

From: Dennis Roberts [<mailto:drobotcitycouncil@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 12:13 PM

To: Pearson, Lorrie

Subject: A new form of Historic Landmark preservation?

Hello Lorrie,

I am searching for some way to promote a growth of local landmark nominations in the community. I think recognition of many more homes—or even entire blocks—of the older parts of Urbana (or even unique modern homes of significant architectural impact and daring) deserve recognition. My thoughts have led to the following proposal that I would like to see come before the HPC for discussion. I have contacted HPC members individually with a similar email:

Create a new level of Historic Landmark in Urbana?

As you may know, I have a strong interest in preserving the history of our community, its historic homes, and the original façades of Urbana's Main Street business district. I have also supported (so far) every nomination that has come before the Urbana City Council from the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission. The recent case of 611 West Elm Street revealed a general feeling of frustration by Council members about contested nominations. I believe Council would like to support many historic designations, but the bar to reach landmark designation is a high one, especially facing strong private owner objection.

Therefore I am asking, do you feel you are achieving your local preservation goals? Would it be useful to the advancement of historic preservation in this city, I wonder, to create a less rigid form of local landmark recognition???

Historic Landmark Designation is an act of personal pride of ownership. Owner approved landmark nominations are highly valued and greatly appreciated. There are known reasons why many a property owner will hold back from filing for this recognition. A common concern is that the sale of the home at some future date will be hindered by landmark designation requirements. Even a property owner who expresses strong interest in having their property designated a local landmark may decide against it for this reason. They expect a landmark designation to become a difficulty when they try to sell their property upon retirement or need to move to a different living arrangement.

Is it possible, therefore, for the HPC to consider a *new level of local landmark designation*?

"Historic Recognition" Landmark Status

The creation of a "Historic Recognition" level of local landmark designation may encourage more homeowners to consider filing for local landmark designation of their property in Urbana.

This designation would use the same established criteria used now for full landmark nomination—but would be tied only to the current property owners. It would expire upon the transfer of ownership of the property to another party. However, landmark designation could be automatically renewed by the next owner. This would allow the new owners to continue local landmark recognition if they shared a similar pride of ownership of their home or business.

This lighter form of historic nomination might seem counter intuitive to the long-range goals of the HPC—saving Urbana's best building stock—or is it? I believe many more homes in Urbana would be recognized for their historic or architectural contribution to the community under a form of obligation that had a sunset clause based on transfer of ownership.

Currently there are only one or two landmark nominations a year before the HPC. Many of these have come to the HPC due to the threat of a demolition—always under protest of the owner. Is this deemed to be a sufficient strategy for historical preservation in our town? Would we see more properties landmarked in Urbana if there was another level available to create local landmarks? I feel the answer would be Yes.

I would like to offer this question to the HPC for consideration.

Yours,
Dennis Roberts
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