



REPORT TO HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Bruce A. Knight, Planning Director

DATE: August 1, 2008

SUBJECT: Case No. PL08-0040: **Application for Landmark Designation for
The Cambridge Apartments
805-807 West Church Street**

A. Introduction: The Historic Preservation Commission is requested to make a recommendation to the Plan Commission to designate the Cambridge Apartments as a landmark.

B. Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends to the Plan Commission that the nomination and findings be approved as proposed.

C. Background:

1. Property Information.

Applicant: Bruce Conway

Owner: The Cambridge Building Corporation

Location: 805-807 W. Church Street

2. Description of Property. The building at 805-807 W. Church Street is a very good example of an American Eclectic Tudor style apartment building. In 1923 the Cambridge Building Corporation was formed, and by 1924 the first unit was occupied. The original shareholders, and their addresses at the time of incorporation, and their professions where known are as follows:

William Hartford	10 W. Hill St.	
H. B. Ramey	406 N. Prairie	Secretary, Travelers Protective Assn
Harry B. Boyer	410 N. Prairie	Local Attorney
E. M. Rhodes	616 W. Healey	Local Attorney
A. F. Rising	RFD #4	
J. W. Wait	805 W. Church	
C. H. North	433 Robeson Bldg.	
Glenn W. North	Terre Haute, IN	
M. L. Hecker	47 Chester St.	M L Hecker building materials co. 217 S ^o Water

The architectural style commonly referred to as American Eclectic Tudor is, according to A Field Guide to American Houses¹, "...historically imprecise, since relatively few examples closely mimic the architectural characteristics of Tudor (early 16-th century) England. Instead the style is loosely based on a variety of late Medieval English prototypes ranging from thatched-roofed cottages to grand manor houses."

The Cambridge Apartments incorporated a large number of details typical of the Tudor style.

The front doors have a classic four-centered Tudor Arch, emblematic of the style. The doors are surrounded by stone trim.

The front sunroom extensions are topped by steeply roofed gables, which have prominent half-timbered ends.

Patterned brickwork and stonework on the front façade is also characteristic of the style. Not unique to Tudor, but not inconsistent in any way, are the stone belt courses that ring the building (except for the rear) at the top of the building, the top of the third story windows, between the second and third stories, and around the base of the first floor. Additional interrupted courses run along the front façade parallel to the main courses and stone lintels compliment overall effect.

The windows are appropriate to the style, either 6 or 8 panes over single lower double hung windows as size allows or 10 pane narrow casement windows in narrow spaces. Silver aluminum storm windows are being replaced over time with anodized brown ones to more closely match the brown window trim. Originally the building had brown trimmed wooden storm windows which needed to be manually changed with the seasons, the newer ones match the style while being significantly easier to maintain.

3. Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes historic preservation as a tool for achieving healthy neighborhoods and commercial areas. The Plan encourages the preservation of buildings that have historical and architectural significance as a means of promoting visual environments of high aesthetic quality and variety.

4. In-Town Plan. The In-Town Plan recommends an implementation strategy which encourages historic designation in selected areas of In-Town which reinforces the conservation and preservation of significant structures within the area. The designation of the Cambridge as an Historic Landmark supports this strategy of the In-Town Plan.

5. Historic Criteria. The applicant proposed the following findings and has requested that the Commission make a determination that the Cambridge Building meets the following criteria from Sec. 37-491 of the City Code:

(c) The property or structure is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for the study of a period style, craftsmanship, method of construction or use of indigenous materials.

The Cambridge is a fine example of an American Eclectic Tudor style apartment building, a familiar design for apartment homes of this era. It is an imprecise style, loosely based on a number of late Medieval English architectural details. While the Cambridge is composed of square brick clad sections and has a flat roof, from the front elevation is broken up by four protruding sunrooms which are topped by steeply pitched roof sections, each of which is fronted by vertical half-timbered gable ends. Each sunroom tower is also edged by stone quoins, emphasizing the vertical line as well as adding a detail typical to the style. The overall effect of this is to make the building look more like the Tudor style, masking the mass of the giant rectangular building behind the façade.

Details like the classic four-centered Tudor style arch over the main front entry doors, together with the half-timbered gable ends and the quoins they showcase cement the American Eclectic Tudor style of the Cambridge.

(e) Identifiable as an established and familiar visual feature in the community owing to its unique location or physical characteristics.

The Cambridge has been an estimable presence on West Church Street for over 84 years, mirrored by its twin building the Oxford on Park Avenue. Together these two stately apartments have provided 24 apartment homes close to the heart of the City of Champaign for over half of the time since the City's incorporation.

(f) One of the few remaining examples of a particular architectural style or use, or is an example which clearly represents a major architectural style, and has undergone little or no alteration since its construction.

Only nine of the pre-WWII co-ops remain as co-operative apartment buildings in Champaign, The Avalon, The Dodson, The Eldridge, The Glenn, The Hawthorne, The Pembroke, The Parkview, The Oxford, and The Cambridge.

The Cambridge has undergone very few changes in its 84 years, and its appearance is virtually unchanged from its original occupancy in 1924.

D. Alternatives:

1. Approve this nomination and forward it to the Plan Commission with a recommendation of approval.
2. Do not approve this nomination and forward it to the Plan Commission with a recommendation of denial.

E. Discussion of Alternatives:

Alternative 1 should be chosen if the Commission determines that the application meets at least one criterion listed in the Zoning Ordinance, Section 37-491, Criteria for Designation of

Landmarks. The designation of the Cambridge Apartment Building as a landmark would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

a. Advantages

- Recognizes the historic character of this community resource
- Consistent with In-Town and Comprehensive Plans
- Helps to preserve this resource for future generations

b. Disadvantages

- None.

Alternative 2 denies the recommendation for the Cambridge Apartment Building to be designated as a local landmark. The Historic Preservation Commission should choose this alternative if it determines that the application for the Cambridge Apartment Building meets *none* of the criteria listed in the Zoning Ordinance for designation as a landmark.

a. Advantages

- None

b. Disadvantages

- This would indicate that the Commission believes that the Cambridge Apartment Building does not meet any of the criteria for designation.

F. Recommended Action: Staff recommends the Commission choose Alternative 1 and recommend to the Plan Commission that the Nomination be approved. Staff further recommends the Commission adopt the proposed findings, as attached.

G. Budget Impact: There is no significant budget impact for a historic designation.

H. Staffing Impact: In the future Staff may be requested to review an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness, but the processing of such occasional individual applications falls well within the Planning Department's routine baseline services.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

Kevin Phillips
Zoning Administrator

Rob Kowalski, AICP
Assistant Planning Director

Attachments: Application for Landmark Designation
Aerial Photograph & Location map
Photos of Building
Excerpt of 1924 Sanborn Fire map
Proposed Findings

Reference: 1) A Field Guide to American Houses, pg. 358, Virginia & Lee McAlester, Knopf, 1984

Photos of Cambridge Apartments



View from
Northwest
on
Church
Street.
Note half-
timbered
gable ends
and
prominent
quoins.

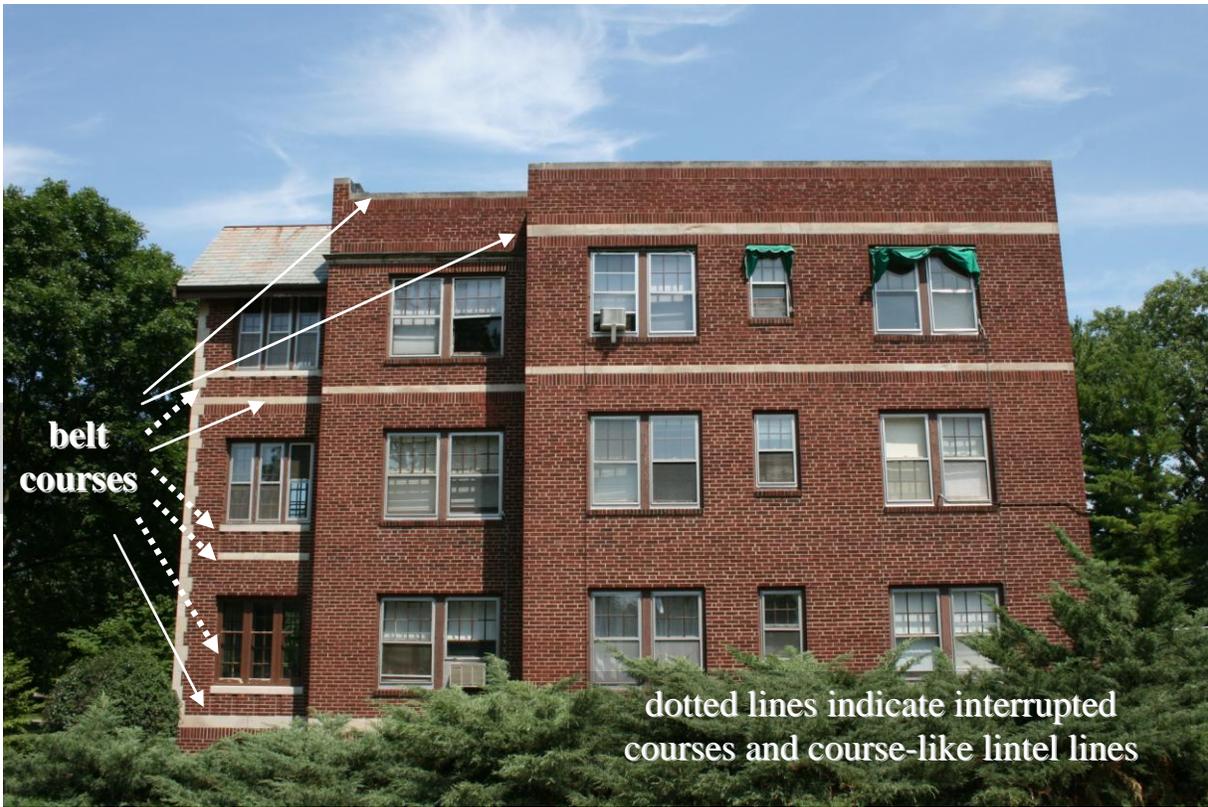


View of
front door
with Tudor
Arch shape
and stone
trim



Rear View ↵

↵ Side View



belt
courses

dotted lines indicate interrupted
courses and course-like lintel lines



Parking garages in rear



Tudor Details abounding



half- timbering
on overhanging
gable ends

Decorative
brick & stone
work

front door with
Tudor Arch
shape and
stone trim

↳
↳
↳

↳

Findings of Fact Landmark Designation



The Cambridge Apartments 805-807 West Church Street

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