from the attic and second stories for apartment access. These modifications are primarily on the rear elevation. Overall, 504 W. Elm Street retains a high degree of integrity as perceived by the public. In terms of local landmark designation, only the exterior is of concern, and the exterior elevations most prominently viewed by the public are the most important in terms of integrity.

*d) Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area.*

The house was designed by Joseph William Royer, Urbana's most prominent architect. The section titled "Architectural Significance: Joseph Royer" (page 9) in the application contains a biography of Royer. Local buildings designed by Royer include: the Champaign County Courthouse, the Sheriff's Residence and the County Jail, the Champaign Country Club, the Urbana Flat Iron Building, the Urbana High School, the Urbana Free Library, the Urbana Lincoln Hotel, Leal School, the Urbana Post Office, and the Cohen Building.

*e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.*

The physical characteristics on the main façade are dramatic -- primarily the prominent projecting two-story portico and the full-width one-story classically detailed porch that wraps around to the east side. Given these unique physical characteristics, the Freeman House is certainly identifiable as an established and familiar feature in the community. In terms of "unique location", all properties are uniquely located, but this criterion refers to a property being recognizable due to unique placement, such as on a hill. The home's visual character is prominent but should not be considered as identifiable based specifically on a unique location.

*f) Character as 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.*

The Freeman House does not qualify under criterion f). The building is not a utilitarian structure.

*g) Located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.*

The Freeman House does not qualify under criterion g). City staff and the applicants are not aware of any archaeological significance of the area.

## Summary of Findings

Recommended findings based on the application and Staff analysis are as follows:

1. Article XII. of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance* provides the City of Urbana the authority to designate local landmarks and historic districts with the stated purpose to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the community.
2. The City of Urbana on March 12, 2007 received a complete application to designate the property located at 504 W. Elm Street as a local landmark.
3. The property located at 504 W. Elm Street and known as the Freeman House was constructed in 1902-1903 in the Classical Revival architectural style.
4. The Freeman House is significant as part of the architectural, economic, political and social heritage of the community. The property is unique for Urbana because it is a high-style, residential example of the Classical Revival architectural style.
5. The Freeman House, built for Gus and Alice Freeman, is associated with important people in local history. Gus Freeman owned Urbana's first movie theater, the "Princess", and his wife, Alice Busey Freeman, was a member of the prominent Busey family.
6. The Freeman House is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, and craftsmanship and which retains a high degree of integrity. The property is for Urbana a rare high-style example of residential Classical Revival architecture and retains a high degree of integrity.
7. The Freeman House is a notable work of a master designer and architect whose individual genius has influenced an area. The house was designed by Joseph William Royer, Urbana's most prominent architect at that time. Among other works in Urbana, Royer designed the Champaign County Courthouse, Flat Iron Building, Urbana High School, Urbana Free Library, Lincoln Hotel, and the Urbana Post Office.
8. The Freeman House is an identifiable and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique physical characteristics, including its prominent classical Greek portico supported by two-story, fluted columns, and prominent porch wrapping around the front façade and east side.
9. The Freeman House is not a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure.
10. The Freeman House is not known to be located in an area that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

## Options

In considering Case No. HP2007-L-02, the Urbana City Council may:

- a) Approve the application; or
- b) Deny the application.

## Recommendation

The Historic Preservation Commission determined on April 4, 2007 that 504 W. Elm Street qualifies for designation as a local historic landmark based on criteria a, b, c, d, and e of Section XII-5.C of the *Urbana Zoning Ordinance*. On May 2, 2007, the Historic Preservation Commission voted six ayes and no nays to recommend that the City Council approve the application for designation.

Based on the documented significance of Freeman House to the community and the fact that the property retains sufficient integrity, staff likewise recommends the Urbana City Council approve the application. A two-thirds majority vote of all Councilmembers holding office would be required to do so per Section XII-5.F.2 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance.

Prepared by:

---

Rebecca Bird, Planning Intern

cc: Erwin Goldfarb, c/o Campus Property Management  
Brian Adams & Ilona Matkovszki  
Libby Tyler, Director, Community Development Services Department  
Alice Novak, Chair, Urbana Historic Preservation Commission  
Betsy Cronan, West Urbana Neighborhood Association

### Attachments:

Application for HP 2007-L-02 Sutton House, 504 W. Elm St, including photographs and maps  
Property Owner's Registered Preference  
Defects of Face of Petition  
March 30, 2007 staff memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes from the April 4, 2007 Historic Preservation Commission meeting  
April 26, 2007 staff memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes from the May 2, 2007 Public Hearing on 502 W. Elm St., Case HP 2007-L-02  
Written correspondence received



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Planning Division*

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

**TO:** Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

**FROM:** Alice Novak, Chair, Urbana Historic Preservation Commission

**DATE:** May 11, 2007

**SUBJECT:** 504 W. Elm Street (Freeman House): Application for historic landmark designation, Case No. HP2007-L-02

---

**Introduction**

Historic Preservation Case No. HP2007-L-02 is an application by Brian Adams and Ilona Matkovszki to designate the property at 504 W. Elm Street (referred to as the Freeman House) as a local historic landmark. Erwin Goldfarb, c/o Campus Property Management, is the property owner. A Registered Preference against the nomination has been submitted by the property owner (copy attached). The petitioners have also submitted an application for designation of neighboring 502 W. Elm Street as a local landmark, and that application is being considered separately but concurrently.

At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on April 4, 2007, the Commission made a preliminary determination that the property qualifies for designation as a local landmark under the following criteria shown in *italics* (Section XII-5.C of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance):

- a) *Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community.*
- b) *Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history.*
- c) *Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity.*
- d) *Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area.*
- e) *Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.*

For more detailed information on how the Freeman House meets the above criteria, please see the attached application, staff memoranda to the Historic Preservation Commission, and Commission minutes.

## **Recommendation**

At the Historic Preservation Commission meeting on May 2, 2007, the Commission held a public hearing on the application. Eight people, including one of the applicants, spoke in favor of the application for designation of the Sutton House as a local historic landmark. One person, who represented the property owner, spoke in opposition to the application. Additionally, since this application first went before the Historic Preservation Commission on April 4, 2007, the Historic Preservation Commissioners and City staff have received approximately 35 emails and letters in support of the designation and two against the designation (both from the property owner's representative).

Following the public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted six ayes and no nays to recommend to the Urbana City Council that the Freeman House be designated as a local historic landmark. The following information on the historical and architectural significance of the property was provided as part of the motion to recommend approval.

- In terms of Criteria A, the building is important for its Classical Revival architectural style and is an excellent example of the style. The building also satisfies the cultural component owing to the fact that the Freemans opened the Princess Theatre downtown.
- In terms of Criteria B, the important individuals associated with this structure are Freeman and Busey, significant for the component of culture and local history
- The house meets Criteria C for its style, craftsmanship and the high degree of integrity that it retains.
- For Criteria D, the house is very significant due to the fact that it was designed by Joseph Royer.
- The property meets Criteria E in that the house is a very unique rendition of the Classical Revival Style and is associated with a very historic part of the community on Elm Street.

Signed:

---

Alice Novak, Chair, Historic Preservation Commission

cc: Erwin Goldfarb, c/o Campus Property Management  
Brian Adams & Ilona Matkovszki  
Libby Tyler, Director, Community Development Services Department  
Alice Novak, Chair, Urbana Historic Preservation Commission  
Betsy Cronan, West Urbana Neighborhood Association



Attachments:

Application for HP 2007-L-02 Freeman House, 504 W. Elm St, including photographs and maps  
Property Owner's Registered Preference and Defects on the Face of the Petition  
March 30, 2007 staff memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes from the April 4, 2007 Historic Preservation Commission meeting  
April 26, 2007 staff memorandum to the Historic Preservation Commission  
Minutes from the May 2, 2007 Historic Preservation Commission meeting

ORDINANCE NO. 2007-06-046

**AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING A HISTORIC LANDMARK**

(504 W. Elm Street, "Freeman House" Historic Preservation Case No. HP2007-L-02)

WHEREAS, Brian Adams and Ilona Matkovszki have nominated the property located at 504 West Elm Street, Urbana (commonly referred to as the "Freeman House") to be designated a historic landmark pursuant to the Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the owner of the subject property, Erwin Goldfarb, c/o Campus Property Management, has been duly notified of the nomination and has submitted a Registered Preference against the nomination; and

WHEREAS, after due publication and notice to all parties as is required under the Ordinance, a public hearing was held by the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission on May 4, 2007 concerning the subject historic landmark nomination; and

WHEREAS, following the public hearing, the Historic Preservation Commission voted to approve landmark designation for the subject parcel by a vote of 6 ayes and 0 nays, and made a written recommendation accompanied by a report summarizing the evidence presented at the hearing, with an explanation of its recommendation, which said recommendation and attachments were forwarded to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the owner of the subject parcel was notified by letter with a copy of the recommendation and attachments on May 17, 2007 of the date of the City Council meeting at which the designation is to be considered.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CORPORATE AUTHORITIES OF THE CITY OF URBANA, ILLINOIS, as follows:

The Council does hereby find and determine, based upon the recommendation and report of the Historic Preservation Commission, that the subject parcel should be designated as a historical landmark on the basis of meeting the following criteria:

- a) Significant value as part of the architectural, artistic, civic, cultural, economic, educational, ethnic, political or social heritage of the nation, state, or community;
- b) Associated with an important person or event in national, state or local history;
- c) Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and which retains a high degree of integrity;
- d) Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual genius has influenced an area;
- e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.  
and

thus, the said parcel at 504 West Elm Street, commonly referred to as the "Freeman House", is hereby designated as a historic landmark, pursuant to the Urbana Historic Preservation Ordinance.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

The East Half (E ½ ) of Lot Two (2), except the North 109.64 feet thereof, all in Sutton's Subdivision of Lot Three (3) of Assessor's Subdivision of a part of the Northwest Quarter (NW ¼) of the Northeast Quarter (NE ¼ ) of the Northwest Quarter (NW ¼) of Section Seventeen (17), Township Nineteen (19) North, Range Nine (9) East of the Third Principal Meridian, in Champaign County, Illinois.

PERMANENT PARCEL NUMBERS: 91-21-17-110-022

Section 2. The City Clerk is directed to publish this Ordinance in pamphlet form by authority of the corporate authorities. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and publication in accordance with the terms of Chapter 65, Article 11, Division 13 (Zoning) of the Illinois Compiled Statutes (65 ILCS 5/11-13-14).

PASSED by the Corporate Authorities this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_,  
2007.

AYES:

NAYS:

ABSTAINS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phyllis D. Clark, City Clerk

APPROVED by the Mayor this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laurel Lunt Prussing, Mayor

**CERTIFICATE OF PUBLICATION IN PAMPHLET FORM**

I, Phyllis D. Clark, certify that I am the duly elected and acting Municipal Clerk of the City of Urbana, Champaign County, Illinois.

I certify that on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007, the Corporate Authorities of the City of Urbana passed and approved Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_, entitled AN ORDINANCE DESIGNATING A HISTORIC LANDMARK (504 W. Elm Street, "Freeman House" Historic Preservation Case No. HP2007-L-02) which provided by its terms that it should be published in pamphlet form. The pamphlet form of Ordinance No. \_\_\_\_\_ was prepared, and a copy of such Ordinance was posted in the Urbana City Building commencing on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007, and continuing for at least ten (10) days thereafter. Copies of such Ordinance were also available for public inspection upon request at the Office of the City Clerk.

DATED at Urbana, Illinois, this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2007.