

Date: May 22, 2019

To: Naperville Historic Preservation Commission

From: Louise A. Howard, Collections Curator, Naper Settlement/Naperville Heritage Society
Non-Voting Member Historic Preservation Commission

Re: Follow-up to March 21, 2019 discussion on rezoning the properties bounded by School Street, Wright Street, Columbia Street and Franklin Avenue which include the P.E. Kroehler House and Peter Kroehler Memorial Dormitory

At the March 21 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission voted to recommend rezoning of the properties bounded by School Street, Wright Street, Columbia Street and Franklin Avenue, from the R2 Zoning District to CU Zoning District.

Although no specific plans have been revealed for the future use or possible development of the property, information regarding their current standing is crucial. This property, referred to as the "Little Friends" property during the meeting has notable characteristics and current historical designations. As a non-voting member and a subject matter expert, it is important to provide the necessary information as you consider the buildings and structures in that area.

The property discussed falls within two historic districts – the Naperville Historic District and the United State Department of the Interior's National Register of Historic Places. The P.E. Kroehler House, located at 126 N. Wright Street and the Peter Kroehler Memorial Dormitory, located at 619 E. Franklin Avenue are cited as Contributing structures to the District. The P.E. Kroehler House is one of only twenty structures and sites within the District called out as being of **Special Significance**. The P.E. Kroehler House is also listed as a contributing structure of significance and the Peter Kroehler Memorial Dormitory as a potentially significant structure in the Illinois Urban Architecture and Historical Survey.

Both structures meet two key National Register criteria: 1. The structure is associated with significant personages in the American past, and 2. The structure embodies distinctive characteristics of an architectural type, period, or method of construction. While neither structure is currently designated as a local landmark, both likely meet the criteria for local landmark designation. Below are some of the specifics that would be considered:

Significant Personage:

- Peter Edward Kroehler, builder and first owner of the home, is a local and national figure of historical prominence. Born in Minnesota, he was a graduate of North-Western College (now North Central College) and worked at the Naperville Lounge Company, at the invitation of his professor, J.L. Nichols.
- Kroehler became a partner and later president of the Lounge Company, which became the Kroehler Manufacturing Company, the world's largest furniture manufacturer and a U.S. Armed Forces military contractor during WWII.
- Kroehler Manufacturing Company was a major employer in Naperville for decades--by WWI the company was the City's largest employer, with about 500 workers—making the City, essentially, a "company town."

- Kroehler had manufacturing plants across North America.
- Organizer and first president of the National Association of Furniture Manufacturers, Kroehler also organized the American Furniture Man and Furniture Club of America and served as the first chairman of the Board of Governors and later as director of the American Furniture Mart.
- In addition to his furniture business ventures, Kroehler also served as a two-term mayor for the City of Naperville. A community philanthropist, Kroehler was one of the original founders of Naperville's Y.M.C.A.
- The Naperville Heritage Society Research Library and Archives holds the single largest Kroehler archival collection. Annually, research requests from scholars and individuals are received from across the globe.

Architectural Significance- P.E. Kroehler House

- Early 20th century structure that embodies characteristics unique to the Craftsman architectural style. Significant features include the side gable roof with shed dormers and copper gutters.
- The wraparound porch with square brick piers and the historic one over one wood windows are also significant elements still present despite alterations to the structure.
- The house serves as a symbol of Kroehler's success and exemplifies the classic American rags-to-riches story.









Architectural Significance- Peter Kroehler Memorial Dormitory, now commonly known as Krejci Academy

- The 1930s, Italian Renaissance Revival style.
- The building originally served as a dormitory for North Central College and represents an early form of 20th century dormitory housing for the college.
- Significant features of the structure include the ceramic tile roof with copper gutters; blonde brick exterior with concrete stringcourse at the third story sill level; second-story porch with flat roof and square brick columns; fluted concrete surround at the south side entry; and shed dormer on the south elevation.

Given the recent significant community response to the proposed alterations of another historic building in the downtown, it is likely that proposals affecting either of these buildings would have a similar community response.

Sources:
 "Historic District." City of Naperville website
<https://www.naperville.il.us/about-naperville/historic-district/>
 (accessed May 21, 2019).
 Revised National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Naperville Historic District, Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois. Listed on NRHP in September 2012.
 Prepared by:

NAPER SETTLEMENT

	National Register of Historic Places "Naperville Historic District" 1977, 2012 (Federal Designation)
	Naperville Historic District 1986 (City Designation)
	City of Naperville Locally Landmarked properties
	Truitt House 48 E. Jefferson Ave.
	Naperville Woman's Club 14 S. Washington St.
	Old Nichols Library 110 S. Washington St.
	Thomas Clow House 5212 Book Rd.
	National Register of Historic Places Martin Mitchell Mansion (Pine Craig) Naper Settlement

