

## **Proposal to Designate the Masonic Temple/Former Fischer's Department Store Building, 2 E. Main St. as an Individually Listed Local Landmark**

June 20, 2023

Dear Mayor McFarland and the Common Council,

The Watertown Historic Preservation & Downtown Design Commission is requesting that the historic Masonic Temple/Fischer's Department Store building, 2 E. Main St., be designated as an individually listed Local Landmark through Chapter 325-4 of the Municipal Code. The Commission voted unanimously on April 26 to move forward with the nomination and to send the request to the Mayor and Common Council for approval.

As you are aware, the Main Street Commercial Historic District was established as a Local Landmark district via a resolution adopted Nov. 15, 1988. In addition, the Main Street Commercial Historic District is listed in both the State of Wisconsin Register of Historic Places and the National Register of Historic Places. The local landmark designation provides protection to properties within this district. Any changes proposed to properties within this district that would alter the appearance and character of a building facade (aside from basic paint and awning selections), require approval from the Historic Preservation & Downtown Design Commission.

Bill Lindborg is the owner of 2 E. Main St. He has requested the commission designate the Masonic Temple/Fischer's Department Store building as a locally designated landmark "on its own merits" as it did for the Schempf Building (207-209 E. Main St.) in 2014. While all properties downtown are locally landmarked as part of a district by ordinance, this request is to apply a higher level of distinction to this particular property. For a property to qualify as a local landmark, it must meet at least two of six criteria as outlined in the ordinance. Based on the ordinance language for local landmark designation, the Masonic Temple/Fischer's Department Store building qualifies for individual listing under criterion:

- A. It has character or interest as part of the heritage of the city.
- D. It embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
- F. It has a relationship to other distinctive buildings, structures, improvements or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a historic design or motif.

The Masonic Temple/Fischer's Department Store building was constructed in 1906 in the Romanesque Revival style. It was designed by H.C. Koch and Sons. With the exception of alterations to the first-floor storefront, the exterior of the building has remained relatively unchanged since its construction. This building has been home to a fraternal order of Masons and multiple retail and office uses throughout the years. The building is most commonly known as the former Fischer's Department Store. Today the building is home to the Blue Butterfly Thrift Store.

It is at the request of Lindborg and the commission that the official designation read: The Masonic Temple/Fischer's Department Store Building. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Melissa Lampe  
Secretary

Watertown Historic Preservation & Downtown Design Commission