



**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
FEBRUARY 17, 2016 AGENDA**

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
16-ADR-0001 5320 Benton Ave	Designation of a Historic Landmark	Rebecca Leitschuh AICP Senior Planner

REQUEST

The petitioners are seeking a Historic Landmark Designation for their home at 5320 Benton Avenue based on the criteria that the property represents the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style.

NOTICE

The application has been filed in conformance with applicable procedural and public notice requirements.

GENERAL INFORMATION

**OWNER/
APPLICANT:** Amy and David Gassen
5320 Benton Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60515

PROPERTY INFORMATION

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: American Foursquare, Prairie Style
BUILDING DATE: 1924
HISTORICAL BUILDING USE: Single Family Residence
EXISTING BUILDING USE: Single Family Residence
PROPERTY SIZE: 6,539 square feet
PIN: 09-08-408-034

ANALYSIS

SUBMITTALS

This report is based on the following documents, which are on file with the Department of Community Development:

1. Application/Petition for Public Hearing
2. Project Summary
3. Plat of Survey
4. Owner Consent Form
5. Certificate of Acknowledgement Form
6. Historic Landmark Information Form
7. Photographs
8. Sanborn Map

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The petitioners are seeking a Historic Landmark Designation for their property at 5320 Benton Avenue under criteria 12.302.B.3 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance: representation of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style. The two-story Prairie Style American Foursquare house with a basement was most likely constructed in 1924, as evidenced by research performed by the petitioner.

The American Foursquare style house is aptly named after its cubic shape and division of living space into quarters and is sometimes called a "Classical Box" or "Prairie Box." Foursquares are typically two and-a-half stories and include a medium pitched pyramid roof, a centrally placed dormer, front porches and wood, stucco and brick walls. In the Village, many Foursquares were designed in the Prairie style which are often noted for their wide eaves.

The property at 5320 Benton Avenue includes many of these features, including a central attic dormer, hipped roof with deep eaves, grouped windows with original divided-light panes, a front porch (although it does not span the length of the front façade), stucco exterior, and horizontal banding. The house is built on a rusticated concrete block foundation. A one-story sun room, a unique although likely original addition to the typical style, is located on the southern portion of the building. In addition to the external original architectural features, many internal architectural features remain including doors, hardware, trim, and floors. A rear addition constructed in 2009 does not impact the historic integrity of this Prairie Style American Foursquare home.

COMPLIANCE WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The petitioner has outlined the request in the attached narrative letter and photographs. The petitioner will further address the proposal and justification to support the requested landmark designation at the public hearing.

Landmark designations require evaluation based on Section 12.302 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, *Landmark Designation Criteria*. Staff finds the request complies with Section 12.302A and Section 12.302.B, *Landmark Designation Criteria #3* as described below.

Section 12.302.A.

The proposed landmark is either over fifty (50) years old; in whole or in part or is under fifty (50) years of age and possesses exceptional importance such as might be recognized immediately for its reflection of an extraordinary political event or architectural innovation; and

The house was constructed ca. 1924. This standard is met.

Section 12.302.B

That one or more of the following conditions exist:

- 1. The property has significant value as part of the historic, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, county, State or Nation;**

This criteria does not apply.

- 2. The property was owned by a person or persons of historic significance to the community, county, State or Nation;**

This criteria does not apply.

- 3. The property represents the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period, style, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;**

Staff finds the property represents the distinguishing characteristics of the Prairie Style American Foursquare. The overall cube-shaped massing, hipped roof, grouped windows, and front porch are

typical of the American Foursquare, with many additional original architectural features as described above in the project description. This criteria is met.

4. **The property represents notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, State or Nation;**
This criteria does not apply.
5. **An area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.**
This criteria does not apply.
6. **A source of civic pride or identity for the community.**
This criteria does not apply.
7. **The property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.**
This criteria does not apply.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENT

Staff has not received any neighborhood comments regarding the proposal at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff finds the petition complies with the criteria in Section 12.302 for Landmark Designation. Based on the findings above, staff recommends the Architectural Design Review Board make a positive recommendation to the Village Council for landmark status of 5320 Benton Avenue.

Staff Report Approved By:



Stan Popovich, AICP
Director of Community Development

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5320 Benton Avenue Location Map

0 30 60 90 120 Feet

January 18, 2016

Dear Architectural Design Review Board,

We are the owners of 5320 Benton Avenue. We would like to respectfully request that our house be designated as a Historic Landmark.

After obtaining virtually all of the deeds from the DuPage County Recorder's Office and researching the early tax history, we have determined that our house was most likely constructed in 1924. Prior to 1927 our home's street address was 164 Benton Avenue and originally included two parcels of land. According to the deeds, the house was first owned by Herman and Martha Hesse; however we believe that Herman Hesse died the year the house was built and that the Hesse family never actually lived in the home. Instead we believe that the Hesse family rented the home to John J. Ehr, who in 1925 is listed as the individual whose name the property taxes were assessed in. The 1927 Downers Grove City Directory also indicates that the Ehr family lived in the home at that time, and that John J. Ehr worked for the Western Electric Company. A 1929 deed shows that John J. and Regina Ehr ultimately took ownership of the house from Martha Hesse that year; and the 1930 census confirms that John J. Ehr lived in the house with his wife Regina, their five children, and John's mother-in-law. The Ehr family remained owners of the home for approximately 40 years.

In addition to the deeds and the property tax records, we have also obtained the 1933 Sanborn map which shows our house and the surrounding houses that existed at that time. From this map we can see that our house had the small front porch as well as the one-story sun room that still exist today. The map also shows a small back porch that was removed sometime prior to our purchasing the home.

Our house represents the distinguishing characteristics of an American Foursquare in the Prairie Style. American Foursquares were a post-Victorian house type and an architectural reaction against the ornateness and complexity found in Victorian buildings. The cube-shaped massing of American Foursquares was designed to maximize square footage on small lots. Additional common characteristics of American Foursquares include a square floor plan, a central dormer in the attic, a front porch (usually, but not always, spanning across the entire front façade), a hip roof, and wide eaves. Our house possesses all of these characteristics in their original form. One unique aspect of our house is that it also includes a one-story sun room on the south side (left side from the street elevation). As previously noted we believe this space to be original to the structure based on its appearance on the 1933 Sanborn map.

Most of the original architectural features are still present; including windows, doors, and hardware. We are in the process of having those features fully restored; which currently includes repairing and refinishing the window sashes, reglazing the windows, replacing the cotton sash cords with new sash chains, and cleaning the hardware.

A one-story addition was constructed in the rear of the house in 2009. The footprint of that addition was intentionally stepped back from the side walls of the house so that it would not impact the historic integrity of the street facade. The addition included a hip roof with wide eaves to match the roof and eaves of the one-story sun room, a stucco exterior to match the stucco of the existing house, and it used wood windows with a similar divided light configuration as the original windows.

Our house is an excellent example of the American Foursquare type with the majority of its original features still intact. Adding it to the list of local Historic Landmarks will ensure that it will continue to be preserved in the future.

Sincerely,



David Gassen



Amy Gassen



Photo #1: Front (East) Elevation - September 3, 2015



Photo #2: Restored Front door – June, 28, 2015



Photo #3: Restored Sunroom French doors– June 28, 2015



Photo #4: Restored window with new sash chain – June 28, 2015



Photo #5: Original door hardware – December 30, 2015



Photo #6: Rusticated concrete block foundation wall – January 10, 2016



Photo #7: 1933 Sanborn Map



Historic Landmark Information Form

Property Address 5320 Benton Ave. Downers Grove, IL 60515

Date of Construction 1924

Architectural Style Prairie Style American Foursquare

Architect (if known) Unknown

Number of Stories 2

Basement (Y/N) Y

Foundation Materials (Concrete, Concrete Block, Wood, Stone, Brick, N/A)

Rusticated concrete block

Exterior Wall Materials (Concrete, Wood, Stone, Brick, Vinyl, Other, N/A)

Stucco

Roof Type (Gabled, Cross-Gabled, Hipped, Hipped-Gable, Shed, Gambrel, Flat, Other, N/A)

Hipped

Roof Materials (Metal, Wood Shingle, Wood Shake, Composition, Slate, Tile, Other, N/A)

Asphalt shingles

Window Type (Double-Hung, Awning, Casement, Hopper, Other, N/A)

Double-hung

Window Materials (Wood, Aluminum, Vinyl, Other, N/A)

Wood

Door Type (Panel, Flush, Transom, N/A) and Materials (Wood, Metal, Glass, N/A)

Wood with glass lights

Other significant exterior architectural features (Accessory Structures, Arches, Porches, Towers, Brick Course, etc.)

Central attic dormer, wide eaves, cube-shaped massing, front porch, one-story sun room