

Staff Report
**PREPARATION OF A NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION
FOR THE AMES PUBLIC LIBRARY**
December 8, 2009

On September 22, 2009, the City Council referred to staff a request from Gloria Betcher, Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, that the City Council direct the Commission to proceed with the preparation of the documents necessary to nominate the Ames Public Library for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (see *attached memo dated September 14, 2009*).

Ms. Betcher provided information to the City Council to support the request. A "Determination of Eligibility" was prepared by Gloria Betcher and Tom Leslie (Architect and HPC member) and submitted to the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) for their review. **In July, the SHSI determined that the Ames Public Library is eligible for listing on the National Register** (see *attached Determination of Eligibility*).

The benefits of National Register listing are many, and are summarized as follows:

National Register listing:

- Recognizes properties of historical, architectural and archaeological significance; through a program of registration, financial aid and incentives, and partial protection from destruction by federally funded projects.
- Encourages the preservation of historic properties by documenting the significance of historic properties and by lending support to local preservation activities.
- Makes owners of historic properties eligible to apply for federal grants-in-aid for preservation activities.
- Potentially provides rehabilitation funds for the upkeep of the building through the Historic Resource Development Program (HRDP) and/or the Historic Sites Program Grant (HSPG).

What impacts of National Register listing exist for the owners of properties that are listed? National Register listing in no way limits the rights of an owner to preserve, alter, or even demolish their property. Owners are not required to do anything, or sign anything, or make any commitments regarding the use of their property, unless any changes or alterations to the property involve the use of federal funds. If so, the impacts of the changes, along with analysis of the alternatives, would be considered under a "Section 106" review process. The purpose of the "Section 106" process is to assure that no unnecessary harm comes to historic properties as a result of federal actions.

Preparation of a National Register nomination for the Ames Public Library is supported by the *Ames Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan*, adopted by the City Council on November 24, 2009. "Goal #3, Objective D, & Objective F" read as follows:

GOAL #3. Enhance municipal policies to protect historic resources and implement policies through identification, effective legislation, and efficient regulatory measures.

Objective D. Continue to designate local historic districts, local landmarks, and National Register of Historic Places properties.

Objective F. Ensure that expansion or development of city property follows good preservation practices.

The Historic Preservation Commission, or any private citizen or organization, may complete the documents necessary to nominate the Ames Public Library for listing on the National Register, as evidenced by recent action taken by the Ames Smart Growth Alliance to nominate the former Roosevelt School for listing on the National Register. However, the Commission would like the support of the City Council prior to pursuing this nomination.



Memo

Planning & Housing Department

TO: Mayor Ann Campbell and Members of the City Council

FROM: Gloria J. Betcher, Ph.D.
Chair, Ames Historic Preservation Commission

DATE: 14 September 2009

SUBJECT: Opportunity to Nominate the Ames Public Library to the National Register of Historic Places

Executive Summary

In spring 2009, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) sought a Determination of Eligibility from the State Historical Society of Iowa (SHSI) for listing the Ames Public Library (APL) on the National Register of Historic Places to clarify the historic status of the 1904-1940 portions of the library for the public during discussions of the APL expansion project. In July, the SHSI determined that the APL is eligible for listing on the National Register (see attached Determination of Eligibility). The HPC would like to pursue an official listing of the property, but as a City commission, we are seeking the approval of the Ames City Council to pursue this listing. We would like the City Council to direct us to move forward with nominating the APL to the National Register.

Background

On 22 April 2009, the HPC expressed concerns to the City Council and the APL Board of Trustees about being left out of discussions related to a library expansion project that could significantly impact an historic resource belonging to the city. When the APL Board of Trustees began exploring its options for expanding the library, citizens in community meetings posed the question of whether or not the current library building was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The HPC became involved in order to clarify the historic nature of the property and ensure that the citizens of Ames were accurately informed about the building's National Register eligibility (it had been misrepresented in early meetings as ineligible for listing). Toward that end, Commissioner Tom Leslie and I updated the SHSI Site Inventory Form for the library. In July, the SHSI returned a Determination of Eligibility (see attached) that confirmed the 1904-1940 portion of the APL is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

National Register Listing of Public Property

Anyone can nominate a building to the National Register of Historic Places. Now that it is clear the APL is eligible for such listing, anyone could follow through with the National Register nomination process. That means that, should a private citizen or organization pursue the listing of the APL--a property owned by the community--the City could not prevent the property from being listed. The HPC, however, as a City commission, does not feel free to pursue a nomination of a City-owned building without the approval

Nomination of the Ames Public Library to the National Register 2

of the City Council. Thus, we are asking for your approval to nominate the APL. This nomination would be completed by Commissioner Leslie and I and would not involve staff time, except when the nomination process required commission or council action forms for official approval.

Benefits of National Register Listing

Despite misconceptions to the contrary, National Register listing would not require the City to do anything to the property. Nor would having the APL listed on the National Register stop the City or any other future owner from making changes to the property or even demolishing the building, as long as no Federal assistance is involved (see the attached information sheet "National Register: Myths, Misconceptions, and Realities"). On the contrary, National Register listing could positively impact the upkeep of the building by making available access to additional rehabilitation funds. National Register properties are eligible for state incentives programs for rehabilitation of historic buildings in Iowa. Listing of the library would allow the City to apply for the State Historical Society's Historic Resource Development Program (HRDP) Grant or the Historic Sites Program Grant (HSPG) for rehabilitation work on the building. You have seen these rehabilitation funds in action recently on another of the City's National Register properties: HSPG money funded \$100,000 of the City Hall door replacement project.

The National Register listing of the APL should also be seen within the context of the Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan now being drafted, which makes clear the relationship between preserving the historical resources of Ames and encouraging economic development, neighborhood stability, and sense of place, among other things. As a cultural and historical resource that demonstrates the continuing value of education to our community, past, present, and future, the APL has value to Ames residents beyond any financial rewards the City might obtain through a National Register listing. From the perspective of the HPC, there is no downside to the National Register Listing of the property.

Recommended Action

The SHSI has already determined that the APL is eligible for National Register listing based on work completed by Commissioner Leslie and me. The HPC believes that the official nomination process would require little further work, which would be completed, once again, by historic preservation commissioners. We do not anticipate any cost to the City for this project. We hope that you will see the benefit of pursuing this listing and direct the HPC to move forward with the official nomination process. We recommend that you give us permission to proceed with a nomination that has the potential to bring both cultural and financial benefits to the City and its residents.

Respectfully Submitted,



Gloria J. Betcher, Ph.D.
Chair, Historic Preservation Commission

CC: Steve Schainker, City Manager
Steve Osguthorpe, Director, Planning and
Housing
Ray Anderson, Preservation Planner
Brittney Rutherford, HPC

Bill Malone, HPC
Elaine Dunn, HPC
Sharon Wirth, HPC
Dillon Kraft, HPC
Tom Leslie, HPC

ELIGIBILITY REVIEW
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Review Date: 07/08/2009

Property Information:

Name of Property: Ames Public Library (ISIF #85-00533)
 Historic District: _____ (ISIF # -)
 Multiple Property Form: _____ (HADB # -)
 Address: 515 Douglas Avenue (AKA 210 6th Street)
 City & County: Ames, Story County

Eligibility:

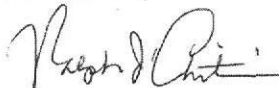
- Insufficient documentation was provided for our review. Please provide the information requested in the "Additional Comments" section, below.
- This property is considered not eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places or is "non-contributing" in a listed or eligible historic district. See "Additional Comments" below.
- This property is considered individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
 National Register Criteria: A B C D
- This property is considered "contributing" in a National Register-listed or eligible historic district.
 National Register Criteria: A B C D

Be advised that this determination is preliminary and based solely on the information provided at the time of the review. Additional research and documentation may be needed to actually nominate an "eligible" or "contributing" property to the National Register. That research may ultimately prove that the property is not, in fact, eligible for listing. Additional research may also prove that properties with a preliminary determination of "not eligible" or "non-contributing" are, in fact, eligible.

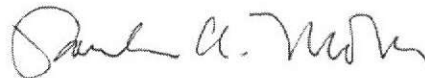
Additional Comments:

The Ames Public Library appears to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because of its longstanding role in the civic and cultural life of Ames. The original section, built as a Carnegie-funded library in 1903, was designed by Hallett and Rawson who were associated with Proudfoot and Bird, one of Iowa's most important firms. The expansion of the building in the late 1930s is a physical manifestation of the determination of the city's librarian and a public demand for additional library services during the Depression. While the building was expanded again in the 1980s with the addition of a Post-Modern wing, the earlier parts of the building can still be read and are believed to possess sufficient integrity. With further research, it may be possible to make a case for Criterion C as an example of the work of Hallett and Rawson and of Allen Kimball who designed the 1930s addition and was the first head of Iowa State University's Department of Architectural Engineering.

Reviewed by:



Ralph J. Christian, Historian



Paula A. Mohr, Architectural Historian