



Project Name & Address: Benjamin and Amy Butts House Nomination
633 E Johnson Street

Application Type(s): Review of local landmark nomination

Legistar File ID # [87159](#)

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Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject site contains one lot, addressed as 633 E Johnson Street.

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

41.07 DESIGNATING LANDMARKS.

- (1) Designation. The Common Council, after considering the recommendation of the Landmarks Commission under sub. (5) below, may designate a landmark according to this section.
- (2) Standards. A site, improvement, or site with improvements may be designated as a landmark if the proposed landmark meets any of the following:
 - (a) It is associated with broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community.
 - (b) It is associated with the lives of important persons or with important event(s) in national, state or local history.
 - (c) It has important archaeological or anthropological significance.
 - (d) It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable as representative of a period, style, or method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.
 - (e) It is representative of the work of a master builder, designer or architect.
- (3) Nomination. Any person may nominate a site, improvement, or site with improvements for designation as a landmark. The person shall submit the nomination to the City Planning Division, to the attention of the Preservation Planner, on a nomination form approved by the Landmarks Commission. The nomination shall clearly identify the proposed landmark, landmark site, and document why it qualifies under sub. (2). The Preservation Planner may ask the person to submit additional information and documentation as needed to complete or clarify the nomination. When the Preservation Planner determines that the nomination is complete, the Preservation Planner shall refer the nomination to the Landmarks Commission.
- (4) Landmarks Commission Review and Public Hearing. Whenever the Landmarks Commission receives a complete, accurate nomination under sub. (3), the Commission shall review the nomination. As part of its review, the Commission shall publish a hearing notice according to Sec. 41.06 and hold a public hearing on the nomination. The Commission may also conduct its own investigation of the facts, as it deems necessary.
- (5) Landmarks Commission Action. After the Landmarks Commission holds a public hearing and completes its review under sub. (4), the Commission shall report to the Common Council a recommendation supporting or opposing the proposed landmark designation. The Commission may recommend landmark designation subject to terms and conditions that are consistent with this chapter. The Commission shall send a notice of the recommendation to each owner of

- record of each lot on which the proposed landmark is located at least ten (10) days before any meeting at which the Common Council may act on the Commission's recommendation.
- (6) Common Council Action. After considering the Landmarks Commission's report recommendation under sub. (5), and based on the standards under sub. (2), the Common Council shall vote to designate or decline to designate the property as a landmark. The City Clerk shall promptly notify the Building Inspector and the City Assessor of each landmark designation. The City Clerk shall record the designation with the Dane County Register of Deeds at the City's expense.
 - (7) Voluntary Supplemental Restrictions. The Common Council may at any time supplement the terms of a landmark designation, pursuant to an agreement between the landmark owner and the Landmarks Commission, to enhance the preservation and protection of the landmark.
 - (8) Recognition of Landmarks. Whenever the Common Council designates a landmark under sub. (6), the Landmarks Commission shall affix a plaque identifying the property as a landmark to the landmark or landmark site. The plaque shall be placed so that it is easily visible to passing pedestrians. In the case of a landmark structure, the plaque shall include the accepted name of the landmark, the date of its construction, and other information that the Landmarks Commission considers appropriate. In the case of a landmark that is not a structure, the plaque shall include the common name of the landmark and other information that the Commission considers appropriate. If the Commission determines that because the landmark is ecologically or culturally sensitive a plaque would be inappropriate, no plaque is required. No person may remove or modify a plaque without approval of the Preservation Planner.

Analysis and Conclusion

The property at 633 E Johnson Street is proposed for landmark designation and includes a residential structure built in 1857, with additions in 1894, 1908, and 1942. The property is being designated for its associations with cultural and social history under Criterion A related to Madison's African-American history, and under Criterion B for this property's association with Benjamin and Amy Butts. The period of significance is 1892-1907, when the Butts family lived at this home.

The building was clad in aluminum siding in 1978, and the original clapboards remain in place beneath. This building is still able to convey its historic associations with the time that Benjamin and Amy Butts lived here. The nomination was funded by the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation with the support of the property owner.

MGO 41.07(2) Criterion A: It is associated with the broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community

The nomination makes a well-documented case for this property's association with the early era of Madison's African-American community. Madison's Underrepresented Communities Historic Resources Survey identifies this period as spanning from Madison's first recorded African-American resident in 1839 until the early 20th Century. The activism and community-building undertaken by the Butts family while they lived at this home had a significant effect on their community as Madison grew.

MGO 41.07(2) Criterion B: It is associated with the lives of important person, and/or with important events in national, state, or local history

The nomination primarily documents the story of Benjamin Butts, but also includes details of the community activism of Amy Butts. Both were leaders in Madison, serving as founders for key African-American cultural institutions, such as the St. Paul's AME Church and the Capital City Lodge #2 of the Prince Hall Masons. While Amy and Benjamin lived at this house, they took in African-American boarders as people moved to Madison to live and work. As they partnered with other leaders at the time, such as the Turner, Miller, and Hill families, to establish Madison's first African-American neighborhood one block away on the 600 block of East Dayton Street.

MGO 41.07(5) Landmarks Commission Action: "...the Commission shall report to the Common Council a recommendation supporting or opposing the proposed landmark designation. The Commission may recommend landmark designation subject to terms and conditions that are consistent with this chapter."

The Landmarks Commission is a referring entity for landmark nominations. The role of the Commission is to review the proposed nomination and decide if the nomination makes a successful case in relation to the criteria in the Ordinance. The Commission's recommendation is made to the Common Council, who will make a final determination on if the nomination meets the criteria for designation as a Madison landmark. The Commission should make specific findings for their recommendation of approval or denial. The Commission may recommend changes to the draft nomination.

Recommendation

Staff believes the standards for designating the property as a Madison landmark are met and recommend the Landmarks Commission refer the nomination to Common Council for designation as proposed.