

Home first to be designated under historic preservation ordinance



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The former home of music composer Donald Drew. Drew was born and raised in Downers Grove. The home was granted historic landmark status by Village Council Tuesday.

Downers Grove, IL -

There's a unique green house in Downers Grove whose walls have heard a lot. It was once the home to Donald Drew, a well known music composer in the village.

Village Council voted unanimously during Tuesday night's meeting to designate the home as a historic landmark. It's the first of its kind under the village's Landmark Preservation Ordinance adopted by Village Council on July 3, 2007.

The home on Carpenter St., a gothic revival style built in 1888, was nominated for the designation by Donald Drew's sister, Mildred Drew.

At the Oct. 14 Village Council workshop meeting, Susan Estall, a member of the Blodgett Legacy Partnership group, spoke about Donald Drew's legacy.

"Donald Drew contributed to music as a composer and musician in Downers Grove over many decades," Estall said. "It's not often in our transient society that one family remains in a home over generations."

Estall released a written statement on behalf of Mildred Drew.

"She is glad the house will be preserved in memory of Donald Drew and his contribution to music."

Mike Davenport, chairman of the village's Architectural Design Review Board, said Donald Drew's contributions to music sealed the deal.

"(The home) would have failed the test if only based on architecture, but in context it meets several of the criteria for the status," Davenport said.

What does potential designation mean for the trees on the property?

"We can't say the ordinance protects the trees," Davenport said. "But by designating this a historic landmark the person who is likely to own that house is unlikely to go out and saw down the trees. This is a large step in preserving those trees."

Estall said she measured the trees on the property to determine their age based on a formula from the Morton Arboretum. According to those calculations, Estall estimates that two oak trees are more than 200 years old.

"Donald Drew wrote a musical composition about those oak trees," Estall said.

What could the designation mean for the home?

Tom Dabareiner, director of community development, said the village records the status with DuPage County. After designation is official, any future modifications to the home must be approved at the village level.

“(The homeowner is) not required to make any changes. However, at some point in the future if they do make changes those plans must be approved through the design and review board and through council before they can occur so we protect the integrity of the original structure,” Dabareiner said.

What could the designation mean for the village?

“This is both an end and a beginning,” said Ken Lerner, chairman of the Downers Grove Coalition for Managed Redevelopment. “It’s the end of a process through which we and other groups lobbied to have a historic preservation ordinance into place I hope it’s the beginning in the sense that it will inspire other people to nominate their homes for landmark (status.)”