JOHN COOPER
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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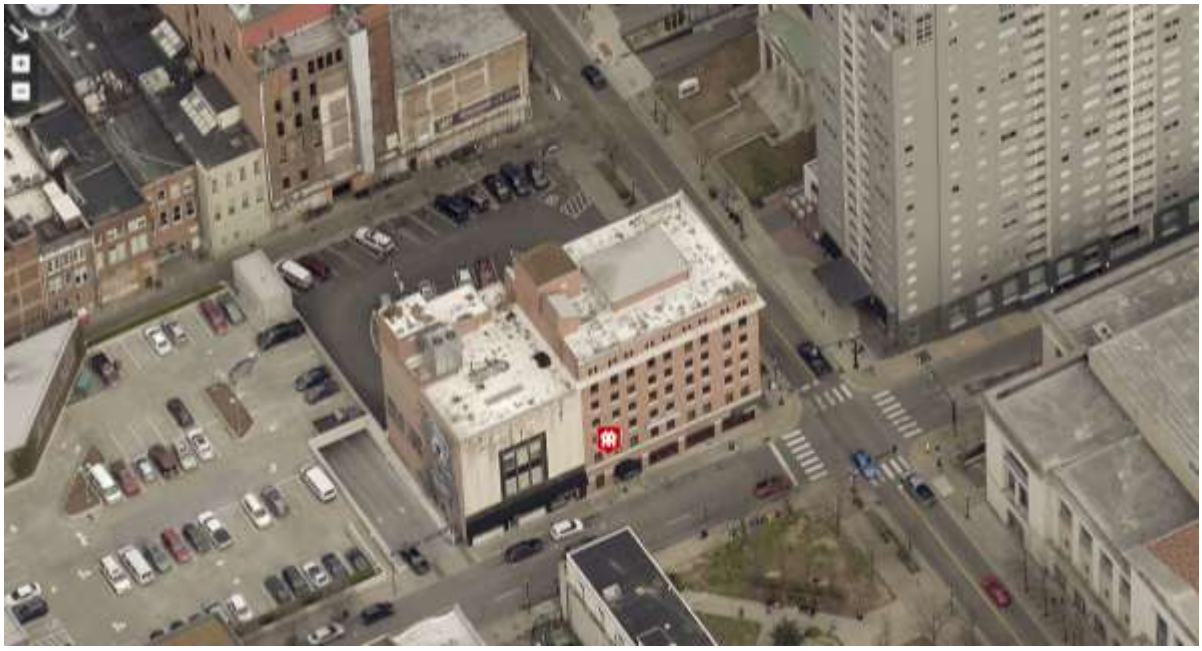
STAFF RECOMMENDATION
530 Church Street
June 17, 2020

Application: Historic Landmark Recommendations for 530 Church Street
Map and Parcel Number: 09306102700
Council Districts: 19
Applicant: Kathryn Withers
Project Lead: Melissa Baldock, melissa.baldock@nashville.gov, 615-862-7970

Description of Project: The applicant is requesting a Historic Landmark for 530 Church Street. **Recommendation Summary:** Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building is listed in in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building to the Fifth Avenue Historic District, and therefore meets the requirements of section 17.36.120. for a landmark overlay.	**Attachments:** A: Public Comment

Area Map

Aerials



Applicable Ordinances:

17.40.410 Powers and duties.

A.Creation of Historic Overlay Districts. The historic zoning commission shall review applications calling for the designation of historic overlay districts according to the standards contained in Chapter 17.36, Article III, referring written recommendations to the metropolitan council. Establishment of an historic overlay district on the official zoning map shall be in accordance with Section 18.02 of the Metropolitan Charter and Article III of this chapter.

B.Establishment of Design Review Guidelines. The historic zoning commission shall adopt design guidelines for each historic overlay district and apply those guidelines when considering preservation permit applications. Design guidelines relating to the construction, alteration, addition and repair to, and relocation and demolition of structures and other improvements shall be consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. A public hearing following the applicable public notice requirements of Article XV of this chapter shall precede the adoption of all design review guidelines by the historic zoning commission. Testimony and evidence material to the type of historic overlay under consideration may be considered by the commission in its deliberations.

17.36.110 Historic overlay districts established.

The following classifications of historic overlay districts are made a part of this title, each classification having separate and unique regulations and guidelines established according to the provisions of Chapter 17.40, Article IX.

C.Historic Landmark (HL) District. The boundaries shall be shown on the zoning map or on special overlays thereto that are made a part of this zoning code and noted by name on such maps, in which no structure shall be constructed, altered, repaired, relocated or demolished in whole or in part unless the action complies with the requirements set forth in this title.

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 yield archaeological information important in history or prehistory; or
5. It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Background: 530 Church Street, the former Wilcox Building, was constructed in 1893-1894 as an office and commercial building for various tenants (Figure 1). It is located at the northeast corner of Church Avenue and Sixth Avenue North. James Wilcox purchased the property from Christ Episcopal Church in 1892, which had recently moved from this corner to its new location on 9th Avenue and Broadway. The former Christ Church was then demolished for the construction of Wilcox's seven-story brick Romanesque Revival structure.

Figure 1. 530 Church Street.

James Wilcox was a wealthy Philadelphian with ties to the prominent Lindsley family in Nashville; in 1887, he married Louise Reid (née Lindsley). Wilcox owned a paper mill in Delaware County, Pennsylvania, and had made his fortune by developing the first fiber paper for bank notes for the federal government. Having spent some time in Nashville, Wilcox was interested in taking advantage of the city's real estate opportunities. An 1890 *Daily* American article describes a meeting of a Nashville Real Estate Exchange where Wilcox addressed the group. The article states that Wilcox opined, "Nashville had been forgotten in the North for many years. She had been reclining in the lap of luxury and had never taken pains to have herself advertised in the papers." James Wilcox was ready to help develop Nashville.

Wilcox purchased the property from Christ Church in 1892, and construction began the following year. Although an article in the *Nashville American* from 1893 referred to the architect as "Sindley from Philadelphia," no further information about Sindley, including what his first name may have been, was found. Philadelphia directory research and a nation-wide registry of architects from around this time do not list anyone with the last name of Sindley, and it is likely that the name was misspelled or misreported. The same newspaper article states that William Crawford Smith oversaw the construction (Figure 2). Smith was a well-known Nashville architect. He is responsible for the design of the Parthenon for Tennessee's Centennial Exposition and the Main Building on Vanderbilt's campus, now known as Kirkland Hall, as well as many other Tennessee structures from the late nineteenth century. He was a former Confederate Colonel in the Civil War and later died in the Battle of Manila in the Philippines in 1899. The extent to which Smith may have been involved in the design of the Wilcox building is not known. In any case, the *Nashville American* stated that the "building will be equipped with two rapidly running elevators and a steam heating apparatus and all the latest conveniences. It will be one of the finest and most convenient office buildings in town, or in the entire south."

Figure 2. William C. Smith. Photo taken from a May 10, 1974 *Tennessean* article, "The Men Who Built the Ryman," but the photo is from the Tennessee Historical Society, State Archives).

The architecture of the Wilcox Building combines Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival elements applied to a commercial box form (Figures 3 & 4). The National Register nomination for the Fifth Avenue Historic District describes the architecture of the Wilcox Building as "a six-story commercial vernacular masonry structure." However, the structure is seven stories in total. The building was constructed with Roman pressed brick, which an 1893 *Daily American* article described as being manufactured locally from the clay of the Cumberland River banks by the Fulcher & Dyas Brick Company.

Figures 3 & 4 are the Church Street (left) and 6th Avenue North facades (right) of the building.

While the upper floors are largely intact, the ground floor storefronts along both Church Avenue and 6th Avenue North have been altered. The grand, round arch, stone, main entrance along Church Street remains intact (Figure 5). On both Church Street and 6th Avenue North, the fourth stories of the three central bays include rounded arch window openings, although the arches have been filled in. Between the fifth and sixth stories are two terra cotta belt courses and decorative terra cotta moldings. A corbelled prominent cornice is located between the six and seventh floors, delineating the transition from the main floor designs to the Renaissance-Revival, palazzo-style double arched window openings on the seventh floor (Figure 6). Although the ground floor has been altered, the changes to the building overall are minor, and the building's architectural integrity remain intact. The east façade of the building now faces a parking lot but originally sat next to a three-story building (Figure 7). Later, a taller building was constructed next door, so the east façade was not visible. As a non-street facing façade, this façade was not built with decorative elements. A recently-painted mural now covers this façade (Figure 8).

Figure 5. The arched main entrance to 530 Church on Church Street.

Figure 6. The decorative brick and terra cotta work on the upper floors of 530 Church Street.

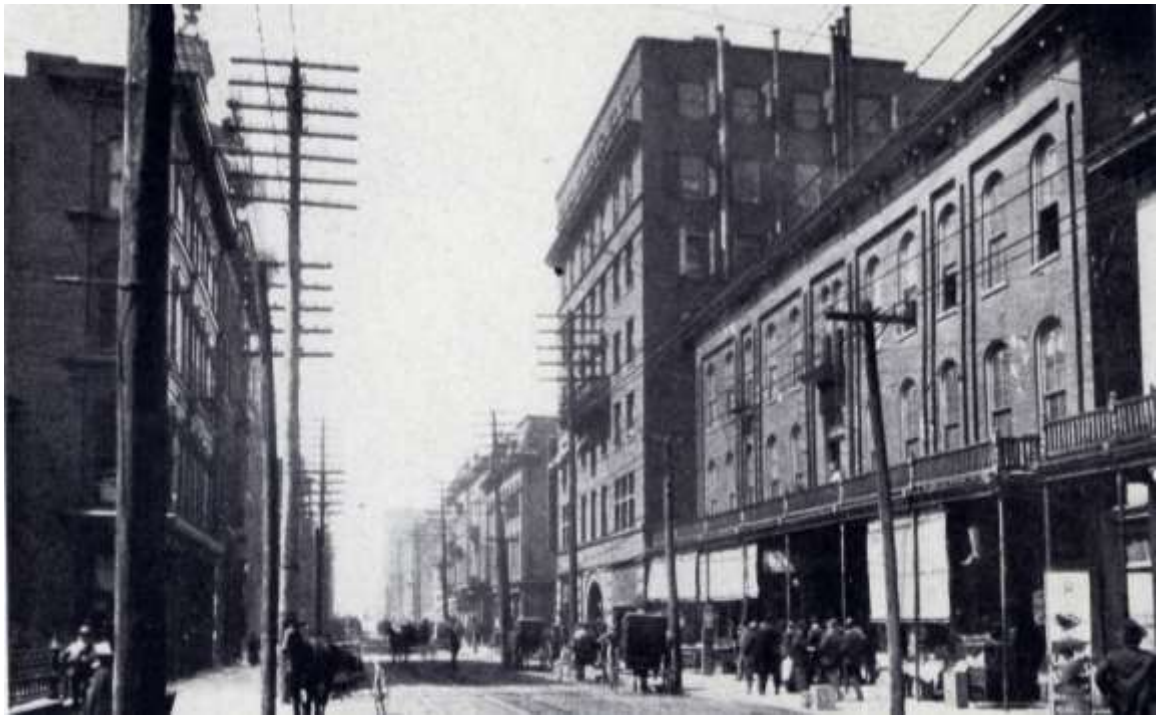


Figure 7. c. 1901 photo of Church Street with 530 Church in the background shows that the building today is largely intact. Photo from https://nashvillehistory.blogspot.com/2016/09/hitchcock-building.html?m=1

Figure 8. The east façade that faces a parking lot.

The building opened for tenants in early 1894, and was known as the "Wilcox Building." By March of that year, various newspaper advertisements described the businesses located within the building, including a purveyor of rubber goods, a dressmaker, an office of the National Bureau of Education, a local office of the Berlitz School of Languages, and many others. The building later housed the office of the Tennessee Centennial Exposition planning committee. (Figure 9).

BUY A DOCTOR

COST ONLY $5

The Hygienic Hot Vapor Bath Cabinet is the Best Physician on Earth.

You have in your room an improved Russian and Turkish, Hot Air, Vapor, Alcohol, Oxygen, Perfumed, Mineral, Sulphur, or Hot Springs' Baths. Circular explains and proves all. Over 60,000 Cabinets sold. They must cure. Agents wanted.

HYGENIC BATH CABINET CO.,
Room 407 Wilcox Building, NASHVILLE, TENN

Figure 9. Advertisement that appeared in the December 17, 1896 *Baptist and Reflector* paper for a "Hygenic Bath Cabinet" sold in the Wilcox building.

Wilcox returned to Philadelphia, but retained ownership of the building until 1905, when he sold it to Edward Bushrod Stahlman. Stahlman was the owner of the *Nashville Banner* newspaper and was an investor in real estate in Nashville's downtown core. He is best known today for the development of the Stahlman building on Third Avenue North and Union Street.

Stahlman held onto the Wilcox building for just three years, selling it in 1908 to John A. Hitchcock. After that, the building was known as the "Hitchcock Building" in the city directories. Hitchcock had a hardware business with his father, Luke Hunter Hitchcock. After the elder Hitchcock's death in 1907, John A. Hitchcock used some of his inheritance to buy 530 Church Street. Although Hitchcock died in 1919, his heirs held onto the building until 1927. The structure continued to be used by various offices and tenants during this time. In 1921, the ground floor was leased to Liggett's drug store, a national chain that remained in the building until 1945 (Figure 10).

FREE SOUVENIR SALE

Friday and Saturday April 15th and 16th

Come to the Formal Opening of

Decker's Corner Cor. Church & Sixth Ave.

Liggett's

Decker's Corner Cor. Church & Sixth Ave.

The Safe Drug Store

TO celebrate the opening of our new store in Nashville, we have selected a free souvenir so attractive that the greatest number possible should be drawn to our store on this occasion.

However, even though you do not care to buy, we would just as much appreciate your presence to inspect one of the most completely fitted and modern drug stores not only of the South, but of the entire country.

THIS new store is affiliated with nearly 250, other Liggett Drug Stores throughout the United States. Supported by factories producing the finest Toilet and Medicinal Preparations, Candies and Pure Food Supplies, we come to this community with facilities equalled by no other Retail Drug Store institution, prepared to sell Drug Store merchandise of known and dependable quality at fair prices. As to service we consider no transaction completed satisfactorily unless the customer is satisfied.

Figure 10. An advertisement from the *Nashville Banner* on April 14, 1921, announcing the opening of the Liggett's drug store at 530 Church.

In 1927, John A. Hitchcock's heirs sold the building to Howell Campbell. Campbell was best known for his candy businesses. In 1901, he founded the Anchor Candy Company, later reorganized as the Standard Candy Company, and he was the creator of Nashville's famous Goo Goo Cluster. He seems to have bought the building as an investment, and his heirs held onto it for nearly half a century, selling it in 1984.

In 1946, while still under the ownership of the Campbells, Nashville's famed Harveys Department store took over the entire building. A January 1946 advertisement in the *Tennessean* boasts:

> Yes, it's the "Harvey Corner" now! You guessed it! We're talking about that bustling, crucially important intersection of Sixth Avenue and Church Street, the very heart of Nashville. Three weeks ago it was still Liggett's Drug Store. Now Harveys has it! Workmen are busily converting it into an integral part of Nashville's Largest Store.

Harveys had opened in 1942 next door at 518 5th Avenue North. Founded by Fred Harvey, a former executive at Marshall Fields department store in Chicago, Harveys quickly grew in the post-World War II period to be one of Nashville's largest department stores, gradually taking over several buildings along Church Street and Fifth and Sixth

Avenues (Figures 11, 12, 13). Harveys flourished in the next several decades, boasting several carousel horses and elaborate holiday displays.

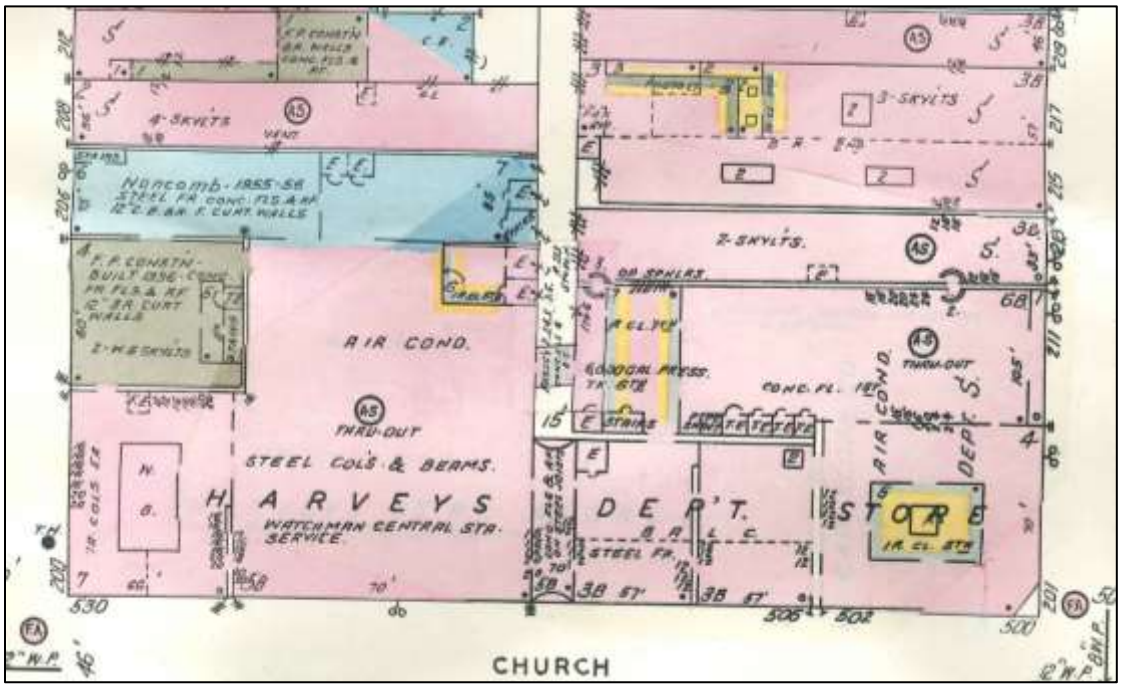


Figure 11. The 1957 Sanborn Map shows how Harveys had expanded.

Figure 12. c. 1957 photo of 530 Church when it was part of Harveys. Photo from https://nashvillehistory.blogspot.com/2016/09/hitchcock-building.html?m=1

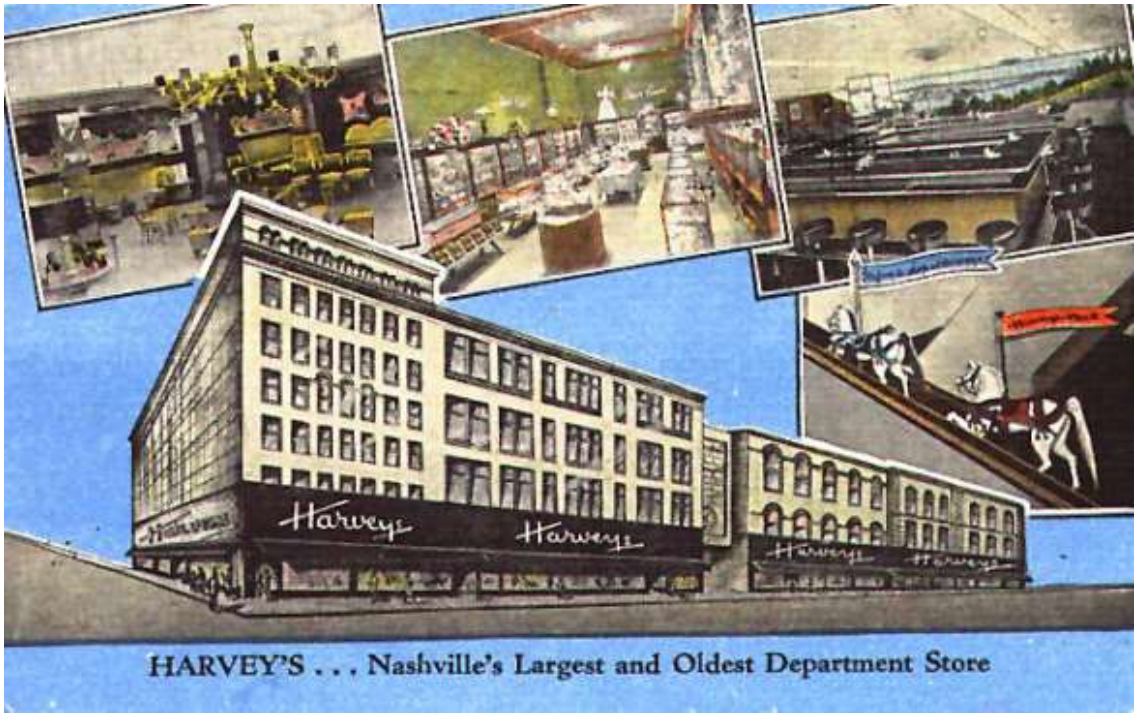


Figure 13. Undated postcard for Harveys.

Harveys played a role in the Civil Rights movement in Nashville. In 1959, James Lawson and other representatives from the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC), a local organization affiliated with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, met with Fred Harvey and his competitor, John Sloan of Sloan's department store, to discuss integrating the stores' lunch counters. Both refused the request, stating that integration would cause them to lose business. Although the large-scale Nashville sit ins would not take place until February 1960, on November 28, 1959, Harveys was the first site to be used as a test case for sit ins. The African American diners were refused service at the Harvey's lunch counter, but were reportedly treated politely. The incident was not reported in the newspapers, and has been described as low-key and a way to "sense the mood and degree of resistance" before the larger sit in demonstrations.

After the larger sit ins demonstrations occurred in February 1960, Harveys was still hesitant to integrate its lunch counter, publicly stating that integration would hurt business. However, within a few months, Harveys and other lunch counters downtown began to integrate their establishments.

As the twentieth century progressed, and Harveys suburban stores became more popular, its downtown location began to suffer. In early 1984, Harveys shuttered its downtown location. 530 Church Street was sold later that year to "Nashville Historic Developers," a conglomeration of several parties. Thankfully 530 Church, unlike the former Harveys building directly to its east, was not torn down. Today, known as Cornerstone Square, the building continues to house various storefront and upstairs office tenants.

Analysis and Findings:

530 Church Street is significant for its late nineteenth century commercial architecture. It is also significant for its connection to the development of Nashville in the late nineteen to early twentieth century, particularly with its association with the famed Harvey's Department store. Its survival into the twentieth century is remarkable given the changes to downtown Nashville over the last one hundred years.

In 1977, the structure was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Fifth Avenue Historic District. Changes to the building since that time have not altered its contributory status. The structure therefore meets the requirements of Section 17.36.120 for a landmark overlay.

No exterior alterations are currently planned.

Recommendation: Staff suggests that the Metro Historic Zoning Commission recommend approval of the historic landmark to the Planning Commission and Metro Council and the adoption of the existing Historic Landmark Design Guidelines to apply to exterior alterations. Staff finds that the building is listed in in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building to the Fifth Avenue Historic District, and therefore meets the requirements of section 17.36.120. for a landmark overlay.

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC COMMENT

From: Paula Middlebrooks <pklarson@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 4:35 PM
To: Zeigler, Robin (Historical Commission) <Robin.Zeigler@nashville.gov>
Subject: comment on Historic Landmark Overlay for 202 6th Ave N and 530 Church St

Attention: This email originated from a source external to Metro Government. Please exercise caution when opening any attachments or links from external sources.

Hello Robin,

I won't be able to attend the public hearing on June 17th, so I wanted to submit a written comment. My comment is that I support the proposed Historic Landmark Overlays and adopting the existing design guidelines for 202 6th Ave N and 530 Church St.

As a neighbor, who lives just a block from this building, I see it often and am heartened it will keep its historic character and continue to contribute to the historic nature of downtown Nashville that is too rapidly being lost.

Thank you.

Paula Middlebrooks
239 5th Avenue North, #301
Nashville, TN 37219