

Lee, Chris

From: Bauman, Robert
Sent: Friday, April 05, 2019 9:57 AM
To: Lee, Chris
Subject: FW: TCLF Marcus Center update

PAC

From: Virginia Small [<mailto:virginiasmall7@gmail.com>]
Sent: Wednesday, April 03, 2019 2:51 PM
To: Bauman, Robert
Subject: TCLF Marcus Center update

Ald. Bauman,

FYI, you are among those quoted.

Online article in a national newsletter...

<https://tclf.org/preservation-commission-recommends-permanent-historic-status-marcus-center-and-kiley-grove>

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Best regards,

Virginia

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"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

— *Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Jane's Walk MKE will host free citywide programs in May to explore neighborhoods and promote community. <https://www.facebook.com/janeswalkmke/>

Virginia Small
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Preservation Commission Recommends Permanent Historic Status for Marcus Center and Kiley Grove

Apr 03, 2019

On April 1, 2019, the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), in a four-to-one vote, granted permanent historic designation to the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts and its grounds, including Dan Kiley's grove of 36 horse chestnut trees. The commission also voted to allow four of the trees, recently determined to be in bad health, to be replaced within the period of one year. The HPC's decision will eventually come before the Milwaukee Common Council, which may yet veto (<https://www.jsonline.com/story/money/real-estate/commercial/2019/04/01/milwaukee-marcus-center-gets-historic-status-but-trees-could-still-go/3330324002/>) the historic designation.



Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Milwaukee, WI - Photo by Joe Karr, 1986

The full-to-capacity meeting began with a report by Carlen Hatala, the City's senior preservation planner, who told the HPC that local historic designation was recommended based on four criteria (<https://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityHPC/PRESERVATIONTOPICS31.pdf>) (see below). Among those who testified in favor of historic designation were landscape architect Jennifer Current and architect Mark Debrauske, who jointly filed the original application for historic designation in January 2019. Also speaking in favor of the designation was Dawn McCarthy of the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance, and Whitney Gould, a member of Milwaukee's City Plan Commission and the former architecture critic for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. TCLF also formally backed the historic designation, submitting a letter of support (https://tclf.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/TCLF_HPC_MarcusCenter.pdf) to the HPC prior to the meeting.

Representatives from the Marcus Center spoke against the designation, citing alterations to the building, including the replacement of its travertine cladding with limestone in the mid-1990s, as sufficient reasons to deny it historical status. But as the preservation staff report had also indicated, several Milwaukee structures have received local historic designation despite significant alterations to their building fabric.



Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Milwaukee, WI - Photo by Ensign Breed/RII, 2015

Alderman Robert Bauman, who co-chairs the HPC, moved to confer permanent historic status and chided the arguments put forth by the Marcus Center: "If it is true that this building is so utterly worthless from a historical architectural standpoint, as your argument basically says, we should tear that building down and start over...You really made the argument that this building is utterly worthless."

While the Marcus Center now claims that removing four trees from the grove is an urgent matter—one that even threatens public safety—it is unclear when the Center began to monitor the trees' condition, or, indeed, if it had done so at all, prior to formulating plans to destroy the grove. Hoppe Tree Service, the firm hired by the Center in January

2019 to assess the health of the trees, had not been retained to perform regular maintenance on the grove prior to that time. In the summer of 2016, the Center touted itself as "a facility with virtually no deferred maintenance."



Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, Milwaukee, WI - Photo by Joe Karr, 1986

More than 4,000 individuals and organizations contributed financially to the building and grounds of the Marcus Center (then the Performing Arts Center of Milwaukee (<https://tclf.org/marcus-center-performing-arts?destination=search-results>), which opened to the public in September 1969. The horse chestnut grove was originally supported by a \$7,500 donation from the Green Tree Garden Club, which remains active (<http://www.greentreegardclub.com/>) in Milwaukee. The Center is the result of a collaboration between celebrated landscape architect Dan Kiley (<https://www.tclf.org/pioneer/dan-kiley>) and the equally accomplished architect Harry Weese (<http://www.milwaukeeindependent.com/featured/remembering-harry-weese-helped-milwaukee-envision-urbanist-future/>).

The historic designation conferred by the HPC may yet be overturned by the Milwaukee Common Council, which will vote in an upcoming meeting (whose date has yet to be determined) to approve or reject the decision. TCLF added the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts to its *Landslide* program (<https://www.tclf.org/demolition-dan-kiley-landscape-milwaukee-announced>) in December 2018, just days after plans were unveiled for a reimagined campus, which called for the Dan Kiley landscape to be obliterated.

"TCLF applauds the Historic Preservation Commission's vote," said Charles A. Birnbaum, TCLF's president & CEO. "As was clear in the comments by the commissioners and those who testified, this decision reinforces the reality that significant works of landscape architecture, such as Kiley's grove at the Marcus Center, can be sympathetically managed without destroying the unique qualities that reflect their design."

The four criteria for the permanent historic designation of the Marcus Center were as follows: The Center (1) exemplifies the development of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin or the United States; (2) embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen; (3) is the work of an artist, architect, craftsman, or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the City of Milwaukee; and (4) is uniquely located as a singular physical characteristic, which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Milwaukee.

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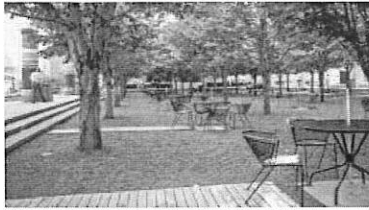
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