



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Milwaukee County

CHRIS ABELE • COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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

Re: Resolution relating to the Permanent Historic Designation of Washington Park at 4301 West Lloyd Street in the 15th Ald. District

Members of the Historic Preservation Commission,

We are in receipt of a notification from the Office of the City Clerk dated November 2, 2018 regarding the application submitted by Michael H. Carriere to designate Washington Park as a Permanent Historic District. Prior to receiving this notification neither the Milwaukee County Parks, the Milwaukee County Executive, nor the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors were aware of the request.

Washington Park is one Milwaukee's oldest, largest, and most dynamic public spaces. As Milwaukee's west side has changed over the last 120 years, so too has Washington Park changed its amenities, buildings, and identity. In the early 1900's Washington Park was known for its athletic sport fields and a half-mile horse racing track. In 1907 a new lake was constructed for row boats in the summer and ice skating during the winter months. In 1938 the Temple of Music band shell was dedicated and is still used today for the Washington Park Wednesdays Summer Concert series. Washington Park was once the location for Milwaukee's 38-acre zoo until it was relocated in 1961 to its current location on Bluemound Road. Highway 41/175 was built on the Park's west side along with the pool and the senior center buildings in the 1950s and 60s. The historic boat house was replaced by the current structure in 1978. Other improvements to the playgrounds, athletic fields, basketball courts, pool, splashpad, picnic shelters, and infrastructure have taken place, meeting the community's needs of the time. In 2018, many of the elements of the original plan for Washington Park no longer exist or have been incorporated in other active uses of the park. Washington Park is a regional park with amenities that serve Milwaukee County's broad and diverse population. As the needs of the public have changed over time, so to have their public spaces.

There are many parks within the Milwaukee County Park system that share the historical significance of Washington Park, including a few that are within other historic districts. Creating an historic district that fully encompasses one specific park that is not also part of a broader neighborhood is a fundamental and significant change in the application of historic district dedication.

County Parks has a partnership with the Urban Ecology Center which allows them to do a capital campaign to rebuild and improve the facility the Washington Park boathouse, where they've been for years. Until the state changes the way it funds local government, the County has had to stretch every dime we have, work with hundreds less employees, and move out of over 1 million square feet of buildings.

Without partnerships like the one we have with the Urban Ecology Center, we wouldn't be able to otherwise serve the thousands of lower income and mostly minority kids that come through just that one facility. The building is not moving, nothing else in the park is being taken down or removed. This application appears targeted towards stopping progress on the Urban Ecology Center project to construct a new environmental and outdoor education center in the park along with numerous other planned improvements.

Milwaukee County, as the land owner and principle stakeholder in parks development in the region respectfully requests the Historic Preservation Commission to deny the application to designate Washington Park as a historic district.

Sincerely,



Chris Abele
Milwaukee County Executive

Cc:

Mayor Tom Barrett
Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson
Alderman Russell Stamper, 15th District
Alderman Michael Murphy, 10th District
Milwaukee County Parks Director Guy Smith
City Clerk James Owczarski