



DANE COUNTY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Room 116, City-County Building, Madison,
Wisconsin 53703

TO: County Board Supervisors
County Executive Jamie Kuhn
Town Clerks
All Other Interested Parties

FROM: Brian Standing, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: County Board Ordinance Amendment 2023-OA-80
Establishing a Cultural Heritage Commission

DATE: July 15, 2024

CC: Todd Violante, Director of Planning & Development
Roger Lane, Zoning Administrator
Cecely Castillo, County Board Staff

I. SUMMARY

If adopted, 2023 OA-80 would establish a Dane County Cultural Heritage Commission to advise the county board and county executive on historic preservation issues, and to potentially serve as an historic preservation commission for Certified Local Governments within Dane County.

II. BACKGROUND

A. *Ordinance and Plan Amended:* If adopted, 2023 OA-80 would amend Chapter 15, Dane County Code, to establish a new Heritage Preservation Commission as a county administrative agency. 2023 OA-80 would also amend Chapter 82, Dane County Code, to make minor amendments to the "Cultural Resources" section of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*.

B. *ZLR public hearing:* The Zoning and Land Regulation Committee (ZLR) advises the County Board on proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments. The ZLR Committee has scheduled a public hearing on 2023 OA-80 for **July 23, 2024**.

III. DESCRIPTION

A. 2023 OA-80 implements recommendations adopted as part of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan* in 2023 ([2023 OA-49](#)).

B. Article 2 would add a new section 15.49 to establish a new, seven-member Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission. Appointments would be made by the County Executive. The Heritage Preservation Commission would:

- Advise the ZLR, county board and county executive on a variety of historic preservation issues;
- Make recommendations and conduct research regarding funding, grants, and other projects that would further the cultural resources goals and objectives of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*;

- Serve as a Historic Preservation Commission for towns and other municipalities that wish to seek “Certified Local Government for historic preservation” status from the National Park Service and the Wisconsin Historical Society. This would allow such communities to access historic preservation grants and other financial assistance from the National Park Service.

C. Article 4 would adopt revisions to the Cultural Resources section of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*. These revisions would:

- Modify language regarding composition of the commission and appointment of commissioners to conform to county ordinance.
- Clarify the process by which the Department of Planning and Development reviews development proposals for potential impacts to known historic or archaeological resources.
- Clarifies the advisory role the Heritage Preservation Commission would take with respect to development proposals pending before the Zoning and Land Regulations committee.

IV. ANALYSIS

A. Consistency with County Comprehensive Plan: The Dane County Comprehensive Plan has included recommendations regarding the creation of a heritage or historic preservation commission since its original adoption in 2009. Creation of this commission will further adopted goals to preserve historic and archaeological resources, expand resource inventory information, expand planning assistance to towns and to educate the public about countywide cultural resources.

B. National Park Service Certified Local Government designation: The National Park Service administers a variety of historic preservation grant programs available to Certified Local Governments (CLGs). Specific programs include resources for documentation, inventory and interpretation of historic sites, revitalization of rural communities, preserve or repair nationally significant sites, or identify and commemorate sites important to underrepresented communities. CLGs must adopt historic preservation ordinances governing construction and external appearance of historic structures, and must have a historic or heritage preservation commission with appropriate expertise to evaluate nominations for historic designation. Many towns and small villages in Dane County lack the staff resources or capacity to create their own historic preservation commissions, and so are unable to access CLG grants. The *Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission* could work with willing communities to serve this function and help meet CLG standards.

D. Consistency with other provisions of the *Dane County Comprehensive Plan*:

- **Housing:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Transportation:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Utilities and Community Facilities:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Land Use:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Economic Development:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Land Use:** No significant conflicts found.
- **Intergovernmental Cooperation:** No significant conflicts found.

V. COMMENTS BY OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OR STATE AGENCIES

Town Governments

The Town of Oregon and the Town of Pleasant Springs have provided letters of support for this amendment (both in Legistar as attachments).

City and Village Governments

As of the date of this report, no city or village governments had commented on this amendment.

Other agencies

Wisconsin State Historical Society

The Wisconsin State Historical Society serves as Wisconsin's State Historic Preservation Office under the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Fund. The proposed Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission was developed in consultation with Wisconsin Historical Society Certified Local Government program staff.