

**Naperville Historic Preservation Commission
Public Hearing Findings and Recommendation
Regarding Petition #21-4482 Seeking Landmark Designation of
34 S. Washington Street, Naperville, IL**

On September 24, 2021 an Application to designate the original portion of the Kroehler YMCA located at 34 S. Washington Street, Naperville which was constructed in 1910 (“**Landmark Application**”) was submitted to the City of Naperville by Naperville Preservation, Inc. (“**Applicant**”) pursuant to the provisions of Section 6-11-3 of the Naperville Municipal Code (“**City Code**”). The Landmark Application specifically excluded the two north additions of the building where a swimming pool and racquetball courts are located from the landmark request.

The Kroehler YMCA is located on approximately half an acre of land on the east side of Washington Street south of the intersection of Benton Avenue and Washington Street. It is zoned B4 (Downtown Core District). The property is owned by the Young Men's Christian Association of Chicago d/b/a YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago (“**Owner**”).

While the City Code notes that the consent of the owner of a building sought to be landmarked is preferable, the Code also provides that the owner’s consent is **not** required as a condition to landmark designation. [6-11-3:3] The Code further provides that even if the HPC determines that criteria set forth in 6-11-3:2 of the Code are met, it is within the discretion of the HPC to recommend denial of a petition for designation of a landmark. [6-11-3:1.10]

In its Landmark Application, the Applicant contended that the 1910 portion of the Kroehler YMCA was eligible for designation as a local landmark by meeting the criteria set forth in as set forth in Section 6-11-3 of the Naperville Municipal Code (“hereinafter “**Landmark Criteria**”), specifically Sections 2.1, 2.2.1, 2.2.3, 2.2.4, and 2.2.5. [Note, however, that at the public hearing the Applicant stated that it also intended to include the criterion set forth in Section 6-11-3:2.2.2 as a basis for the designation.] The Code criteria for local landmark designation are set forth below.

6-11-3:2 Criteria For Designation Of Landmarks: An application for landmark designation may be granted based on the findings that the improvement proposed to be designated as a landmark meets the following criteria:

2.1. That it is over fifty (50) years old, in whole or in part; and

2.2. That one or more of the following conditions exist:

2.2.1. That it was owned or occupied by a person of historic significance in national, State or local history;

2.2.2. That it has a direct connection to an important event in national, State or local history;

2.2.3. That it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;

2.2.4. That it represents the notable work of a builder, designer or architect whose individual work has substantially influenced the development of the community; or

2.2.5. That it is included in the National Register of Historic Places.

On January 3, 2022 the Owner submitted a response to the Landmark Application through its attorney, Scott Day. The response reflected the Owner's strong objection to the proposed Landmark designation and included documentation pertaining to costs to renovate the (entire) building and the impact that approval of the Landmark Application would have on the sale value of the property. Additional exhibits were submitted on behalf of the Owner at the public hearing on the Landmark Application.

On Thursday, January 27, 2022 a public hearing was conducted on the Landmark Application by the Historic Preservation Commission of the City of Naperville (hereinafter "**HPC**"). A quorum of the HPC was present, comprised of: Chairman Christopher Jacks, Mark Urda, Erin Franczyk, Phillip Garrison, and James Wills. HPC City Council liaison Patrick Kelly was present by electronic means and Naper Settlement representative Donna Sack attended in person. The public hearing began at 7:00 p.m. and concluded at approximately 10:48 p.m.

After all those who intended to provide testimony or comment were sworn in by the Chair of the HPC, opening remarks were made by the Applicant and the Property Owner. Public testimony was then provided by six individuals. Cross-examination and questions were allowed. Closing remarks were then made by the Owner and Applicant.

After a vote to close the public hearing, the HPC began deliberations, considering the City Code criteria in relation to the Landmark Application pertaining to the Kroehler YMCA. The following are the HPC findings of fact and recommendation regarding the Landmark Application.

HPC Findings of Fact in Response to the Landmark Application

1. The Owner of the Kroehler YMCA responded to the Landmark Application as set forth above, objecting to the proposed local landmark designation.
2. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.1** of the City Code, that the portion of the Kroehler YMCA sought to be designated a local landmark is more than 50 years old, **was met**. [Vote: 5-0]
3. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.2.1** of the City Code (that the structure to be landmarked was owned or occupied by a person of historic significance in

national, State or local history) **was not met**. The Commission found that there was little discussion or evidence presented related to this criterion. [Vote: 5-0]

4. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.2.2** of the City Code (that the structure to be landmarked had a direct connection to an important event in national, State or local history) **was met** since Naperville was the first community of its size and outside the City of Chicago to have a YMCA, and because the Naperville community worked together to raise a significant amount of money in a short period of time to support construction of the YMCA. [Vote: 5-0]
5. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.2.3** of the City Code (that the structure to be landmarked embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period, style, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials) **was not met**. In its Landmark Application, Applicant noted that: "The architectural style most closely associated with the building is Italianate". At the public hearing the Applicant contended that "YMCA" is its own architectural style. The HPC concluded that the architectural style of the building is not distinctive. [Vote:4-1]
6. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.2.4** of the City Code (that the structure to be landmarked represents the notable work of a builder, designer or architect whose individual work has substantially influenced the development of the community) **was not met**. Although the Applicant presented evidence that the firm of Shattuck and Hussey of Chicago was hired to design the Kroehler YMCA, and that the firm designed YMCAs across the United States, there was no evidence that the architecture of Shattuck and Hussey substantially influenced the development of the City of Naperville. [Vote: 4-1]
7. The criterion set forth in **Section 2.2.5** of the City Code (that the structure to be landmarked is included in the National Register of Historic Places) **was met**. The Kroehler YMCA is included within the boundaries of a federal historic district as designated by the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. [Vote: 5-0]
8. The 1910 portion of the Kroehler YMCA is eligible for landmark designation under the City Code since it is more than 50 years old and also meets the criteria set forth in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.5 of Section 6-11-3:2 of the City Code.
9. While technically meeting the local landmark criteria set forth in the City Code, the HPC recommends against such designation as allowed by Section 6-11-3:1.10 of the Code which gives the Commission the discretion to recommend denial of an application for designation of a landmark even if landmark criteria are met. The Commission finds that the Kroehler YMCA building is lackluster and only minimally meets the City Code landmark criteria. Further, it is unclear how the building will appear after the portions of the building which are not eligible to be landmarked are demolished.

At the conclusion of HPC deliberations, the HPC voted 4 to 1 against a Motion to Approve the Application. The Chair of HPC clarified that the HPC vote constitutes a recommendation to the Naperville City Council to deny the Landmark Application.