



**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

GREG FISCHER
MAYOR

August 2, 2012

Dear President King, Metro Council members and citizens:

For nearly 40 years, the process to designate an historic building a local landmark has served Louisville and its citizens well. Our landmarks process preserves buildings that help tell a unique story that belongs only to Louisville. The landmark process has been a catalyst for community and neighborhood revitalization and a core component of our economic growth as old buildings and their architectural details from the past are transformed into restaurants, housing, art galleries and new and expanding businesses that create jobs. The look and feel of these buildings is a central element to the authenticity of our city.

Preservation has played a critical role in the exciting transformation of our city. Our Main and Market Street buildings give Louisville a heralded presence like none other in the country. A few years ago, the city stood to lose an entire block along East Market Street if not for an effort to landmark those properties. That decision resulted in millions of dollars in investment and a new, thriving district now known as “NuLu” - home of exciting local restaurants, shops and galleries that are receiving accolades both locally and nationally from citizens and visitors.

From Museum Row on West Main to the African-American Heritage Center in Western Louisville, from the Farnsley-Moreman House in Pleasure Ridge Park to the Little Loom House in Iroquois, and from Locust Grove on Blakenbaker to Blackacre Farm near Jeffersontown, our city celebrates and honors its past, as we look to build a great future for the next generation. Other cities have razed most of their heritage – and it painfully shows. We are fortunate to have so much connection to our history through our built environment. Our sense of place contributes directly to our quality of life.

The landmarks process is not perfect. A recent example is the Bauer site on Brownsboro Road (formerly Azalea restaurant), which was planned to be a new pharmacy and other retail shops until some citizens advocated for, and the Landmarks Commission approved, designating the property an historic landmark. Our city — and the property owner — now have a boarded decaying structure rather than a vibrant new center delivering services and creating jobs.

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While we may have a few examples in different parts of our community where the landmarks process can be questioned, we cannot underestimate its tremendous positive cumulative impact on our city. Landmarking is a standards-based process and is rarely used – averaging twice a year for the last 40 years. Landmarking should continue to be a special and unique event reserved for those structures that clearly meet the standards, preserve our past, and meet the needs of our community going forward. Our landmarking process has served us well for more than a generation – and preserved our sense of place for generations to come. After much deliberation and dialogue with a broad cross section of our community, I have decided to veto the ordinance passed by the Metro Council. The positive impacts of our current, nationally-recognized landmarks law far outweigh the need to change this four-decade precedent for our city. Additionally, the citizens of Louisville have clearly told me that they fear the landmarks process potentially could be politicized through Metro Council involvement. I cannot support a law that allows a simple majority of the Metro Council to overturn the standards-based review of the Landmarks Commission. The ordinance as presented also contains several constitutional and legal issues relative to the separation of powers and due process.

I share the concern of many on the Metro Council that the Commission sometimes oversteps its boundaries in its effort to preserve at the cost of the greater good. During the past few months, valuable changes to the landmarks process were proposed and adopted by council that would make it more transparent and robust, including more input from impacted neighbors, greater notice to property owners, and a longer more deliberate process. I request the Commission to adopt and pursue those measures.

Vetoes should be rare, and this is only my second one as Mayor. I take this action because I believe that Louisville has tremendous “soul” - manifested by our people and our place, created by the natural beauty that has been endowed to us and by the many generations who have come before. Landmarking is a process that advances our authenticity.

My administration appreciates the many hours of work and debate dedicated to this discussion the last few months. Our city is better for the robust conversation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Fischer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being more prominent than the last name "Fischer".

Greg Fischer
Mayor