



HERITAGE RESEARCH, LTD.

13 February 2005

Alderman Robert Donovan
City of Milwaukee
200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

RE: 2601-2637 W. National Avenue

Dear Alderman Donovan,

Heritage Research, Ltd. (HRL) was asked by Redmond Commercial Development Corporation to inspect and review structures along the captioned block of W. National Avenue. Specifically, we were to determine if there are any potentially significant historic buildings within the address constraints noted, or immediately adjacent thereto.

In rendering the opinion conveyed in this letter, please know that the HRL staff meets all of the criteria required by the National Park Service as it pursues its historic preservation duties and responsibilities. All HRL staff members have graduate degrees in history, architectural history or historic preservation.

Prior to studying the subject block, please know that we observed the nature of other buildings and conditions in the immediate neighborhood. A McDonalds restaurant is located on the north side of W. National, between 25th and 26th streets. As well, a modern Marshall & Ilsley bank and a modern Mobil Oil gas station are on the southwest and northeast corners of the 27th and W. National intersection, respectively. A strip mall that may date to the 1960s occupies the northwest corner of 27th and W. National. And the Mitchell Court residential tower, a facility of the City of Milwaukee Housing Authority, occupies much of the north side of W. National, between 26th and 27th streets. It may be concluded from these observations that modern intrusions are very much a part of the evolving area.

As for the subject block, please know that we consulted a current roster of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and found that no such properties are on the south side of the 2600 block of W. National. Additionally, we consulted *Built in Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City* (by Landscape Research and published by the City of Milwaukee, 1983), as well as *The Heritage Guidebook: Landmarks and Historical Sites in Southeastern Wisconsin* (by H. Russell Zimmerman and published by the Heritage Wisconsin

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Corporation, 1978), and found that neither identifies nor discusses buildings in the study block. We also reviewed the City of Milwaukee's list of Locally Designated Districts, Sites and Structures, a copy of which is available on-line. Neither the subject block, nor individual buildings in it, appear to be on that list. (Please note that Richard Perrin's *Milwaukee Landmarks* [published by the Milwaukee Public Museum, 1968] and *Milwaukee Landmarks* [published by the City of Milwaukee, 1981] were also consulted.)

These findings notwithstanding, we did determine that the neighborhood along W. National Avenue was surveyed in 1985 for historic structures. The conclusions of that survey are on file at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. Properties identified in the survey included the following (do note that the 1985 business is cited after the address): 1) 2601-5, National Liquor Bar, built in 1909 and designed by Charles Thoringer; 2) 2611, National Liquor Mart; 3) 2619-21, National Coffee Shop; 4) 2625-25, Kathy's Lounge; 5) 2629, Competition Store; 2633, Hair Care Salon in a Mediterranean Revival Building; and 6) 2637 [a.k.a. 904 S. 27th Street], Dr. A.W. Wilson in a building built in 1902 (architect Nicholas Dornbach) and renovated in 1922 (architects Herbst and Kuenzli). As well, two houses on S. 26th (911 and 917), and adjacent to National Avenue, were previously surveyed.

This collection of buildings today is anchored by the National Liquor Mart on the east and a Cingular Wireless Telephone Company outlet on the west. The buildings likely conveyed in 1985 a sense of historic character, as several of them do today. Nevertheless, despite the sense of character, and while some of the buildings would likely be worth noting if a survey were to be pursued in 2005, the historical and architectural integrity of the structures seems to be in decline—both individually and collectively. And along with that decline, none of the buildings are thought to have the character or integrity necessary to merit formal designation or listing. Additionally, the modern redevelopment observed in the neighborhood becomes a factor since it has already compromised the historic integrity of the broader environment in which the subject buildings exist.

The decline and deterioration of these buildings is unfortunate. However, the development proposed for the subject area may well help stabilize—or perhaps improve—the neighborhood. And that appears to be an objective beyond that achievable by the current buildings.

Yours truly,

John N. Vogel, Ph.D.
Senior Historian