



# Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

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**HPC meeting date: 11/5/2018**  
**Ald. Nik Kovac District: 3**  
**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**  
**PTS #114640 CCF #180975**

**Property** 2323 E. KENWOOD BL. "Rustic Wooden Bridge"  
Lake Park, in the North Point North Historic District

**Owner/Applicant** MILWAUKEE COUNTY PARK DEPARTMENT      Lake Park Friends  
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WAUWATOSA WI 53226

**Proposal** Demolish bridge to prepare site for a new bridge in the same location.

**Staff comments** As of 1993, there were at least twelve "rustic" bridges in Lake Park. They were assumed to date from the 1930s. There is evidence of "rustic" bridges as early as 1896. It is difficult to determine what the original design for this particular bridge was, as most photographs and postcards of a "rustic bridge" do not indicate which bridge is in the photograph. One photo refers to "south ravine" which is unlikely to be this one. Early photos and postcards through 1910 indicate several bridges of a similar design over various span lengths. Most featured log construction with minimal use of sawn lumber. The present bridge's sawn lumber, above grade concrete, and modern carriage bolts indicate late 20<sup>th</sup> century construction or partial rebuild. The County and Lake Park Friends believe that the subject bridge dates to the 1970s.

The county indicates that the bridge is in a condemnable state and a safety hazard. This has not been independently verified. This bridge been closed to the public since 2016.

Unlike other bridges in the park, this is a modern replacement of an original structure; it does not match or closely resemble known historic designs in the park. It is a simplified interpretation of the historic designs. The current bridge has limited architectural value. Its historic value is that it serves as a part of the original planned circulation paths through the park. The circulation pattern and paths are specifically protected in the designation.

### *E. Guidelines for Lake Park*

*Lake Park provides a link between the North Point North residential area and the lakefront. The Olmsted design blended the established street system with the park circulation system to unify the bordering neighborhood with the park...*

*Lake Park still exhibits many features of the Olmsted scheme including the pathways and bridges, sculpture and plantings. As changes are planned, care should be taken not to obstruct major views and vistas and to maintain to the fullest extent possible those design features that remain from the Olmsted plan.*

### *1. Roadways, Paths and Bridges*

*Every attempt should be made to maintain the historic vehicular and pedestrian circulation system in the park including drives, paths, stairways, and bridges. New parking areas, roadways, paths, or bridges should be designed so as to be compatible with the historic character of the park.*

**Analysis of Demolition Criteria**

There are seven criteria for demolition in the designation:

*1. Condition: Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety.*

It is not an immediate threat; however, it is unsafe to use. Unlike other bridges in the park, there is no dispute over the repair-worthiness of this particular bridge.

*2. Importance: Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.*

Bridge has modest architectural character. The quality of material and craftsmanship is unique in the area, but is not fully in keeping with historic wooden bridge designs in the park. The present bridge does not meet the new construction guidelines for the district. It is historically significant to the extent that has kept original circulation paths in the park in use.

*3. Location: Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.*

It contributes to the neighborhood as a method of circulation vital to the use of the park. As it currently exists, it has limited effect on the appearance of the park.

*4. Potential for Restoration: Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.*

Repair costs have not been provided.

*5. Additions: Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.*

The bridge was a later effort at a simplified rustic design. It is in keeping with the park's character, but a better design is possible.

*6. Replacement: Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale or by a new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (see New Construction Guidelines).*

Design work and fundraising for a new bridge are not complete. Lake Park Friends has committed funding to rebuild a structure closer to a period design. Staff would call the attention of the Commission that it has the option to require proof of funding for replacement that is satisfactory to both itself and the City Comptroller.

Staff would strongly recommend that this not set a precedent for approval of demolition of any other features or structures of the park that were constructed within the designation's period of significance: 1890-1930.

**Recommendation** Recommend HPC Approval of Demolition. HOLD approval of new construction as incomplete.

**Conditions** Construction of a replacement bridge that is compatible with the design of the park and meets new construction guidelines for the district must begin within two years.

**Previous HPC action**  
**Previous Council action**

## Appendix: Excerpts of the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Ordinance

320-21-11

c-2. Certificate to Allow Demolition. ... If the commission grants or conditionally grants a certificate of appropriateness for demolition to allow for new construction, the commission may, in its decision, stipulate that no permit for demolition shall be issued by the commissioner of city development or the commissioner of neighborhood services until the commission determines that the applicant has provided the commission with evidence, satisfactory to the commission in consultation with the comptroller and the commissioner of city development, that all debt and equity financing necessary for the new construction project has been obtained and all related conditions have been satisfied.

...

h. Criteria; Certificates to Allow Demolition. In determining whether to grant, grant with conditions, deny or defer action on a certificate of appropriateness to allow partial or complete demolition, the commission shall consider any of the following:

h-1. Whether the structure is of such architectural or historic significance that its demolition would be detrimental to the public interest and contrary to the general welfare of the people of the city.

h-2. Whether the structure, although not itself an individually-designed historic structure, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the district as a whole and should be preserved for the benefit of the people of the city.

h-3. Whether demolition of the structure on a historic site or within a historic district would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this section and to the objectives of the historic preservation plan for the applicable district as duly adopted by the common council.

h-4. Whether the structure is of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture, or material that it could not be reproduced without great difficulty or expense.

h-5. Whether retention of the structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the city and state by encouraging the study of American history, architecture, and design, or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage.

h-6. Whether the structure is in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve, restore or use it, provided that any hardship or difficulty claimed by the owner which is self-created or a result of demolition by neglect cannot qualify as a basis for the issuance of a certificate of appropriateness.