Walton Street Park & Pool

Local Historic Landmark Designation

Alex Cole - Urban Planner III

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Key Takeaways

- Walton Street Park & Pool were identified as significant historic resources as part of the African American Heritage Research Survey
- Planning & Urban Design (PUD) received Local Landmark application from The Preservation Society of Asheville & Buncombe County (PSABC) in early 2022
- Parks and PUD partnered to engage the community in an effort to get input on improved park amenities and to gauge support for historic designation over the past 6+ months
- Walton Street Park & Pool have contributed significantly to the history of Asheville and Buncombe County; areas of significance include Black ethnic heritage, entertainment/recreation and social history
- Based on survey results, community members support both Local Landmark and National Register designation
- Local Landmark designation would ensure that the historic character of the park and pool are retained

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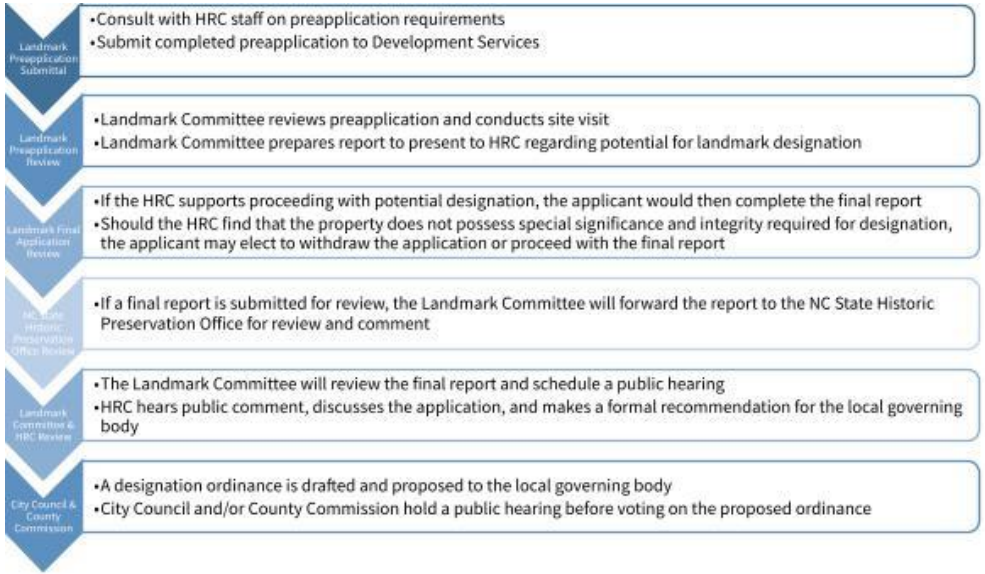
Presentation Overview

- Landmark Designation Process
- Background
- Additional Engagement Efforts
- Survey Results
- Walton Street Park & Pool Historical Overview
- Effects of Landmark Designation
- Board & Commission Recommendations
- Questions

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Local Landmark Designation Process

- N.C.G.S. 160D-945 & 160D-946 and UDO Ch. 8-5 & 8-6 - HRC/City Council authority to designate local historic landmarks



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Background

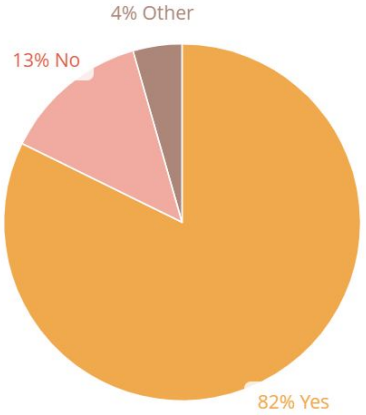
- February 2022 - City receives preliminary landmark application from PSABC
- Parks Department & PUD partnered with Southside United on community engagement for the Walton St. Park amenity improvements and potential historic designation
- Project team developed a survey to engage the community
- Staff identified in-person community engagement opportunities
  - April 28 - Grant Southside Center Groundbreaking
  - April 29 - Walton Street Block Party
  - May 6 - Grant Southside Center Block Party
  - May 7 - Walton Street Park Bike Pop-Up
- August 2022 - City receives draft landmark designation report
- August 2022 - Designation report forwarded to NC HPO for comment
- September 2022 - Designation report presented to AAHC for comment and recommendation
- October 2022 - Designation report presented to HRC for comment and recommendation

Additional Outreach Efforts

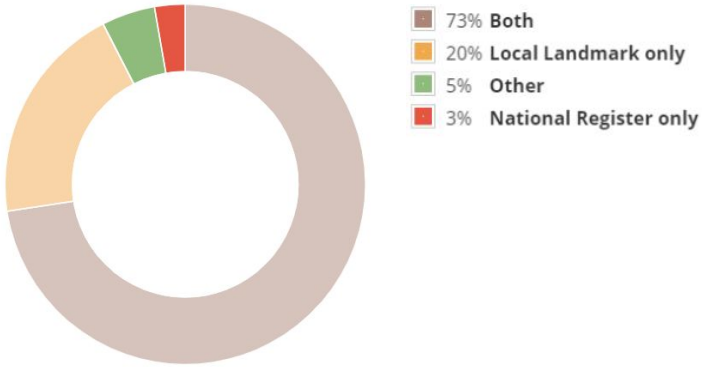
- Project mailer sent out to all households in the Southside neighborhood
- Information and paper surveys available at the Grant Center
- Informational signs and QR code for survey placed around Southside Community
- Project pages posted on City website
- City staff attendance at Southside United Neighborhood meetings
- Information posted at City community centers & Eddington Center
- Reparations Health & Wellness Committee Meeting (August 23)
- Goombay Festival
- East End Valley Street Heritage Festival
- Burton St. Community Meeting (August 16)
- Walton St. Community Water day (August 20)
- Hand delivery of paper surveys and flyers in the Southside area (August 17 & 24)
- Press release (September 30)
- Asheville Citizen-Times article (August 15)
- WLOS interview (August 8)

Survey Results

- Online survey live May-September 2022
- Over 230 participants



Support for historic designation



Landmark and/or National Register

Walton Street Park & Pool Historical Overview



- 4.37 acre park established by the City and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).
- Park was constructed in 1938-1939 and opened to the public in June 1939; the Walton Street Pool was completed in the fall of 1947; the Poolhouse was completed in 1948 and the Pool and Poolhouse opened to the public in June 1948.
- Walton Street Park & Pool are significant for being the sole municipal park and swimming area for Asheville's Black population, and are thus associated with events that have contributed significantly to the history of Asheville and Buncombe County.
- The park complex retains the arrangement of features established during the period of significance (1939-1972). The park, pool, and poolhouse retain integrity of location, setting, association, feeling, workmanship, and design.

Effects of Landmark Designation

- Recognizes and honors the cultural and historical significance of a place that allows us to tangibly connect to our past.
- Allows for historic character to be retained through a design review process whenever proposed changes are made for the site.



Image courtesy of: Isaiah Rice Photo Collection, Special Collections and University Archives
Ramsey Library at UNC Asheville, Asheville, NC

Board & Commission Recommendations

- September 8, 2022 - African American Heritage Commission
  - recommended unanimously in favor of designation

- October 12, 2022 - Historic Resources Commission
  - recommended unanimously in favor of designation

Requested Action and Next Steps

Requested Action:

- Adopt an ordinance designating Walton Street Park as a Local Historic Landmark

Next Steps:

- File designation ordinance with the Register of Deeds
- Continue to engage the community on improved park amenities

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