

LAKE PARK RAVINE BRIDGE

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REMARKS BY HPC STAFF CARLEN HATALA

I would like to recap some of my earlier comments during the Work Group Meetings and the Public Involvement Meeting and provide some clarification.

I work as the staff of the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission. Much like the staff at the Wisconsin Historical Society our office reacts to submittals for Certificates of Appropriateness. But in addition, it has always been the office's policy to work proactively with potential applicants ahead of time to come to an appropriate solution with regards to their historic resource.

First and foremost, preservation of historic resources is the ultimate goal of having gone through the National Register process and local historic designation process. It makes no sense to think of a historic resource as expendable or historic only if it is convenient.

In this instance, the significance of the Lake Park Ravine Bridge has been firmly established on a variety of levels that includes the cultural significance of the Olmsted park in which the bridge plays an important role, includes the technology of its construction and includes the aesthetic design produced by one of the top architectural firms in the city and state. It is listed in the National Register and is locally designated.

Demolition is the last resort and all efforts must be made to repair and retain the resource so that it can continue telling the story of its significance. Criteria for demolition are listed in the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Ordinance (320-21-11-h) as well as the Preservation Guidelines for the North Point North local historic district. The criteria speak to the resource's distinctive character and how it contributes to the benefit of the residents of Milwaukee and what would be lost with demolition.

In my reviews of historic resources that need repair, I always approach the matter from the standpoint that the resources will get preserved and a way can be found to accomplish this. Will repairs have to be seamless? Evidence of repairs to a historic resource is completely acceptable and the bridge today shows evidence of having been repaired in the past. New restoration and rehabilitation methods are evolving each year and we cannot anticipate what may be helpful in the future. Reports presented at the Work Group meetings and the Public Involvement Meetings indicate that the bridge can be repaired.

As staff to the HPC, I support the goals of the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance and best practices in the Historic Preservation field. I will be making a recommendation to the Historic Preservation Commission on this matter at the time a Certificate of Appropriateness application is filed by Milwaukee County. Commission members will then render a decision.

In summary, preservation of a historic resource should be the first priority. If and when all efforts to preserve the resource fail, then appropriate alternatives can be explored.