

2/10/2025

Re: Mr. Alonzo Robinson Jr. – First Black registered Architect in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Dear Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission,

I am Mr. Kim A. Robinson Sr. son of Alonzo Robinson Jr. first Black registered Architect in the city of Milwaukee, state of Wisconsin. It is a blessing to know that my dad's work is still standing and is part of the Historical land scape of Milwaukee. On November 21, 2021, the Milwaukee Fire Department Headquarters designed by Alonzo Robinson Jr. in 1960 was renamed the Alonzo Robinson Milwaukee Fire Department Administration Building.

My father left home at age 13 to attend high school in Dover, Delaware. DSU (Delaware State University) was called the State College for Colored Students at the time he enrolled. Founded in 1891, DSU is proud of their heritage as one of the country's first land-grant educational institutions. He finished two years of college and was drafted into the U.S. Army under the rank of First Sergeant, a senior non-commissioned officer (NCO). When he was honorably discharged from the army, he attended Howard University which offered a 5-year Architectural Program that he had aspired to do before getting drafted. He graduated from Howard University (Washington D.C.) school of Architecture in 1951. He moved his family to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to take a job with the Bureau of Bridges and Buildings. He went on to design churches and other buildings throughout the city.

As the Inner-city of Milwaukee landscape is changing with the times road work such as bike lanes, speed bumps, the new museum going up on 6 street, etc. This is just a small example of why we should consider persevering with the Architectural work of Alonzo Robinson Jr. The Central City Plaza which is located at 600 W. Walnut Street is one of my father's Architectural projects that expressed his love for Architecture. The one-story building located at 1747 N. Sixth Street could be saved and used by an Architectural organization in conjunction with the new museum going up down the street or re-purpose by the Salvation Army by restoring and building around the existing buildings.

Alonzo Robinson Jr. Architectural work would only gain full equity in Milwaukee when his story, experiences, and contributions to the landscape of Milwaukee and Wisconsin are preserved. For so long as the First Black Architect in Wisconsin he was ignored, forgotten, or even actively suppressed, but 25 years after his passing the time is now to give him the full recognition he deserves. African American history is American History here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Alonzo Robinson Jr. labor and love for Architecture is expressed in the buildings he designed here. Beyond their architectural merit, the properties designed by my dad hold deep cultural and communal value. These structures reflect a unique blend of style and functionality, contributing to the visual identity of Milwaukee while serving as spaces that have housed businesses, residences, and institutions central to the development of the City's neighborhoods. My Dad's work has shown his ability to meet the needs of a growing city while incorporating innovative architectural elements.

I urge the Historic Preservation Commission to take a proactive role in recognizing and preserving Alonzo Robinson's work by

1. Officially documenting his architectural contributions and integrating them into educational and public history initiatives.
2. Supporting the designation of his buildings as historic landmarks to ensure their protection.
3. Collaborating with local organizations, property owners, and preservation groups to maintain and restore the structures he designed.

4. Encouraging ongoing community engagement and awareness regarding his influence on Milwaukee's architectural heritage.

The Robinson Family feels that Alonzo Robinson Jr. Architectural work was Built to Last.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Kim A. Robinson  
N77W23885 Sun Valley Run  
Sussex, WI 53089  
414-322-1927 / kimfoto39@sbcglobal.net