

KARL F. DEAN  
MAYOR



# METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission  
Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204  
Telephone: (615) 862-7970  
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## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

**Bank Street**  
**June 17, 2015**

**Application:** Historic Landmark Overlay extension for Bank Street

**Map and Parcel Numbers:** no m/p, north of Church Street between 1<sup>st</sup> Av N and 2<sup>nd</sup> Av N

**Council Districts:** 19

**Applicant:** Mayor Karl Dean

**Project Lead:** Robin Zeigler, [robin.zeigler@nashville.gov](mailto:robin.zeigler@nashville.gov), 615-862-7970

<p><b>Description of Project:</b> Mayor Karl Dean requests that the Bank Street be designated as a Historic Landmark Overlay.</p> <p><b>Recommendation Summary:</b> Bank Street meets criterion 3 as a remaining example of early “paving” techniques. Staff suggests that the Commission recommend a Historic Landmark Overlay for Bank Street.</p>	<p><b>Attachments</b> <b>A. Photos</b></p>
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## **Background:**

Bank Street has had several names over the years, the first of which is Clark Alley. Clark Alley is listed in city directories as early as 1856. It is possible that the street even predates that, but few maps exist from that time. In the 1920s there are records of the street being called both Clark Alley and Brandon Court. The most likely explanation for this is that the Brandon Printing Company was the only building on the north side of the street and locals started to refer to the block by that moniker. In the 1930s the street was renamed Clark once more and the street one block north, which was originally a portion of Union Avenue, adopted the name Brandon. Due to the proximity of the booming financial district, often called the “Wall Street of the South,” Clark Alley was renamed a final time in 1941 to its current name: Bank Street.

Bank Street is unique in the fact that it is the only street in downtown Nashville that is paved with setts, also known as Belgian Block. Streets paved with setts are often mistaken for cobblestone, but are a separate form of paving. Cobblestones are round stones in their natural shape with sand and mortar in between, whereas setts are quarried rectangular stones, usually of granite, that fit together much like bricks. Setts are quieter and provide a better grip for horses, making them a more desirable form of paving than cobblestones, and became popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Famous streets paved with setts include the Red Square in Moscow and the Champ-Élysées, the final stretch of the Tour de France.

As more effective forms of paving came along, many streets paved with setts were redone. Most streets did not have the setts removed, but simply poured asphalt over them, which is why there are times when the asphalt wears down and Belgian Blocks can be seen underneath. However, due to its small size and infrequent usage, Bank Street was never repaved and still remains as it was 150 years ago.

## **Applicable Ordinance:**

### Article III. Historic Overlay Districts

17.36.120 Historic Districts Defined. B. Historic Landmark. An historic landmark is defined as a building, structure, site or object, its appurtenances and the property it is located on, of high historical, cultural, architectural or archaeological importance; whose demolition or destruction would constitute an irreplaceable loss to the quality and character of Nashville and Davidson County; and that meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The historic landmark is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history;
2. It is associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history;
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic value;

4. It has yielded or may be likely to yielded archaeological information important in history or prehistory; or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Analysis and Findings:**

Bank Street meets criterion 3 as a remaining example of early “paving” techniques. Staff suggests that the Commission recommend a Historic Landmark Overlay for Bank Street.

