

**Naperville Historic Preservation Commission
Public Hearing Findings and Recommendation
Regarding Petition HPC-0007-2025 Seeking Landmark Designation of the 1906
Building at 25 E. Benton Avenue, Naperville, IL**

On September 30, 2025, an application to designate the 1906 Building located at 25 E. Benton Avenue, Naperville, (“**Application**”) was submitted to the City of Naperville by the First Congregational Church Landmark Taskforce, (“**Applicant**”), pursuant to the provisions of Section 6-11-3 of the Naperville Municipal Code (“**City Code**”). The Application specifically includes the limestone structure constructed in 1906 nearest to the Center Street and Benton Avenue intersection.

The 1906 Building is located at the northwest corner of Center Street and E Benton Avenue. It is zoned R2 (Single-Family and Low Density Multiple-Family Residence District). The property is owned by the First Congregational Church of Naperville, a religious corporation of Illinois (“**Owner**”).

The Application was prepared and submitted by the First Congregational Church Landmark Taskforce with assistance from Naperville Preservation, Inc. Accordingly, this Application is being submitted with property owner consent.

In its Application, the Applicant contended that the 1906 Building 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 5.1, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, and 5.1.4. The Application notes criterion 5.1.5., which requires the property to be located in the Federal Historic District, was not met] The Landmark Criteria are set forth below.

6-11-3:5 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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

5.1.5. That it is included in the National Register of Historic Places (“**NRHP**”).

On Thursday, December 4, 2025, 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 Santucci, Vice-Chairman Paul Deffenbaugh, James Wills, Robert Sanchez, Jacob Sandborn, Jessica Bufort, and Kerry Malm. Non-voting members of the HPC present included City Council liaison Patrick Kelly and Naper Settlement representative Christine McNulty. The meeting began at 7:00 p.m. and concluded at approximately 9:01 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. Public testimony was then provided by 6 individuals. Cross-examination and questions were allowed. Closing remarks were then made by the Applicant.

After a vote to close the public hearing, the HPC began deliberations, considering the Landmark Criteria in relation to the Application pertaining to the 1906 Building. 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 criterion set forth in **Section 5.1** of the City Code, that the 1906 Building sought to be designated a local landmark is more than 50 years old, **was met**. [Vote: 7-0]
2. The criterion set forth in **Section 5.1.1** 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 met**. The Commission found that many of the members of the congregation, past and present, who are considered owners and occupants of the church, are of significance in national, State, and local history. [Vote: 7-0]
3. The criterion set forth in **Section 5.1.2** 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**. In its Landmark Application, the Applicant noted, the "ringing of the bell" related to the county seat moving from Naperville to Wheaton and numerous churches organized from the First Congregational Church of Naperville. [Vote: 7-0]
4. The criterion set forth in **Section 5.1.3** 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 met**. The Commission found the Gothic Revival architectural style and use of local limestone materials satisfies this criterion. [Vote:7-0]
5. The criterion set forth in **Section 5.1.4** 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 met**. In its Landmark Application, the Applicant noted, the work of Merritt Josiah Morehouse, architect and draftsman, and Morris Sleight,

land developer, substantially influenced the development of the community.
[Vote: 7-0]

6. The criterion set forth in **Section 5.1.5** of the City Code, that the structure to be landmarked is included in the NRHP, **was not met**. In its Landmark Application, the Applicant noted, the First Congregational Church of Naperville is in Naperville's Federal Historic District, it is not on the NRHP. [Commission's motion to approve this criterion denied by a vote of 0-7]
7. The 1906 Building 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 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3, 5.1.4 of Section 6-11-3:5 of the City Code.

At the conclusion of HPC deliberations, the HPC voted 7 to 0 in support of a Motion to Approve the Application. The HPC vote constitutes a recommendation to the Naperville City Council to approve the Landmark Application.