

October 29, 2018

Carlen Hatala  
City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission  
Zeigler Municipal Building  
841 N. Broadway, Room B-1  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Ms Hatala and the Commission,

I am writing to support the nomination of Washington Park as a local historic district. As you are aware Washington Park was designed by the revered landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted. Today most people view parks as a place for active recreation; however, in a time not so long ago, parks were considered places with quiet, green spaces for passive recreation. When the father of many of America's parks and campuses, Frederick Law Olmsted, came to Milwaukee in 1889 he wanted the city fathers to locate Washington Park and Lake Park closer to the center of industrial activity. My seminal article on Lake Park for the Milwaukee County Historical Society(1982), points out the importance of this concept. FLO wanted people to escape the commercial aspects of a city for an opportunity of quiet contemplation. Today we need to combine active and passive recreation to make our parks restorative and enjoyable in the 21st century.

Washington Park with its central location in Milwaukee is a critical cultural landmark. After the Olmsted firm designed the park, the work was overseen by Warren H. Manning, A recent book, Warren H. Manning: Landscape Architect and Environmental Planner (2016), gives the reader an understanding of the concepts that come from both Olmsted and Manning. The undulating land with varieties of trees; vistas that calm and inspire; water elements of beauty and enjoyment - all of these elements are part of Washington Park. Yes, the park has changed with the freeway intrusion, Senior Center and Urban Ecology Center; however, the park is large enough to embrace these changes. Now is the time to recognize the importance of Washington Park and keep the legacy of Olmsted alive and well.

In my work on the restoration of historic monuments in Milwaukee, I have often stopped at the Goethe-Schiller monument (1908), on a rise overlooking part of Washington Park, to consider the German poets and intellectuals that influenced the folks who lived in the neighborhood in the 1900's. At the dedication of the monument an ocean of voices, 1,000 women and 1500 men and children, joined in reading and singing Schiller and Goethe's works. Yes, there have been changes in the neighborhoods bordering the park; however, the park remains an important cultural icon of Milwaukee, and in my opinion is one of Milwaukee's most important public legacies.

I hope you will carefully consider the application by Professor Michael Carrier for Washington Park to become a local historic district for the City of Milwaukee.

Sincerely,



Diane M. Buck  
3559 N. Summit Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211