

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY FOR DELTA CHI FRATERNITY HOUSE

BACKGROUND:

The City has received a request for a recommendation of National Register Eligibility for Theta Delta Chi Fraternity House (aka Colonials Club House) at 217 Ash Avenue. A National Register Nomination is attached. The nomination was submitted to the City by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) after first being submitted to SHPO by William C. Page, Public Historian.

As a Certified Local Government (CLG), one of the City's responsibilities is to review National Register nominations on any property that lie within the jurisdiction of our local Historic Preservation Commission. Nominations are first submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office, and a copy of the nomination is then sent to the CLG for review and comment. After allowing for public comment, the Commission and the Mayor are to decide if the property meets the criteria of the National Register.

The State Historical Society of Iowa is required to provide the City with a 60-day period for the review from the date the nomination is received by the City. The City received a copy of the nomination on April 12. The State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC) plans to consider the nomination of the Delta Upsilon Chapter House at its June 10, 2011 meeting. That meeting will be held at the Historical Building in Des Moines.

The property owner is Theta Delta Chi Realty Company. Mr. Page prepared the nomination for the property owner, which is the applicant for this nomination.

The applicant has selected National Register Criterion A and C as being applicable to this application. "Criterion A" is described as follows:

National Register Significance Criterion A:

Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

"Criterion C" is described as follows:

National Register Significance Criterion C:

Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic

values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

The completed nomination forms include a summary of the significance of the Delta Upsilon Chapter House as follows:

“Completed in 1910, the Colonials Club House is National register eligible, locally under Criterion A, because of its significance for the development of the Fourth Ward in Ames, Iowa. The construction of the building on the south side of the Iowa State University campus inaugurated a major land use change in the community. Prior to 1910, off-campus student housing and commerce tended to cluster in West Gate neighborhood, a section of the Fourth Ward west of the campus. The construction of the new club house at 217 Ash Avenue signaled the beginning of something new: the emergence of Ash Avenue and its environs on the southeast side of the campus as the preferred location of new Greek residences. By the 1920s this area possessed the largest concentration of them in Ames, supplanting to the present day West Gate for that distinction.

The property is National Register eligible under Criterion C. The 1910 construction of the building helped inaugurate a new era of fraternity house design in Ames. Prior to this time, Greek residences resembled large, frame single-family dwellings of vernacular design and limited architectural detailing. This new club house, designed by the Des Moines architectural firm of Proudfoot and Bird, introduced masonry construction, Colonial Revival styling, and architectural detailing unparalleled hitherto among Greek residences in Ames. The quality of this building, coupled with Proudfoot and Bird’s similar albeit slightly earlier design for the Association Building (Alumni Hall, NRHP) on the Iowa State campus created a taste for Colonial Revival styling in Ames, which became, if not de rigueur for new Greek residences, at least equal to Tudor Revival styling in popularity for them over the next thirty years.

The period of significance and a significant date, under Criterion C, is 1910, the year the house was completed and first occupied. The period of significance under Criterion A, is also 1910, the time when the construction of the fraternity house set a standard for setbacks subsequently followed by other Greek organizations. The year 1910 is a significant date for both of these reasons.

The property contains one resource for this nomination, the fraternity house itself, which is contributing and classified as a building.”

Should the Historic Preservation Commission and the Mayor/City Council disagree with one another on the property’s National Register eligibility, both views will be presented to the State Nominations Review Committee (SNRC) and the SNRC will conduct their review of the nomination. If both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Mayor/City Council do not consider the property eligible for the National Register, the State must halt the nomination. However, the nomination will still go forward to the National Park Service for an official “Determination of Eligibility.” If the nomination is halted, the property owner, the person who prepared the nomination, or any interested party may appeal the decision to halt the nomination.

An individual property cannot be listed unless the owner wants the listing. Such a property owner would need to notify the Bureau of Historic Preservation in writing if the property owner objects.

National Register status in no way limits the right of the property owner to preserve, alter, or even demolish the property. Property owners are not required to do anything, or sign anything, or make commitments regarding the use of their property, provided that no Federal license, permit, or funding is involved.

The power to protect a National Register property is limited to local design guidelines and to a review of those projects which are funded, wholly or in part, by the federal government and which impact, directly or indirectly, listed properties. National Register status does not mean that a property cannot be destroyed by a highway, by Urban Renewal, or by some other project. It does mean that before a federal agency can be involved in any way with such a project (e.g., funding, licensing, or authorizing it), the federal agency must consider alternatives by which the National Register properties might be saved from destruction.

The question to be answered by the Historic Preservation Commission and the Mayor/City Council is whether the nominated property meets the National Register of Historic Places significance Criterion A and C.

At its May 9, 2011 meeting, the Historic Preservation Commission voted 5-0 to find that the nomination of the Theta Delta Chi Fraternity House to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C, and recommended National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can find that the nomination of the Theta Delta Chi Fraternity House to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C and recommend National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.
2. The City Council can find that the nomination of the Theta Delta Chi Fraternity House to the National Register of Historic Places does not meet the National Register Significance Criteria and recommend National Register ineligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.
3. The City Council can postpone this request for additional information from the applicant and/or City staff.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

City staff believes that the information provided in the application provides a solid basis for a determination of significance according to Criterion A and C. The building played a major

role in the emergence of Ash Avenue and its environs as the preferred location for Greek residences. The architecture of the building, Colonial Revival, also set a new standard of excellence for Greek residential architecture at Iowa State University.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council accept Alternative #1, thereby finding that the nomination of the Theta Delta Chi Fraternity House, located at 217 Ash Avenue, to the National Register of Historic Places meets National Register Significance Criterion A and C and recommends National Register eligibility to the State Nominations Review Committee.