



January 27, 2025

TO: Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission

RE: Letter of Support: Dane County's Under-Represented Communities' Historical Marker Program

Dear Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission Members:

I am writing to offer my support for the nomination of the Capehart Housing Neighborhood in Sun Prairie for Dane County's Under-Represented Communities' Historical Marker Program. The story of the neighborhood's development, its role in addressing the critical housing shortage of the late 1940s and 1950s, and its lasting impact on the demographic makeup of the City of Sun Prairie is a vital chapter in the history of both the community and the broader national narrative.

In the late 1940s, the U.S. faced a growing housing crisis, particularly for military families in need of accommodation near military bases. The Capehart Act of 1955 sought to alleviate this problem by authorizing the construction of housing on federal land close to military installations. This led to the creation of more than 250,000 housing units across the country, many of which remain in use today. Sun Prairie was fortunate to be chosen as one of the locations for a Capehart neighborhood due to its proximity to Truax Field.

Construction of 280 new homes began in 1961 in the area now known as Vandenberg Heights. This neighborhood quickly became a vibrant military community. Census data and local anecdotal accounts suggest that this was the first significant influx of Black Americans to Sun Prairie and thus played an integral role in shaping the demographic and cultural makeup of the City.

The Capehart neighborhood stands as a testament to both the federal government's efforts to address housing needs and the changing racial dynamics of mid-20th century America. The legacy of this neighborhood continues to shape the social fabric of Sun Prairie today. For these reasons, I strongly believe that the historical significance of the Capehart neighborhood merits formal recognition through the placement of a historical marker.

Thank you for your consideration of this important nomination. I wholeheartedly support the effort to preserve and honor this piece of Sun Prairie's history.

Paul Esser, Mayor
City of Sun Prairie, WI
January 27, 2025