



**Date** ..... October 20, 2014 .....

**RESOLUTION SETTING DATE OF HEARING ON APPLICATION FROM JACK PORTER TO DESIGNATE THE "RIVERFRONT YMCA" BUILDING LOCATED AT 101 LOCUST STREET AS A LOCAL LANDMARK**

WHEREAS, the City of Des Moines has received an application from Jack Porter to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark; and,

WHEREAS, the Riverfront YMCA building is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines, represented by Vernon Delpesce (officer), and is legally described as follows:

Except streets, Lots 1 through 5 and the intervening vacated North/South alley right-of-way, in Coliseum Place, an Official Plat, all now included in and forming a part of the City of Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa.

WHEREAS, the Landmark Review Board considered the application at a public hearing on September 16, 2014, and its members voted 16-0 in support of a motion to recommend that the Riverfront YMCA building be determined eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the City Code; and,

WHEREAS, the City Plan and Zoning Commission a public hearing held on October 2, 2014, its members voted 10-0-1 to recommend DENIAL of the request to designate the Riverfront YMCA building as a Local Landmark, but suggested that City Council work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. That the accompanying communications from the Landmark Review Board and the City Plan and Zoning Commission are hereby received and filed.
2. That the meeting of the City Council at which the proposal to designate the Riverfront YMCA building as a local landmark is to be considered shall be held in the Council Chambers at 5:00 p.m. on November 3, 2014, at which time the City Council will hear both those who oppose and those who favor the proposal.

Date October 20, 2014

- That the City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to cause notice of said proposal in the accompanying form to be given by publication once, not less than four (4) days and not more than twenty (20) days before the date of hearing, all as specified in Section 362.3.

MOVED by \_\_\_\_\_ to adopt.

FORM APPROVED:



Roger K. Brown  
Assistant City Attorney

(20-2015-4.01)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MOORE				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk



October 16, 2014

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

On September 16, 2014, the Landmark Review Board heard a request from Jack Porter to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark. Upon completion of the public hearing, the Board, by a vote of 16-0, approved a motion to recommend that the "Riverfront YMCA" building be determined to be eligible for Landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the City Code.

Please see the attached copy of the September 16, 2014, meeting minutes for a summary of the discussion and a list of those participated in the hearing.

Sincerely,

Dennis Reynolds, Chair  
Landmark Review Board

# Landmark Review Board Meeting

**Tuesday, September 16, 2014**

**Members Present:** Scott Allen, Pat Barry, Brian Clark, Catherine Dietz-Kilen, Elaine Estes, Scotney Fenton, Naura Heiman-Godar, Robert Griffin, Tim Hielkema, Colleen MacRae, Marlon Mormann, Laura Peters, Dennis Reynolds, Tim Rypma, York Taenzer and Aaron Todd

**Guests:** Jack Porter, Vernon Delpsce, Tom Stanberry, Pat Miners, and Joel Aschbrenner

**Staff:** Jason Van Essen, Erin Olson-Douglas, Matt Anderson, Roger Brown, and Glory Parks

**Call to order:** 7:31am

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Dennis Reynolds called the meeting to order with an opening statement citing excerpts from the local Landmark Ordinance. The Landmark Review Board is made up of members of the Urban Design Review Board and the Historic Preservation Commission. The Board is charged with reviewing proposed alterations, new construction and demolitions to locally designated landmarks and makes recommendations to the City Council. All Certificates of Appropriateness for local landmarks that are not located in a local historic district are issued by the City Council.

Jason Van Essen, Senior City Planner, City of Des Moines, Planning and Urban Design Division, outlined the request before the Board and gave a brief summary presentation of the project. The applicant is proposing the nomination of the "Riverfront YMCA" building as a local Landmark.

Mr. Van Essen stated that the Landmark Review Board's recommendation will be forwarded to the Plan and Zoning Commission and the City Council for review in accordance with Section 58-60 of the City of Des Moines Historic Preservation Ordinance. It is anticipated that the Plan and Zoning Commission will review the nomination on October 2, 2014. The City Council will receive the recommendations of the Board and Commission on October 20, 2014 and will set a date for their hearing of the nomination. It is anticipated that the City Council will hold their hearing on November 3, 2014.

Additionally, if the property is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council. The property would become eligible for State Historic Tax Credits if designated as a local Landmark. In general, Landmark designation conveys that the community desires a building be retained and when altered that it should be done in a manner that maintains its historic integrity. This is accomplishing through a design review process.

If the Landmark designation is made there is a provision in the Ordinance that allows a case to be made to the City Council that there is an economic hardship. The Council can then take that into consideration and allow work or demolition.

A Des Moines Historical Society representative was unable to attend the meeting but a copy of their letter of support was given to members of the Board.

Jack Porter, 815 18<sup>th</sup> Street, seeks approval to recommend the Riverfront YMCA as worthy of landmark status.

Mr. Porter gave a historic background overview of the building, in order to show:

- the significance of architectural design,
- the distinctive characteristics of Mid-century Modern Architectural,
- that the building possess high artistic value of the era, and
- is associated with a person significant to our cultural heritage.

Mr. Porter gave a visual presentation of historic sketches and promotional material used during the construction of the building to raise community awareness. The presentation included information about Mid-century Modern Architecture in general and local examples of Mid-century Modern architecture. Mr. Porter gave a few examples of how the building could be renovated to accommodate new uses.

Designation of the property would not preclude someone from constructing an addition or removing the 1980's addition. The primary purpose of the Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation is to retain and maintain the existing historic fabric. Within that, it does not mean that a whole new use cannot be done for a designated building. The value of designation is the assessment of how that new use effects existing historic fabric, features and finishes.

Mr. Porter stated that the exterior murals are an integral part of the exterior walls of the building, which would likely make it very difficult to deconstruct and reconstruct them. Any attempt to move the murals would first require a thorough assessment.

Vernon Delpsce, president and CEO of the Greater Des Moines YMCA, on behalf of the YMCA and the Board stated that they are not in favor of this designation if it hinders their ability to sell the property. Mr. Delpsce explained the cost and extent of renovation it would have taken to get the Riverfront YMCA up to today's standard for a state of the art YMCA.

The owner has a letter of intent to purchase the property from a developer. The owner also has an agreement with the Des Moines Redevelopment Corporation (DMRC) that if they have not sold the property before moving to their new location that DMRC will purchase the property. That agreement requires the property to be delivered as a clear site ready for development.

Pat Miners, 4115 55<sup>th</sup> Street, stated that she has been in contact with local brick layers to explore the feasibility of moving the murals. The persons she spoke to indicated that if a large enough wall could be found to move it to it would be extremely difficult to move the flat mural and there is not much hope that the curved mural could be preserved at all. For this reason she believes that the building should be preserved because of these large pieces of art work.

Ms. Miners stated that YMCA adds another aspect to the river beside the buildings that were built in the early 1900's and she is in favor of giving it landmark status.

Tom Stanberry, 547 44<sup>th</sup> Street, the current chair of the YMCA Board and attorney for the YMCA, stated that the YMCA is not opposed to preservation of the Y as landmark if that designation does not hinder what the developer or DMRC want to do with that site. The YMCA was persuaded not to proceed with preservation because the building is functionally obsolete for use as a YMCA building or any type of housing.

Mr. Stanberry stated that the Y will have a signed purchase agreement in hand by the end of the week. The developer has indicated their plan is for at least some demolition.

#### Board questions and comments

- Reynolds: This is a challenging site. The specialized nature of the uses make it very difficult, the floor plate size, and the floor to floor height. Bird's Run sewer, which runs under the building, makes renovation or new construction difficult. It has been helpful to hear the information presented today so the Board can take an impartial and fair approach.
- Mormann: I see it as simple: if you vote no it will be a level lot – if you vote yes for a recommendation of a landmark listing there is a chance it will not become a level lot but it does not guarantee it. It is difficult financially to make it work. I am on the side of preserving it for now to give it a chance.
- Estes: The YMCA was the first interruption on what was designated as the Civic Center along the river that was to be used for municipal buildings. The Y comes about as close to being a public facility that was open to all people that was used as a public and educational facility. This references criteria that another building should not interrupt the concept of the municipal buildings on the riverfront, no matter how the building is orientated.

No one was more concerned about cultural heritage and history of this country and many other countries than William Wagner. Mr. Wagner was widely traveled and consulted with architects worldwide, served on the National Trust for Historic Preservation Advisory Board and adaptive reuse was one on his specialties. Because Mr. Wagner worked hard to save so many buildings, I feel that we have a responsibility to save some of his buildings, but as far as this building there are many reasons for retaining it. The use of the YMCA was connected to a lot of prominent business people who used the Y on a daily basis.

People learn by seeing things, and we see things through buildings and we learn the different periods through buildings, we visit museums, we collect objects, and all are teaching tools. Think of the Y as an educational institution that had responsibility and an interest of helping people develop their personal lives as well as their learning lives. I would hope that we would take the appropriate action.

- Hielkema: The building has been an interesting discussion for some time. Although the building is a fine example of Mid-century Modern Architecture everyone seems to get stuck on; is it a piece of art or is it a building? I feel that the murals being a part of the building are more important than the building itself. Don't want to see the murals gone, so it is a very interesting duality that cannot be found in many other situations that would be designated as a landmark. It has been stated that a landmark could be a piece of ground because of the archeology. The murals make it a landmark to me. Those developers and architects who have looked at the building realize that it would be very hard to modify.

William Wagner is known more for what he has done vs his architecture, but it would be nice to save some of buildings. He was so important in preservation, his sketches and so many other things but it was his integration with Stanley Hess on this building that qualifies it in my mind.

- MacRae: There are compelling arguments on both sides and this is not an easy decision but the Board's criteria falls under the Section 58-58. For this reason, I feel that it is important the Board focus on numbers 2 and 4 of the City of Des Moines Historic Preservation Ordinance to see if it falls within the criteria.

I think that from what has been said today that it falls, undoubtedly, within number 4 and perhaps within number 2 as well. Because that is the task of the Landmark Review Board, I will be voting in favor of continuing this discussion, because I think it is also important to note that this just moves it on to the Planning and Zoning Commission and to the City Council, this is not the designation itself.

- Reynolds: The cultural aspect is one that struck with me as well.

Brian Clark made a motion to recommend Riverfront YMCA building at 101 Locust Street be determined eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. Seconded by Allen. Motion unanimously approved.

**Meeting Adjourned: 8:42am**

**CITY OF DES MOINES LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD**  
**STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**  
**Tuesday, September 16, 2014**

**AGENDA ITEM #1**

**20-2015-4-01**

**Applicant:** The nomination was submitted by Jack Porter. The property is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines.

**Location:** 101 Locust Street.

**Requested Action:** Nomination of the "Riverfront YMCA" building as a Local Landmark.

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

The subject property is located on the west bank of the Des Moines River and is bound by Grand Avenue to the north, Locust Street to the south and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to the west. The property contains the Riverfront YMCA building. The building consists of an eight-story tower containing dormitory style residences along the river with a lower section to the west containing community rooms, gymnasium and other facilities. A surface parking lot is located along 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. The original portion of the building was constructed in 1960. The Aliber Youth Center was added to the northwest corner of the building in 1980.

The submitted nomination describes the building as "an excellent example of post-war Modernism, the design uses simple geometric forms to emphasize volume, large expanses of brick, sparse ornamentation and flat roofs. In addition to the extensive use of pinkish-red variegated brick, other exterior materials include slate, granite and stainless steel." The building was designed by William Wagner with the Des Moines firm of Wetherell and Harrison. The Nation Building Service of the YMCA served as design development consultants. The exterior and interior murals were designed by Stan Hess. Mr. Hess was an art professor at Drake University at the time. The 1980 addition was designed by local architect, Ron Walker.

## **II. APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF THE CITY CODE**

Section 58-56 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance contains the landmark purpose statement. Section 58-58 contains the criteria for the designation of a landmark and Section 58-60 establishes the nomination process.

### **Sec. 58-56. Purpose.**

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (2) Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements;
- (3) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (4) Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- (5) Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (6) Strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (7) Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

**Sec. 58-58. Designation criteria.**

- (a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:
  - (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
  - (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
  - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
  - (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
  - (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Sec. 58-60. Procedures.**

- (a) The historic preservation commission shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located within historic districts, and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below. The landmark review board shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located outside historic districts and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below.
- (b) Notice that an application for designation of a landmark or landmark site is being considered shall be given to the owner of the parcel on which the proposed landmark is situated or which is part of the proposed landmark site in accordance with the following:
  - (1) Such notice shall be served by certified mail, addressed to the owner at his or her last known address as such appears in the records of the county treasurer's office, or if there is no name on

such records, such notice may be served by regular mail addressed to "owner" at the street address of the property in question.

- (2) Such owner shall have the right to confer with the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, prior to final action by the commission or board on the application.
  - (3) The historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, may, in addition, hold the public hearing of the proposed designation by giving notice as required by law.
- (c) After such investigation by the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as is deemed necessary, but in no case more than 60 days after the receipt of the complete application, the application for designation shall be recommended for approval or disapproval. Such recommendation shall be in writing and signed by the chair of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, and shall state the reasons for recommending approval or disapproval. The recommendation may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site as described in the application or may include modifications thereof. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to and filed with the plan and zoning commission, within five days after making such recommendation.
  - (d) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the plan and zoning commission shall schedule a public hearing at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
  - (e) Within 30 days after the public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall forward such application to the city council, together with the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board. The plan and zoning commission may adopt the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as its own or may prepare a written recommendation of its own. The plan and zoning commission may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site or may include modifications thereof. If the modification requires an additional public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall hold such hearing before forwarding the application to the city council.
  - (f) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the council shall schedule a public hearing to consider the recommendation at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
  - (g) The city council, after public hearing, may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the recommendation of the plan and zoning commission by a majority vote of its membership. If the plan and zoning commission shall have failed to act within the time limit set forth in this section, the city council may, nevertheless, approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposed landmark or landmark site as originally proposed or modified by a majority vote of its membership.

### III. ANALYSIS

A nomination must demonstrate that the subject building or site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and meets one or more of the following criterion.

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;  
or
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The submitted nomination includes a State Historical Society of Iowa Site Inventory form for the property that was prepared in 2010. The form was prepared by Shannon Schaefer, Intern, State Historical Society of Iowa and reviewed by Paula Mohr, Ph.D., Architectural Historian, State Historical Preservation Office. On May 7, 2010, Ms. Mohr signed the form as concurring with the survey opinion that the Riverfront YMCA building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on Criterion A and C.

National Register Criterion A is described as properties associated with significant events or a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community. This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 2. National Register Criterion C is described as properties having distinctive architectural characteristics that embody a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possess high artistic value or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (a.k.a. "district"). This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 4.

Per Criteria 1, along with other former YMCA buildings in Des Moines (including the former downtown YMCA location at 4th and Park), this building is an example of the historic YMCA development model of men's dormitory housing coupled with a public fitness facility and provides a record of a "broad pattern of our history." Per Criteria 4, the building is an example of late Modernist architecture that emphasizes its materiality in a bold, often geometric manner. This era of Modernist architecture is better exhibited locally at the original limestone building for the Des Moines Art Center (1948) and at Drake University (Scott Chapel, 1955 and dormitories, 1957) by the work of master architects Eero and Eiel Saarinen.

The YMCA building is currently in a state of flux. The tower portion of the building has been empty as the men's housing portion of the YMCA program moved to a new facility in downtown in 2011. The fitness center will relocate from the Riverfront YMCA later this year/early 2015 to a facility that is currently under construction in downtown. Within the next three years, the site will be sold for redevelopment or for holding by the Des Moines Redevelopment Company. The site holds high economic development potential and the constraints of the existing building – small floor plate, low floor-ceiling heights, obsolete mechanical-electrical systems, lack of sprinkler system, small window openings, and unique fitness facility floor plan – present considerable challenges to reuse of the facility. Further, the building entrances are oriented away from the River, discounting the considerable effort the River Walk expends to enhance views and use of the Des Moines River. Changing the entrances and window pattern on the west side of the YMCA to enhance river usage would compromise the character defining elements of the building as its siting and window pattern provides a record of the “broad pattern of our history”. The challenges of using historic tax credits for renovations may be difficult to marry with the building changes needed for adaptive reuse and river orientation.

Complete copies of the Nomination are included in the Board's packet. The following are highlights from the “Historical Significance” section of the nomination.

#### YMCA History

- The Des Moines YMCA was first organized in 1868 and is noted as being one of the earlier local Y's in the United States. The Des Moines YMCA originally met at the Coskery and Tannahill dry goods store at 4<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street. The YMCA moved to a second location in 1891 at 4<sup>th</sup> and Grand Avenue and then to a location at 4<sup>th</sup> and Keosauqua Way (1333 Keosauqua Way) in 1912. A Crocker Street YMCA was founded in 1919 at 12<sup>th</sup> and Crocker Street for young African-American men and boys and operated at this location until the late 1950's. The cornerstone was laid at the southeast entrance of the current downtown building on April 26, 1959. The building was dedicated in 1960 and was noted as costing \$3.9 million dollars to construct and equip including land acquisition.

#### Architecture

- The YMCA Building Bureau made the decision to adopt Modernism in the late 1940s. Among the buildings that bear a resemblance to the Des Moines facility, include the YMCA in Binghamton, Oklahoma City, and Racine (Wisc). The Des Moines building is an example of post-war Modernism style, which incorporates large geometric blocks, straight lines, flat roofs and the use of building materials that are economical yet durable.

- William Wagner was the chief architect on the YMCA project for the local firm of Wetherell and Harrison. Mr. Wagner graduated from Iowa State University in 1939 and later earned a Masters degree from Drake University. Wager is best known as a preservation architect. His body of work includes the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa.

### Murals

- Stanley O. Hess studied at the University of Oklahoma with Mexican artist Emilio Amero and Lenard Good (who later served as Chair of the art department at Drake University). Hess earned a BFA in commercial art from the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and a MFA in painting in 1950. From 1950 to 1951 he was an instructor of art at the William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri. Later in 1951, Hess joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines.
- Hess was commissioned to create murals at the National Travelers Life Insurance Company Building, the Iowa Power and Light Building (moved to former Science Center in 1971), the Des Moines YMCA and the Mercy and Iowa Lutheran hospitals in Des Moines. He created mosaic stations of the cross for the St. Theresa's Church in Des Moines. Along with painting, Hess also designed a typeface called "Hessian."
- Hess' works many times are described as "double images, which require at least a second viewing." Hess and Bracklayers Local Union No. 2 donated their time completing the YMCA murals. The murals are made entirely of multi-colored brick creating images, out of Hess' research on the history of the YMCA, which symbolize the purposed and objectives of the organization. *(See the nomination form for descriptions of the two exterior murals and the four interior murals.)*
- The YMCA World Alliance office in Geneva, Switzerland requested photographs and information regarding the murals to be published in their "World Communique" magazine as the building was being completed. The magazine was distributed to 77 countries. The murals were also published in the Annual Report of the National Council YMCA Board (U.S. & Canada) at the time.

#### **IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the "Riverfront YMCA" building at 101 Locust Street be determined "eligible" for Landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

The Landmark Review Board's recommendation will be forwarded to the Plan and Zoning Commission and the City Council for review in accordance with Section 58-60 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. It is anticipated that the Plan and Zoning Commission will review the nomination on October 2, 2014. The City Council will receive the recommendations of the Board and Commission on October 20, 2014 and will set a date for their hearing of the nomination. It is anticipated that the City Council will hold their hearing on November 3, 2014. The Board and the Commission are recommending bodies in this process. The decision to designate a property or site as a local Landmark is a public policy decision made by the City Council.

If the property is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council. The Board is a recommending body. When reviewing alterations to Landmark properties, the Board forwards a recommendation to the City Council in a similar manner as the Urban Design Review Board does when reviewing development agreements. The property would become instantly eligible for State Historic Tax Credits if designated as a local Landmark. In general, Landmark designation conveys that the community desires a building be retained and when altered that it should be done in a manner that maintains its historic integrity. This is accomplishing through a design review process.



October 13, 2014

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their meeting held October 2, 2014, the following action was taken regarding a request from Jack Porter (applicant) to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark. The subject property is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines represented by Vernon Delpesce (officer).

**COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

After public hearing, the members voted 10-0-1 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Dory Briles	X			
JoAnne Corigliano	X			
Jacqueline Easley				X
Tim Fitzgerald				X
Dann Flaherty	X			
Jann Freed	X			
John "Jack" Hilmes	X			
Ted Irvine				X
Greg Jones	X			
William Page	X			
Christine Pardee	X			
CJ Stephens			X	
Vicki Stogdill	X			
Greg Wattier	X			

**APPROVAL** of staff recommendation to **DENY** the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark but asked that the City Council work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION

Staff recommends that the "Riverfront YMCA" building at 101 Locust Street not be designated as a local Landmark. While the building may be eligible for designation, staff believes that the site is the most important feature in light of numerous plans and implementation activities. The overall interest of the City is to insure that development of the site is maximized from an economic and aesthetic standpoint regardless of whether the building is saved or demolished.

There are other examples of YMCA buildings in Des Moines and better examples of Modernist era architecture in Des Moines, such as Scott Chapel (1955) and the dormitories (1957) at Drake University by master architects Eero and Eliel Saarinen. Much work has been done to preserve the Civic Center National Register Historic District buildings, such as the World Food Prize Center (local landmark), the Municipal Building and the Police Station. The City has encouraged preservation via the Civic Center Historic District and economic development via the construction of the River Walk. A continued balance between preservation and redevelopment on the riverfront is necessary for the River Walk to achieve its potential.

## STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

### I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Case Overview:** The subject property is located on the west bank of the Des Moines River and is bound by Grand Avenue to the north, Locust Street to the south and 2nd Avenue to the west. The property contains the Riverfront YMCA building. The building consists of an eight-story tower containing dormitory style residences along the river with a lower section to the west containing community rooms, gymnasium and other facilities. A surface parking lot is located along 2nd Avenue. The original portion of the building was constructed in 1960. The Aliber Youth Center was added to the northwest corner of the building in 1980.

The submitted nomination describes the building as "an excellent example of post-war Modernism, the design uses simple geometric forms to emphasize volume, large expanses of brick, sparse ornamentation and flat roofs. In addition to the extensive use of pinkish-red variegated brick, other exterior materials include slate, granite and stainless steel." The building was designed by William Wagner with the Des Moines firm of Wetherell and Harrison. The Nation Building Service of the YMCA served as design development consultants. The exterior and interior murals were designed by Stan Hess. Mr. Hess was an art professor at Drake University at the time. The 1980 addition was designed by local architect, Ron Walker.

On September 16, 2014, the Landmark Review Board unanimously approved the recommendation that the "YMCA building at 101 Locust Street be determined eligible for landmark designation in accordance with Section 58-58 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance." The Board is comprised of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Urban Design Review Board. The Board meets as needed to review nominations and proposed alternations to landmarks not located within a local historic district.

The Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for review in accordance with Chapter 58-60 and Chapter 82-40 of the City Code. The City Council will receive the recommendations of the Board and Commission on October 20, 2014 and will set a date for their hearing regarding the nomination. It is anticipated that the City Council will hold their hearing on November 3, 2014. The Board and the Commission are recommending bodies in this process. The decision to designate a property or site as a local Landmark is a public policy decision to be made by the City Council.

If the property is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council. The property would become instantly eligible for State Historic Tax Credits if designated as a local Landmark. Federal tax credits require National Register of Historic Places designation. In general, Landmark designation conveys that the community desires a building be retained and when altered that it should be done in a manner that maintains its historic integrity. This is accomplished through a design review process.

**2. Size of Site:** 81,183 square feet (1.86 acres).

**3. Existing Zoning (site):** "D-R" Downtown Riverfront District, "D-O" Downtown Overlay District and the "GGP" Gambling Games Prohibition District.

**4. Adjacent Land Use and Zoning:**

**North** – "D-R"; Use is MidAmerican Energy facility including the Hansen Triangle Park.

**South** – "D-R"; Use is the World Food Prize Building.

**East** – "D-R"; Uses are the Des Moines River and City Hall.

**West** – "C-3"; Use is multiple-family residential.

**5. Applicable Recognized Neighborhood(s):** The subject property is within the Downtown Des Moines Neighborhood. All recognized neighborhoods were notified of the meeting by mailing of the Preliminary Agenda on September 12, 2014 and the Final Agenda on September 26, 2014. All agendas are mailed to the primary contact(s) designated by the recognized neighborhood association to the City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division. The Downtown Des Moines Neighborhood Association mailings were sent to Larry Bradshaw, 418 6th Avenue, Suite 902, Des Moines, IA 50309. Additionally, a notice of public hearing of the request by the Plan and Zoning Commission was published in the Des Moines Register on September 24, 2014.

**6. 2020 Community Character Land Use Plan Designation:** The Des Moines' 2020 Community Character Plan currently designates the property as Public/Semi-Public, which is described as an area for "uses such as government facilities, schools and hospitals". This designation is a reflection of the current use. A Future Land Use Map amendment may be required should future reuse of the site require a zoning change. The site is currently zoned "D-R" Downtown Riverfront District.

- 7. Applicable Regulations:** Pursuant to Chapter 82-40(a) of the City Code, the Plan and Zoning Commission is an advisory body to the City Council and is a key factor in the growth and development of the city. Therefore, the Commission reviews all local Landmark and Historic District nominations in accordance with the Historic Preservation Ordinance and for compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and forwards a recommendation to the City Council.

Section 58-56 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance contains the landmark purpose statement. Section 58-58 contains the criteria for the designation of a landmark and Section 58-60 establishes the nomination process.

**Sec. 58-56. Purpose.**

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (2) Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements;
- (3) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (4) Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- (5) Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (6) Strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (7) Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

**Sec. 58-58. Designation criteria.**

- (a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:
  - (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
  - (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
  - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
  - (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
  - (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Sec. 58-60. Procedures.**

- (a) The historic preservation commission shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located within historic districts, and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below. The landmark review board shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located outside historic districts and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below.
- (b) Notice that an application for designation of a landmark or landmark site is being considered shall be given to the owner of the parcel on which the proposed landmark is situated or which is part of the proposed landmark site in accordance with the following:
- (1) Such notice shall be served by certified mail, addressed to the owner at his or her last known address as such appears in the records of the county treasurer's office, or if there is no name on such records, such notice may be served by regular mail addressed to "owner" at the street address of the property in question.
  - (2) Such owner shall have the right to confer with the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, prior to final action by the commission or board on the application.
  - (3) The historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, may, in addition, hold the public hearing of the proposed designation by giving notice as required by law.
- (c) After such investigation by the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as is deemed necessary, but in no case more than 60 days after the receipt of the complete application, the application for designation shall be recommended for approval or disapproval. Such recommendation shall be in writing and signed by the chair of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, and shall state the reasons for recommending approval or disapproval. The recommendation may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site as described in the application or may include modifications thereof. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to and filed with the plan and zoning commission, within five days after making such recommendation.
- (d) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the plan and zoning commission shall schedule a public hearing at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (e) Within 30 days after the public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall forward such application to the city council, together with the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board. The plan and zoning commission may adopt the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as its own or may prepare a written recommendation of its own. The plan and zoning commission may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site or may include modifications thereof. If the modification requires an additional public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall hold such hearing before forwarding the application to the city council.
- (f) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the council shall schedule a public hearing to consider the recommendation at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
- (g) The city council, after public hearing, may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the recommendation of the plan and zoning commission by a majority vote of its membership. If the plan and zoning commission shall have failed to act within the time limit set forth in this section, the city council may, nevertheless, approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposed landmark or landmark site as originally proposed or modified by a majority vote of its membership.

## II. ANALYSIS

1. **Landmark Nomination Criteria:** A nomination must demonstrate that the subject building or site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and meets one or more of the following criterion.

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The submitted nomination includes a State Historical Society of Iowa Site Inventory form for the property that was prepared in 2010. The form was prepared by Shannon Schaefer, Intern, State Historical Society of Iowa and reviewed by Paula Mohr, Ph.D., Architectural Historian, State Historical Preservation Office. On May 7, 2010, Ms. Mohr signed the form as concurring with the survey opinion that the Riverfront YMCA building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based on Criterion A and C.

National Register Criterion A is described as properties associated with significant events or a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community. This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 2. National Register Criterion C is described as properties having distinctive architectural characteristics that embody a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possess high artistic value or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (a.k.a. "district"). This criterion correlates to City of Des Moines Landmark Criterion 4.

Per Criteria 1, along with other former YMCA buildings in Des Moines (including the former downtown YMCA location at 4th and Park), this building is an example of the historic YMCA development model of men's dormitory housing coupled with a public fitness facility and provides a record of a "broad pattern of our history." Per Criteria 4, the building is an example of late Modernist architecture that emphasizes its materiality in a bold, often geometric manner. This era of Modernist architecture is better exhibited locally at the original limestone building for the Des Moines Art Center (1948) and at Drake University (Scott Chapel, 1955 and dormitories, 1957) by the work of master architects Eero and Eiel Saarinen.

Complete copies of the Nomination are included in the Commission's packet. The following are highlights from the "Historical Significance" section of the nomination.

## YMCA History

- The Des Moines YMCA was first organized in 1868 and is noted as being one of the earlier local Y's in the United States. The Des Moines YMCA originally met at the Coskery and Tannahill dry goods store at 4<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Street. The YMCA moved to a second location in 1891 at 4<sup>th</sup> and Grand Avenue and then to a location at 4<sup>th</sup> and Keosauqua Way (1333 Keosauqua Way) in 1912. A Crocker Street YMCA was founded in 1919 at 12<sup>th</sup> and Crocker Street for young African-American men and boys and operated at this location until the late 1950's. The cornerstone was laid at the southeast entrance of the current downtown building on April 26, 1959. The building was dedicated in 1960 and was noted as costing \$3.9 million dollars to construct and equip including land acquisition.

## Architecture

- The YMCA Building Bureau made the decision to adopt Modernism in the late 1940s. Among the buildings that bear a resemblance to the Des Moines facility, include the YMCA in Binghamton, Oklahoma City, and Racine (Wisc). The Des Moines building is an example of post-war Modernism style, which incorporates large geometric blocks, straight lines, flat roofs and the use of building materials that are economical yet durable.
- William Wagner was the chief architect on the YMCA project for the local firm of Wetherell and Harrison. Mr. Wagner graduated from Iowa State University in 1939 and later earned a Masters degree from Drake University. Wager is best known as a preservation architect. His body of work includes the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa.

## Murals

- Stanley O. Hess studied at the University of Oklahoma with Mexican artist Emilio Amero and Lenard Good (who later served as Char of the art department at Drake University). Hess earned a BFA in commercial art from the University of Oklahoma in 1948 and a MFA in painting in 1950. From 1950 to 1951 he was an instructor of art at the William Woods College in Fulton, Missouri. Later in 1951, Hess joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines.
- Hess was commissioned to create murals at the National Travelers Life Insurance Company Building, the Iowa Power and Light Building (moved to former Science Center in 1971), the Des Moines YMCA and the Mercy and Iowa Lutheran hospitals in Des Moines. He created mosaic stations of the cross for the St. Theresa's Church in Des Moines. Along with painting, Hess also designed a typeface called "Hessian."
- Hess' works many times are described as "double images, which require at least a second viewing." Hess and Bracklayers Local Union No. 2 donated their time completing the YMCA murals. The murals are made entirely of multi-colored brick creating images, out of Hess' research on the history of the YMCA, which symbolize the purposed and objectives of the organization. (*See the nomination form for descriptions of the two exterior murals and the four interior murals.*)

- The YMCA World Alliance office in Geneva, Switzerland requested photographs and information regarding the murals to be published in their “World Communique” magazine as the building was being completed. The magazine was distributed to 77 counties. The murals were also published in the Annual Report of the National Council YMCA Board (U.S. & Canada) at the time.

**2. Comprehensive Plan Analysis:** The following Comprehensive Plan documents are applicable:

2020 Community Character Plan

The following goals from the 2020 Community Character Plan are relevant to this application.

- Promote economic growth and efficiency.
- Enhance and preserve Des Moines’ urban character.
- Establish landmark protection status for key landmark buildings.
- Historic district and landmark structures should be preserved and protected.
- Apply special design standards through site plan review process for properties in vicinity of major landmarks.
- Develop a detailed land use plan for the Downtown working with the principles established in the Destination Downtown Strategic Plan (see “What’s Next, Downtown?” plan)

Rediscovering the Rivers Plan

Rediscovering the Rivers, the 2002 riverfront masterplan states, “the rivers [have] taken on a less prominent role in the city, providing merely a backdrop for the development and revitalization that is occurring in downtown Des Moines.” The plan challenges, “to take advantage of this incredible natural resource -- to reconnect with the rivers, bring them to the forefront once again.” Implementation of a phase 1 with over \$60 M of improvements over several years, concluded in spring 2015 and included the following projects:

- Meredith Trail - 2005
- DM Union Railway Bridge Renovation (a.k.a. Red Bridge) - 2006
- Long Look Garden - 2006
- Brenton Skating Plaza – 2006
- DM River Outfall & Overflow (Sewer) – 2007
- Hansen Triangle - 2007
- Center Street Pedestrian Bridge - 2010
- Armory Parking Lot & Promenade North of Armory – 2011
- Promenade adjacent to Brenton Skating Plaza – 2012
- West End of Center Street Bridge - 2012
- Hub Spot (Court Ave Plaza) – 2013
- Court Ave Pump Station - 2013
- South of Court (East & West) & Y-Block - 2013

## What's Next, Downtown? Plan

The following statements are from the "Movement: Celebrate our Rivers" section of the "What's Next, Downtown?" plan.

Historically, development at the River's edge produced an array of handsome civic buildings and some industrial uses. However, a handful of prime riverfront redevelopment opportunities -- from vacant lots to lingering industrial and warehouse uses to under-utilized, aging properties -- are likely to alter this century-long development pattern, adding a new dimension to the riverfront.

Redevelopment has the opportunity to contribute activity to the riverfront. As handsome as the Beaux Arts civic buildings are, they generally house workers for approximately 40 hours per week. New development should contain a mix of uses in order to contribute to a vibrant, active riverfront.

Though there may be new uses along the River, the continuity of public access along the entire downtown stretch of the riverfront should remain intact. This is a somewhat of a rarity at waterfronts across the country and should be maintained.

- 3. Development Potential:** The YMCA building is currently in a state of flux. The tower portion of the building has been empty as the men's housing portion of the YMCA program moved to a new facility in downtown in 2011. The fitness center will relocate from the Riverfront YMCA later this year/early 2015 to a facility that is currently under construction in downtown. Within the next three years, the site will be sold for redevelopment or for holding by the Des Moines Redevelopment Company.

The site holds high economic development potential and the constraints of the existing building – small floor plate, low floor-ceiling heights, obsolete mechanical-electrical systems, lack of sprinkler system, small window openings, and unique fitness facility floor plan – present considerable challenges to reuse of the facility. Further, the building entrances are oriented away from the River, discounting the considerable effort the River Walk expends to enhance views and use of the Des Moines River. Changing the entrances and window pattern on the west side of the YMCA to enhance river usage would compromise the character defining elements of the building as its siting and window pattern provides a record of the "broad pattern of our history". Regulations on use of historic tax credits for renovations may be difficult to comply with given the building changes needed for adaptive reuse and river orientation.

There are limited opportunities for redevelopment along the Des Moines River in the downtown. The City has encouraged historic preservation via the Civic Center Historic District and economic development by construction of the River Walk. It is critical that additional uses be added to the River Walk that are active beyond "8 to 5". All or parts of the building may be able to be incorporated into a redevelopment project. However, requiring preservation of the structure versus encouraging it limits the potential range of projects that could be proposed. Limiting the possibilities reduces the ability to secure a high impact project. Staff does not intend this position as a blanket statement to be used in all redevelopment cases as often the greatest impact involves historic preservation. In this case, staff believes the potential positive impact on the downtown and the tax base is too great to require retention of the building.

If a developer comes forward that wishes to incorporate the building they could nominate the building to the National Register and would be able to access State and Federal tax credits.

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Erik Lundy presented the staff report and recommendation.

Dann Flaherty asked what would be the impact of making this building a landmark.

Erik Lundy stated some of the benefits to making this property a landmark include making it eligible for historical tax credits. If they were to receive historical tax credits they would have to follow the Secretary of Interior Standards for rehabilitation. There would be limitations as to how this could be redeveloped which may not be in line with riverfront planning efforts.

Will Page asked staff to clarify the process if the building were designated as a local landmark and changes or redevelopment were to occur and would the Plan and Zoning Commission have a review function.

Erik Lundy stated they would follow Chapter 58 of City Code. Redevelopment or alterations of a local landmark are subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and City Council.

Will Page asked if the property is designated as a local landmark and there were some kind of proposed redevelopment for the site would the Plan and Zoning Commission have a review of that proposal.

Mike Ludwig stated there are other provisions in the City code that would involve Plan and Zoning Commission review on that property. There is the Downtown Riverfront Zoning District which has a site plan review by the Plan and Zoning Commission. In addition, if it is used for multi-family residential there are multi-family site plan criteria that would be applicable to the property. Therefore, any redevelopment of the property would have both Plan and Zoning Commission review at some level and review by the Landmark Review Board pursuant to Chapter 58 of City Code.

CJ Stephens asked if the YMCA owns the building and the land.

Erik Lundy stated yes.

CJ Stephens stated this property is appraised at \$14 million and it has been tax free for 60 plus years. She believes there should be some ownership of the public and the tax payer in this building. The more important thing is that it begin contributing to the tax base that is being carried by the neighborhoods and the tax payers. This is a significant piece of property. She believes they are not getting the entire details of this property.

Erik Lundy stated there are no immediate proposals for the Plan and Zoning Commission to take into account. The Commission's role is to look at this in relation to the Comprehensive Plan.

Mike Ludwig stated the Plan and Zoning Commission will get a chance to review any development of this property. Any redevelopment of the property whether the building is preserved or demolished or any addition would require a site plan review by the developer. The staff recommendation emphasized whatever happens with this property it needs to be a significant development.

Greg Wattier asked can anybody at any time ask that someone else's property be designated as a local landmark.

Erik Lundy stated yes, that is the way it is set up. An individual can petition to make a request to designate any property as a local landmark regarding ownership.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if landmark status has been granted to other buildings in the downtown area:

Erik Lundy stated yes. One is the neon sign that sits on top of the Des Moines Public Schools Kitchen (the old Colonial Bakery Sign). There are others but staff did not bring the list of local landmarks.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked how often does the owner request a landmark status.

Erik Lundy stated he would have to research the answer.

Jack Porter 815 18<sup>th</sup> Street stated he is not in agreement with staff recommendation. He shared a PowerPoint to explain his reasons. This building is more than just architecture, it is culture, history of a City and it includes experiences around a building that also make it a landmark. He stressed the amount of work in the late 1950s that went into constructing the building with a huge amount of community involvement. He pointed out some of the sketches and photos of the interior and exterior of the building. He believes that this building should be a landmark and is a great example of architecture/art. He asked that his handout with detailed explanations of why this building should be a landmark be received and filed. He pointed out that this case has been established to designate the downtown YMCA under the landmark ordinance for the Commission's consideration. He believes the YMCA architecture criteria one, it's artistic value criteria two, it's cultural value criteria three or the building's distinguished characteristics criteria four is enough to warrant the Commission's support of that landmark designation. As disappointed as he is in the staff recommendation he understands their position and believe that it is factual. But it does reveal to him a bias against preserving this historic building. The development potential presents argument that new development is the only economic development tool available in the City of Des Moines. He asks that the members of the Plan and Zoning Commission be provided a fair and complete assessment of both existing and proposed development possibilities. He noted a downtown development letter dated September 24 says that Polk County will remove its million dollars for demolition if landmark status is given to this building. He believes a million dollars should have been designated for demolition or rehabilitation. If every landmark needs the owner's consent or is expected to meet economic development criteria then those items should be included in the landmark ordinance and not added after the fact in the evaluation. He believes that if the people of Des Moines wish to live in a world class city then those unique structures that exist in no place else in the world need to be preserved. This building and unique art exist only in one place and that is the City of Des Moines. If we are to achieve the status as a world class

city like the money interest people says is their goal, then the historic and cultural resources that make Des Moines unique will have to be preserved.

John "Jack" Hilmes why now has Mr. Porter come forward wanting to make the YMCA a landmark site.

Jack Porter stated why not. He was told the YMCA would be preserved by city staff in the past. Things have changed. He is now retired and no longer a SHPO employee and is not hampered by any constraints of being a state employee or working for SHPO.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if what he is hearing is that Mr. Porter felt like it would have been a conflict of interest before July 15, 2014 for him to have raised this issue with the City as he saw the movement of buildings and properties occurring leading to the current situation.

Jack Porter stated yes.

CJ Stephens asked if the Plan and Zoning and the Council would vote to approve the request of the applicant that the same action can be taken to remove the Landmark designation.

Jack Porter stated that is the way he understands the ordinance. He noted that the building does not have to retain its non-profit status. It can be an income producing for profit project. Because it was built as a YMCA it does not have to stay a YMCA. When they evaluate whether a historic tax credit project is going to effect the historic structure they are evaluating what will be done with the character defining historic features like the murals and mosaic not the financial feasibility. The Secretary of Standards provides guidelines on how to evaluate proposed work. The assumption is that historic structures will be rehabilitated for a new use. It is how that new use effects existing historic fabric such as the murals and mosaics that is most important.

Greg Wattier asked Mr. Porter if this as an all or nothing proposition.

Jack Porter stated not necessarily. The Commission has the authority to amend the landmark designation and recommendation to the Council. The Council has that authority also. There is a political factor that is weighing on this entire thing. A complicated deal has been made. He believes the goal is to have a better project but questions why is it a better project with the developer cutting costs.

John "Jack" Hilmes asked if the applicant has had any conversation with the YMCA about things like Professor Hess' murals and adaptation of those components elsewhere. He has read in material supplied today that there have been murals moved from building to building in an effort to preserve that part of the structure.

Jack Porter stated he has had no conversation with the YMCA or the Des Moines Development Corporation or Polk County. He pointed out that the landmark ordinance states "*The purpose is to effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history*". The YMCA does not have to be a new building.

## CHAIRPERSON OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING

Jon Croft 300 Walnut #82 stated he believes that some things are worth saving. The YMCA is worth saving and he would like to see it stay. Currently, there is a good mix of old and new development along the river and he hopes that the Commission will grant the applicant's request.

Pat Meiners 4115 55<sup>th</sup> Street stated she has spoken to people from the bricklayers union and one other person in town and she has been given very little hope that those murals can be moved, especially the curved one. These murals were the first type to be built anywhere in the world. She agrees with the applicant. Des Moines has been very negligent of its history. Every county in Iowa, every suburb surrounding Des Moines has a great museum and Des Moines has none. The YMCA is next door to the World Food Prize one of the greatest restoration works in this city. Because there has been no tax received from the YMCA property for many years, it makes her a big stakeholder in that property and she believe she has a right to say that she wants that property maintained and eligible for historic status.

Vernon DelPesce President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Des Moines 101 Locust Street stated on behalf of the YMCA they are not in favor of the landmark designation. They do own the property and have owned the building for over 50 years. They understand the history that has taken place. This is the third permanent location of the YMCA in Des Moines since 1868 and they will be moving to a new location January 1, 2015. Just because the building may technically meet the criteria does not mean it is in the best interest of the community. He believes that they have spent many years exploring what to do with their future and what to do with this building. They looked at renovating it and found it to be cost prohibitive. If they could have paid for rehabilitation the building still would not have met their needs for a modern YMCA. The last several years numerous local developers have looked at the property to see if they could potentially use it for something, renovate it and maybe use the housing components of it No one has been able to come up with a viable plan even using historic tax credits. They were part of the land swap that involved Polk County and Wellmark which resulted in them purchasing the Convention Center where the YMCA will be housed. This opened their site for future redevelopment, which was very important to community leaders. There is a pending purchase agreement from an out of state developer on the riverfront site. There is also an agreement with the Des Moines Redevelopment Corporation to purchase it from the YMCA at a pre-established price at a pre-established date in the event they had not sold it at that time. The YMCA's obligation in that agreement is to deliver to them a site with no building on it that is ready for redevelopment. A landmark designation would greatly hinder the ability to sell the property and would create a tremendous hardship on them because part of their financing package for the new site is utilizing the funds from sale of their current site.

Jann Freed asked if they inquired about moving, preserving or incorporating the murals and mosaics into the new design.

Vernon DelPesce stated the YMCA has been around since 1868 and is the fifth oldest continuous business in Des Moines. They have a very rich history and are going to make a huge effort to preserve that history and preserve what has taken place in the building and the historic elements of the building through pictures and stories and things that you read in history books. But to move those type of elements and try to incorporate them would be

quite expensive. Also, as they do sell the building the owner will have input as to what happens to anything.

Glenn Lyons CEO of the Downtown Community Alliance, 3316 Southern Hills Drive stated he is the author of the September 24<sup>th</sup> letter that explains how they tried to work with the YMCA, the County and others in the community to raise over \$10 million to support the YMCA project. To find a new site, to allow the court house campus to be developed in the court district and along Walnut Street; to create an opportunity to have a brand new mixed use building hopefully with restaurant at grade and apartments above on the Riverwalk. Those were all good intentions and had very little to do with business scheme. Mr. Knapp started this project and mobilized support for the YMCA. Is the YMCA the bricks and mortar or is it the occurrence in the building. In the new building there will be new sets of experiences and memories created. That is how the YMCA perpetuates itself every 50 years. Finding a way to build a new facility to accommodate the contemporary needs of our society and do things for them that the public sector cannot always provide. This is important for downtown. They bought the old-plex that the County abandoned. They have the ability to do the court house project which is reusing the jail as a criminal court, renovating the historic court house and converting the JC Penney to the civil courts and prosecutors' offices bringing new life and activity to the court district and accommodating the needs of the justice system. The YMCA building cannot be reused in the same way that other historic buildings can. When looking at the Des Moines building, The Fleming building and a lot of the warehouses around town they can be converted to residential use with retail uses at grade. When looking at this building the he does not know how the main floor can be converted to any meaningful use without incredible public subsidy. When looking at the tower there is a very narrow floor plate designed for a hostel, low ceilings and no sprinkler system. Landmark status would make it hard to sell to anyone who could do a good project on this site and it makes it hard for the YMCA to complete their new project which is keeping the YMCA alive in Des Moines. He is asking that the Commission deny the applicant's request.

Will Page is concerned about the art work. If this building is demolished how do they feel about removal of artistic heritage of this City?

Glen Lyons stated the first question to ask is can it be saved. If it can be saved, is it affordable and reasonable to do. If it is not in either case, how can the memory be captured. Weighing the artistic value of the murals against the value of the building and the context of what they have been discussing. It is a hard judgment to make.

Will Page stated from this answer the analysis is not completed.

Glen Lyons stated he did not know.

Rick Tolakson 319 SW 7<sup>th</sup> Street CEO of Hubbell Realty Company stated they have done a number of historic rehabs in the downtown area. He stated it is very lucrative to do a historic rehab. There is a lot of federal historic tax credits and state historic tax credits available. When looking at a project such as the YMCA they are going to look at a project and say can they utilize the historic part of the building first. Why not, they have a huge incentive to try. He could not figure this out after walking through the tower numerous times. It is expensive to demolish buildings. CBRE Hubbell Commercial has it listed and there is a buyer they are negotiating with and it has a long due diligence period because they have to

get in there and figure it out. The building is just one part of it. What are they going to build? Tax incentives are available if you build what the City wants you to build. That will all be a part of the negotiation which would probably take six months. The Plan and Zoning Commission will be part of it. Mr. Knapp called him and asked to see the building, he believed he could save it. They went through the building and he said that it is a "tear down". It was nothing he had envisioned.

Eric Turner 730 54<sup>th</sup> Street stated he is a member of the YMCA since 1981. He believes the timing of this is very troubling. At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour and 59<sup>th</sup> minute somebody can put in a petition to stall or if not completely end your transaction. This project has been in the works for a long time. He believes the transitional housing piece was done in conjunction with the whole notion that the YMCA was going to have a new location. Work is being done to the Convention Center to renovate it for the new YMCA. Money is being spent. Yet there is conversation tonight about whether or not the YMCA can sell a property that it owns without a third party coming in and saying you cannot for these reasons. It is a chilling effect on any transaction. He understands the concern about the art work and if someone can salvage it he is sure the YMCA will be more than happy to make it available. But to stall this project and end this transaction over those items when the process is already in motion and nothing has been said until recently just seems to be unfair. He believes it is not legal to pass laws on something that has already occurred to make it illegal. In effect that is what the applicant is requesting the Commission do. The Commission would be sending the message saying they are going to reverse this transaction because of these reasons, all of which could have been stated up front as part of the process.

### Rebuttal

Jack Porter stated he believes this project is all about money and not about whether it meets the landmark nomination as written in City code. All these arguments are outside of the City code. It wasn't that long ago that the understanding was the YMCA would be preserved, so things changed rapidly. He learns by reading the newspaper and as volunteers you can only do what you can do when you can do it. He believes in preservation of historic resources. He wants the City of Des Moines to be a world class city. If we keep tearing down buildings that make Des Moines unique and unusual then the City of Des Moines will never get there. Des Moines is a wonderful community with great resources and wonderful culture. But every building that's destroyed a little bit of it goes away. He understands the fear and some of the arguments but disagrees with the assumption that preserving historic landmarks in the City of Des Moines is a road block. He believes that it is all about respect, not only our community's tax payers but also respecting the art of art. He believes with a really good architect they could solve this issue and he is hoping and asking the Commission to recommend this building be a historic landmark and have the City Council wrestle with this very critical issue.

## **CHAIRPERSON CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING**

CJ Stephens suggested to the Commission that their advice to the City Council would be to take a further in-depth look at this. She believes that there is a lot at stake here and she is not in agreement with staff's recommendation to deny the applicant's request.

Greg Wattier stated he believes there are separate issues and the troubling issue he has is regarding private property owner rights. He loves saving old buildings and new uses. He

has made a livelihood out of it. The timing is very unfortunate. The property owner was well within their rights to make deals, to decide whether they want to tear down the building or sell it years ago.

Tim Fitzgerald commented he has a lot of respect for the comments made on both sides of this issue. He believes the City does a great job of rehabbing old buildings and when the CEO of Hubbell gets up and states that he and the CEO of Knapp Properties believes it is not viable, he tends to believe that. He is also in agreement with Commissioner Stephens in wishing to see if something can be done to preserve the art work.

John "Jack" Hilmes stated when he thinks of the City of Des Moines' reuse of old building he thinks of East Village, Fleming, Des Moines, Liberty, the warehouses along the river and along the MLK corridor, Equitable Building, World Food Prize, Vets Auditorium, Polk County Courthouse, JC Penney Building, the jail etc. It is happening all over the place. The point is it seems like if the rehab could be done they would. Reflecting on ability and deep pockets to be able to do that. If the Hubbell families and the Knapp families look at this building with the intention of trying to do something with it and they cannot see the light of day even with the tax advantages there must be something nearly impossible about the ability to renovate this structure.

Will Page stated nothing is impossible. He commented that this building is not just privately owned building it is a semi-publicly owned building and it was built as a semi-publicly owned building and many people have contributed to the construction of the building. A developer could go in and turn the building into a income producing property (which is fine) but still is going to be an income producing property on a site that has been developed in a semi-public way. He believes the debate tonight is perfectly acceptable. In fact he believes the debate tonight is critical for the City to discuss. Also, he believes there is another option available. The Commission has heard that many people are concerned about the art work. We have discussed removing the art work from this site and what they have heard is that might not be feasible. He would like to see an analysis of the feasibility. He asked why can't some of the facades be preserved that have these exquisite murals or mosaics. Why couldn't a clever architect and developer integrate that into a new design?

Christine Pardee agrees with Commissioner Page and stated if there is an opportunity to flush that out then it needs to occur, if that really has not been done.

### **COMMISSION ACTION:**

CJ Stephens made a motion to APPROVE the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.

Motion FAILED 3-8 (CJ Stephens, Dann Flaherty and Will Page voted in favor and Greg Jones, John "Jack" Hilmes, Dory Briles, Jann Freed, Christine Pardee, Greg Wattier, Vicki Stogdill, Tim Fitzgerald vote in opposition)

### **COMMISSION ACTION:**

Dory Briles moved staff recommendation to DENY the applicant's request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.

Dann Flaherty asked for a friendly amendment to ask the City Council to work to preserve the art and architecture that can be preserved if possible.

Dory Briles accepted the friendly amendment.

Motion passed 10-0-1 (CJ Stephens abstained)

Respectfully submitted,

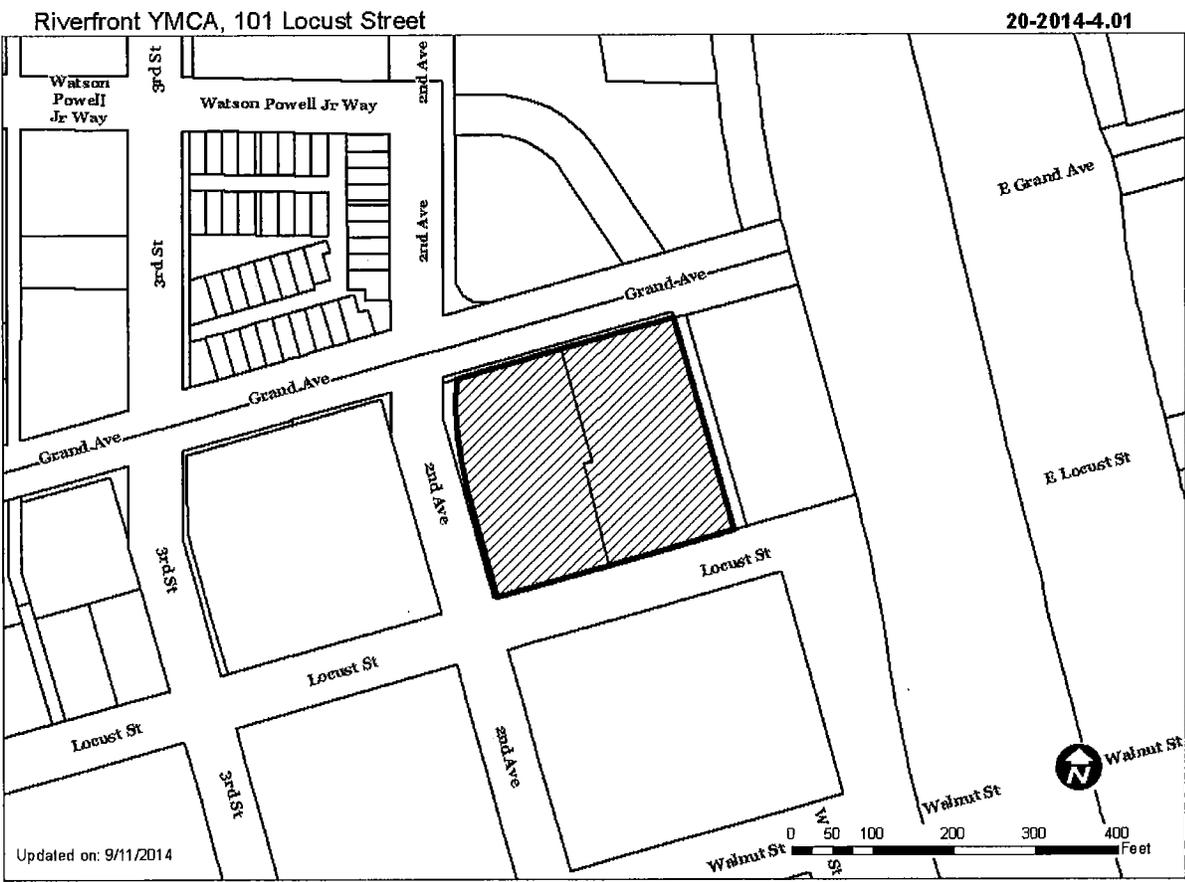
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael G. Ludwig".

Michael G. Ludwig, AICP  
Planning Administrator

MGL:clw

Attachment

Jack Porter (applicant) on property at 101 Locust Street. The subject property is owned by the YMCA of Greater Des Moines represented by Vernon Delpesce (officer).		<b>File #</b> 20-2015-4.01		
<b>Description of Action</b>	Denial of request to designate the "Riverfront YMCA" building located at 101 Locust Street as a Local Landmark.			
<b>2020 Community Character Plan</b>	Current: Public/Semi-Public. Proposed: N/A/.			
<b>Horizon 2035 Transportation Plan</b>	No planned improvements.			
<b>Current Zoning District</b>	"D-R" Downtown Riverfront District.			
<b>Proposed Zoning District</b>	N/A.			
<b>Consent Card Responses</b>	In Favor	Not In Favor	Undetermined	% Opposition
Inside Area				
Outside Area				
<b>Plan and Zoning Commission Action</b>	Approval		<b>Required 6/7 Vote of the City Council</b>	Yes
	Denial	7-2-1		No
				X



1 inch = 137 feet

Plan & Zoning Board

Oct. 2, 2014

Jack C. Porter

815 18<sup>th</sup> Street

Des Moines, IA.

Chair and Members of the Board,

I am here to seek your approval to recommend the Downtown YMCA as worthy of Landmark status. I hope to convince you the Y is significant because of architectural design – it embodies distinctive characteristics of Mid-Century Modern architecture; it possesses high artistic value representative of that era; and finally, is associated with a person significant to our cultural heritage – William J. Wagner, FAIA.

**Architecture:**

Built between 1957 and 1960, the era commonly referred to as Mid-Century Modern (MCM) and was designed by Wetherell-Harrison Architects with William J. Wagner as chief architect.

**PLEASE REFERANCE THE SITE INVENTORY FORM PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED.**

Use of materials such as unique masonry in structural and artistic details, the Y is representative of Post WW II designs. Details such as use of aluminum railings and window detailing and finishes; geometric and building masses broken by sweeping walls, marble columns, and unique mosaics; proportions and interplay of the many functions within the building are reflected in strong exterior forms connected both on the exterior and interior circulation and common spaces. All are characteristic of MCM architecture. (The Downtown Y building was recognized by the Iowa AIA’s Century of Iowa Architecture: 50 Most Significant Iowa Buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for the decade 1950–1960. This honor included such other buildings as the Walter House (Cedar Rock), FLW; Lamberson House, FLW; Ero Saarinen’s chapel and hall at Drake mentioned by staff; and the Crites House No. 1, Crites & McConnell.

**High Artistic Values:**

**PLEASE REFER TO THE SITE INVENTORY FORM**

Stan Hess was the chair of the Art Department at Drake University. Besides the exterior and interior mosaics and murals in the Y, his work also adorns National Travelers Life Insurance Company building, Iowa Power & Light (relocated to the former Science Center building), and work at both Mercy and Lutheran hospitals. Noted for his “double images” – a close look is encouraged. His work is labeled as modernist, surrealist, and pop in style and material, all typical of MCM art.

## **Association:**

William J. Wagner, FAIA

Writer, jeweler, artist, researcher and a true preservation architect, "Bill" Wagner is known for his American Federal calendar sketches of Iowa's landmarks. Recognized by the Iowan magazine as one of our unique and honored citizens. Bill associated with many of our Presidents, but is probably best known for his design of the Hoover Presidential Library and Burial Grounds in West Branch. His vast collection of work is housed in the Dallas County Museum outside Perry in a new addition dedicated to his memory.

## **ARGUMENT**

The case has been established to designate the Downtown YMCA under the Landmarks Ordinance for your consideration. It would seem reasonable to assume the Y's architecture (criteria 1); artistic or cultural value (criteria 3); or the building's distinguished characteristics (criteria 4) is not enough to warrant landmark designation. As disappointing the staff report is to read, it does reveal a bias against preserving this historic building.

The introduction of Development Potential creates an argument that seems to assure only "New Development" is the only economic development tool available in OUR city. I am not going to address each of the statements submitted by your staff, but rather ask you to insist the members of the P&Z Board be provided a fair and complete assessment of **BOTH** existing and proposed development possibilities. If the historic features are inadequate, then most certainly a new building should include features and a design that is of superior quality.

The staff position has put you in a very awkward position. If every landmark needs the owner's consent or is expected to meet economic development criteria, then those items should be included in the landmark ordinance not added after the fact in your evaluation. Staff should provide a detailed and factual report to the P&Z Board for your review and evaluation.

Without such an assessment historic buildings are placed at a huge disadvantage in evaluating their development potential and value. Leave it to say \$15M of investment in either a historic or new building is \$15M worth of investment, however the historic building has the added benefit of its cultural value.

Landmark designation provides the potential to use the State Historic Tax Credit program whose value is 25% of the Qualified Rehabilitation Costs for the project.

In closing, I make this observation. If the people of Des Moines wish to live in a World Class City – then those unique structures that exist in no place else in the world need to be preserved. Our Y building and its unique art exists in only one place – OUR CITY – our Des Moines. It seems to me the moneyed interest say their goal is to create a world class city but Des Moines will never achieve that recognition without the historic and cultural resources that make Des Moines unique.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I will attempt to answer your questions with the best of my ability.



401 Main Street, Suite 5 keokuk, Iowa 52632  
Phone: (319) 526 8474 Fax: (319) 526 8963  
www.preservationiowa.org

Attn: City of Des Moines, Iowa  
YMCA of Greater Des Moines Iowa  
September 25, 2014

To whom it may concern,

We have recently been made aware of efforts, in regards to the YMCA of Greater Des Moines, Iowa located at 101 Locust St Des Moines, IA 50309, to place this building on a listing of Historic Places in the Downtown Des Moines, Iowa area. Preservation Iowa is aware of this structure and recognizes the YMCA for its historical significance and importance to the local culture. Preservation Iowa supports efforts to give this structure recognition on state and federal levels to preserve its name and status as a building of historical significance. Preservation Iowa also believes the building to be of value for the Downtown Des Moines area as a structure to be placed in use. Thank you for considering our recommendation at this time.

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Kuckelman, President  
Preservation Iowa

**Our mission is to build partnerships that enhance our economic and cultural future through the preservation of Iowa's historic resources.**



September 15, 2014

Dear Members of the Landmark Review Board:

The Des Moines Historical Society submits this letter in support of the nomination of the Riverfront YMCA building for Local Landmark status.

Built in 1957, the building under consideration is an excellent example of Mid-Century Modern architecture and as such, is worthy of our efforts to maintain and celebrate it. Its association with artist and Drake professor Stan Hess, who created the spectacular murals, is in and of itself a notable reason this building has such interest. Not only do these murals depict the values of the YMCA organization, but also they are the first like them in the country.

Some people may not understand why we would want to preserve a building like the Riverfront YMCA. And if it is allowed to be torn down, they will never have the opportunity to understand it. And that is certainly a shame. Having been named one of the 50 most significant Iowa buildings of the 20th century by the American Institute of Architects Iowa Chapter, the YMCA building may not be as ornate as the much older World Food Prize Hall of Laureates or as stately as the State Capitol. But there are merits to being able to look back 100 years from now and view the YMCA building as part of a larger architectural movement that influenced the American experience throughout the mid-19th century, and the organization itself as one that provided valuable resources and transitional housing for homeless adult men in Des Moines.

Please approve this request for Local Landmark status so that we may continue to learn from this building and the art housed as part of it.

Sincerely,

Sarah Oltrogge  
President

cc: Jack Porter  
Jason Van Essen  
Mike Ludwig

September 24, 2014

**City of Des Moines**  
**Plan and Zoning Commission**  
City Hall  
400 Robert D Ray Drive  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

**Attention: Chairman, Plan & Zoning Commission**

**Regarding: Possible Landmark Status for Existing YMCA Site in Downtown Des Moines**

Dear Mr. Greg Jones:

The Downtown Community Alliance Board of Directors reviewed this matter at our Meeting of September 18, 2016, and voted unanimously to oppose the proposed landmark status for the existing YMCA site along the Des Moines River in Downtown.

The Board made its decision after considering both the pros and cons of the proposed landmark status and concluded that the community benefits of obtaining landmark status are marginal in comparison to the community costs incurred in preserving the building.

As you are aware, demolition of the existing YMCA building and its redevelopment as a new, high-density, mixed-use site along the Riverwalk is a key element in the implementation of a broader Downtown revitalization strategy now underway. Elements of that strategy include:

1. Acquisition of the former County Convention Complex on Grand Avenue by the YMCA (completed);
2. Renovation and reuse of the 'Plex' as the new YMCA in Downtown (underway);
3. Donation of the adjacent Wellmark lands to the YMCA (completed);
4. Development of an enclosed, Olympic-sized pool on the former Wellmark lands and its integration into the new YMCA building (underway);

**Downtown Community Alliance**  
601 Locust Street, Suite 700, Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-286-4950 | 515-243-6684 fax | [DowntownDesMoines.com](http://DowntownDesMoines.com)



5. Acquisition by Polk County of the former JC Penny Building owned by Wellmark, using funds received from the sale of the 'Plex' (completed);
6. Renovation and reuse of the former JC Penny Building for court purposes (underway);
7. Inclusion of the 'new' Court House Annex in the broader Court House campus renovations (underway);
8. Sale of the Existing YMCA to a developer with the proceeds from that sale being used to help finance the new YMCA project; and
9. Redevelopment of the existing YMCA site as a new high-density mixed use project immediately adjacent to the Riverwalk.

Taken together, this is undoubtedly one of the most significant public-private partnerships undertaken in Downtown Des Moines. All three projects, each in their own way, will provide support to the broader Downtown revitalization effort. For example:

- The new YMCA will provide enhanced recreational amenities to Downtown residents and employees alike.
- The Court House Campus will result in the provision of increased space for the justice system, the renovation of our historic Court House, and new pedestrian activity along Walnut Street and in the Court District.
- The development of a mixed use project on the former YMCA site will bring the first commercial (i.e. restaurant) and residential uses directly to the Riverwalk.

The existing YMCA site, in fact, is the only potential development site directly adjacent to the Riverwalk. The remaining uses that front the Riverwalk are public buildings and a power station.

**Downtown Community Alliance**  
 601 Locust Street, Suite 700, Des Moines, IA 50309  
 515-286-4950 | 515-243-6684 fax | [DowntownDesMoines.com](http://DowntownDesMoines.com)



A decision to award landmark status to the existing YMCA building would have significant, negative effects in Downtown. For example:

- The YMCA would not be able to sell the site free and clear of the existing development; this would result in a severe devaluation of the property's market value and a significantly lower financial contribution to the new YMCA project, if a sale was to be realized.
- The County's pledge to provide \$1 million toward the demolition of the existing building would be nullified.
- The Des Moines Redevelopment's pledge to pay \$4.5 million for the cleared site, if a buyer cannot be found, would also be nullified.
- The possibility of developing a new, high-density, mixed-use site on the Riverwalk would be negated.

The ability to reuse the existing single-purpose built structure would be severely constrained by its design and condition. It is hard to imagine, for example, any viable commercial use occupying the lower floors of the building. And, it is also hard to imagine, any economically viable residential use of the Tower, with its extremely narrow floor plate, low ceilings, lack of sprinkler system, etc.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that:

- The YMCA will face a severe financial hardship if the existing YMCA is to be given landmark status;
- The opportunity to add new vitality to the Riverwalk will be lost; and
- The community will face the very real possibility of having an abandoned building on the Riverwalk for years to come.



It is for these reasons that the DCA Board of Directors is asking the Plan & Zoning Commission to reject the proposed landmark designation for this building.

Sincerely,



Glenn F. Lyons MCIP  
President and CEO  
Downtown Community Alliance

**Downtown Community Alliance**  
601 Locust Street, Suite 700, Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-286-4950 | 515-243-6684 fax | [DowntownDesMoines.com](http://DowntownDesMoines.com)



**Landmark Nomination Form**

**Landmark Review Board**

**IDENTIFICATION:**

**SITE NAME:** Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)  
**LEGAL LOCATION** (description): Coliseum Place, Lots 1,2,3 and 4.

**OWNER(S) NAME:** YMCA of Greater Des Moines

**OWNER(S) ADDRESS:** 101 Locust Street, Des Moines, IA 50309

**CATEGORY: STRUCTURAL/ARCHITECTURAL**   
**LANDSCAPE:**  (check one)  
**ARCHEOLOGY:**

**COMPONENTS:** nomination includes original YMCA building, additions and adjacent parking lot and site.

**USE** (present) recreational and multiple dwelling (past) recreational and multiple dwelling

**DESCRIPTION:**

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:** 1957-1960 and c. 1980 addition

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Wetherell Harrison -  
William J. Wagner, chief architect

**BUILDING TYPE:**

Single-family dwelling  Industrial  Other institutional  Religious   
Multiple-family dwelling  Educational  Public  Agricultural   
Commercial

**EXTERIOR WALLS:** clapboard  stone  brick  board and batten  shingles  stucco   
other \_\_\_\_\_

**STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:** wood frame with interlocking joints  masonry load-bearing walls   
wood frame with light members (balloon frame)  iron frame  steel frame with curtain walls   
reinforced concrete  other

**CONDITION:** excellent  good  fair  deteriorated

**INTEGRITY:** original site  moved--if so, when \_\_\_\_\_  
from where \_\_\_\_\_

Information on alterations, additions (with dates and architect, if known) and any other notable features of building/site: Addition was added to building in 1980. Addition was designed by Ron Walker. Multiple interior work has been done over the last several years.

**RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:** barn  other farm structures  carriage house   
garage  privy  other \_\_\_\_\_

**SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE:** open land  woodland  scattered outbuildings  commercial   
 industrial  residential  densely built-up  other downtown riverfront

**Prepared by:** Jack C. Porter

**Date:** July 15, 2014

**Address:** 815 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, IA 50314 **Telephone:** (515) 243-7064

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNIFICANCE:** (Indicate all sources of information for all statements)

**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

Please see attached nomination to the National Register of Historic Places under section on architectural and historic significance.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Theme(s)

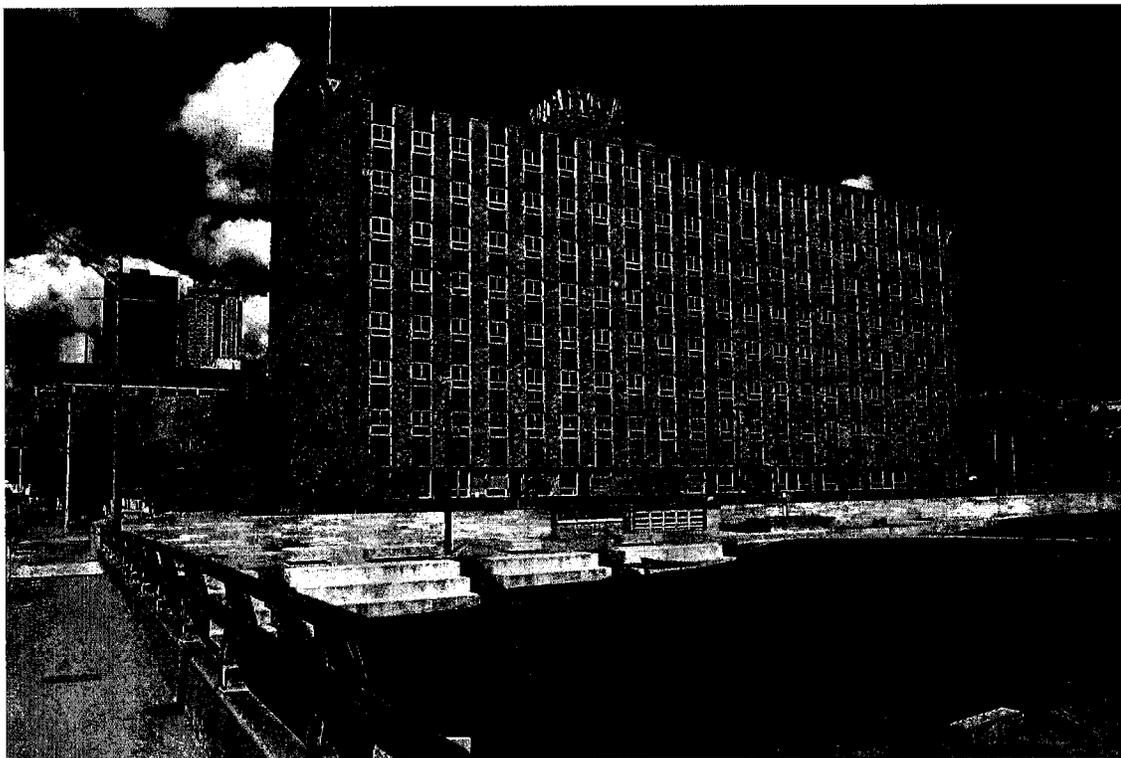
**SOURCES** (for primary and secondary sources give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):

National Register nomination evaluated on May 7, 2010

Polk County Assessor web site printed July 15, 2014.

**Map**

**Photo**



APR 22 2010

Site Inventory Form  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
(April 2010)

State Inventory No. 77-10696  New  Supplemental  
 Part of a district with known boundaries (enter inventory no.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship:  Contributing  Noncontributing  
 Contributes to a potential district with yet unknown boundaries  
National Register Status:(any that apply)  Listed  De-listed  NHL  DO  
9-Digit SHPO Review & Compliance (R&C) Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Non-Extant (enter year) \_\_\_\_\_

**ELIGIBLE**

1. Name of Property

historic name YMCA  
other names/site number Central YMCA

2. Location

street & number 101 Locust Street  
city or town Des Moines  vicinity, county Polk  
Legal Description: (If Rural) Township Name \_\_\_\_\_ Township No \_\_\_\_\_ Range No \_\_\_\_\_ Section \_\_\_\_\_ Quarter of Quarter \_\_\_\_\_  
(If Urban) Subdivision Coliseum Place Block(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Lot(s) 1, 3, 4, 5

3. State/Federal Agency Certification [Skip this Section]

4. National Park Service Certification [Skip this Section]

5. Classification

Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
	If Non-Eligible Property Enter number of:	If Eligible Property, enter number of: Contributing    Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	_____ buildings	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____ sites	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____ structures	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____ objects	_____ objects
<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____ Total	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related project report or multiple property study (Enter "N/A" if the property is not part of a multiple property examination)  
Title \_\_\_\_\_ Historical Architectural Data Base Number \_\_\_\_\_

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>01B-multiple dwelling</u>	<u>01D-transitory housing</u>
<u>03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization</u>	<u>03C01-facility of volunteer or public service organization</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>08-Modern movement</u>	foundation _____ walls (visible material) <u>03-brick, 04A-granite, 04E-slate, 05F-stainless steel</u> roof _____ other _____

Narrative Description ( SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" representing your opinion of eligibility after applying relevant National Register criteria)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	A Property is associated with significant events.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	B Property is associated with the lives of significant persons
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	C Property has distinctive architectural characteristics
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> More Research Recommended	D Property yields significant information in archaeology or history

County Polk Address 101 Locust Street  
City Des Moines

Site Number 77-10696  
District Number

**Criteria Considerations**

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.  
 B Removed from its original location.  
 C A birthplace or grave  
 D A cemetery  
 E A reconstructed building, object, or structure  
 F A commemorative property.  
 G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance** (Enter categories from instructions)

02-Architecture

04-Art

29-Social History

**Significant Dates**

Construction date 1957-60  check if circa or estimated date  
Other dates, including renovation

**Significant Person**

(Complete if National Register Criterion B is marked above)

**Architect/Builder**

Architect  
Wetherell & Harrison; William Wagner-Chief Architect  
National Building Service of the YMCA, consultants  
Builder  
Weitz Construction

**Narrative Statement of Significance** ( SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS, WHICH MUST BE COMPLETED)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography  See continuation sheet for citations of the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form

**10. Geographic Data**

UTM References (OPTIONAL)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

See continuation sheet for additional UTM references or comments

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Shannon Schaefer (Intern) date 4/23/2010  
organization State Historical Society of Iowa telephone 515-451-1464  
street & number 600 E Locust St state IA zip code 50319-0290  
city or town Des Moines

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION** (Submit the following items with the completed form)

**FOR ALL PROPERTIES**

- Map:** showing the property's location in a town/city or township
- Site plan:** showing position of buildings and structures on the site in relation to public road(s)
- Photographs:** representative black and white photos. If the photos are taken as part of a survey for which the Society is to be curator of the negatives or color slides, a photo/catalog sheet needs to be included with the negatives/slides and the following needs to be provided below on this particular inventory site:

Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____
Roll/slide sheet # _____	Frame/slot # _____	Date Taken _____

- See continuation sheet or attached *photo & slide catalog sheet* for list of photo roll or slide entries.  
 Photos/illustrations without negatives are also in this site inventory file.

**FOR CERTAIN KINDS OF PROPERTIES, INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING AS WELL**

- Farmstead & District:** (List of structures and buildings, known or estimated year built, and contributing or noncontributing status)
- Barn:**
  - A sketch of the frame/truss configuration in the form of drawing a typical middle bent of the barn.
  - A photograph of the loft showing the frame configuration along one side.
  - A sketch floor plan of the interior space arrangements along with the barn's exterior dimensions in feet.

**State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Use Only Below This Line**

Concur with above survey opinion on National Register eligibility:  Yes  No  More Research Recommended  
 This is a locally designated property or part of a locally designated district

Comments:

Evaluated by (name/title): Paul M. M., Architectural Historian Date: 5/7/2010