

October 23, 2023

Chairman and Alderman Michael Murphy
City of Milwaukee - Zoning, Neighborhood, and Development Committee
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Chairman Michael Murphy and committee members,

On September 11, 2023, I provided testimony and some background information about the reasons for my application for the historic designation of the Zube/Burnham House located at 1636 W. National Avenue, Milwaukee, WI in the 12th Aldermanic District.

In February 2021, I learned that this property was owned by George Burnham, an Industrialist of Cream City Brick in the mid-1800s. George and John Burnham relocated here from New York and manufactured “cream city brick,” at one point employing over 200 men in factories on the near southside of Milwaukee. This cream city brick, Italianate cottage is nestled between two large properties to the east and west of the building on National Avenue.

The preservation of this home adds to the cultural and historical significance of Milwaukee’s rich architectural history. The impact of cream city brick can be seen throughout the City of Milwaukee, from colleges, clinics, nonprofit organizations and schools. As Dr. Andrew Stern stated in his dissertation, “Cream City: The Brick that Made Milwaukee Famous was produced from deep bands of glacial clay with elevated levels of magnesium and calcium. The durable material became the ubiquitous masonry building material in the city in the nineteenth century and was sought around the country as a facing material” (Stern, A., 2007).

The Burnham/Zube house is located in the heart of Milwaukee’s southside community, a neighborhood of immigrants and could be the community identity needed for creating a sense of place but also showcasing the importance of preserving the homestead of George Burnham who used natural resources for the advancement of industry in businesses and homes.

In closing, the purpose of this historic designation is to preserve a building and honor the legacy of George Burnham. Unfortunately, I am unable to make today’s meeting but I hope you and other Common Council leaders will consider the promise of protecting and preserving this important building in the City of Milwaukee.

Sincerely,

Patricia T. Nájera, PhD