

April 30, 2021

To the honorable Chair and Commissioners:

1100 S. 5th Street, Ste. 319
Milwaukee, WI 53204
P: 414.220.0530

The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports the nomination of the St. Catherine's Residence for Young Women at 1032 E. Knapp St. to the National Register of Historic Places. We concur with the nominator's finding of local significance under Criterion A for its contributions to Social History as the City's lone extant example of the 20th century social movement to provide affordable, protective housing for young women in Milwaukee. We also agree that the building meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration A for inclusion of a religious institution, as the primary significance of the property is not religion but social services, as evidenced by the acceptance of residents of all faiths.

MPA is very pleased to support the nomination of St. Catherine's as an all too rare National Register listing nominated specifically for its role in women's history. Despite making up roughly 50% of the population and being integral to the development of a preservation movement in this country, women have largely been excluded from historic designations, with only 8% of National Register sites being associated with women. Remarkably, Latinos, African Americans, and other minority populations are included in this low figure (<https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-12-15/historic-preservation-chicano-moratorium-national-register>). Designating the St. Catherine's residence will be an important step in correcting the historic overlooking of the importance of women and other underrepresented populations in our historical record.

As the oldest and only remaining site in the City dedicated to providing affordable dormitory style housing to women, St. Catherine's stands as testament to a strong social movement of the 20th century to provide women with the opportunity to build a life for themselves in Milwaukee through safe and affordable accommodations and social connections. The organization has been doing so since 1894, and this building has served this function since 1966 after being converted from an apartment building.

This continuity of use lends the building integrity of feeling and association, key factors in Criterion A nominations. While some elements of integrity have been lost (original solar screens, the addition of cladding on non-primary elevations, newer vinyl windows), the majority of these changes are reversible. As a Criterion A nomination, the property's layout, communal spaces, and continuous use maintains the integrity necessary to demonstrate its role a young women's residence home.

For these reasons, we believe the St. Catherine's Residence for Young Women deserves the commission's support for National Register listing.

Thank you as always for your hard work on behalf of the people and places of Milwaukee.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Ebersole
Executive Director
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance