



CITY OF ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

Community Services Area

Planning & Development Services Unit

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September 11, 2008

Honorable John Hieftje, Mayor, and
Members of the Ann Arbor City Council,
Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Re: Formation of a Study Committee for the Purposes of Establishing a Historic District
in the Neighborhood known as Germantown

Dear Mayor Hieftje and Council Members,

A significant neighborhood in the history of Ann Arbor has gone overlooked for some time with regard to its preservation. It has a cohesive and consistent historic character of such a high degree that it should be considered as a possible Historic District. This neighborhood has suggested boundaries of roughly Division on the East, South Fourth Street on the West, Madison on the South and William on the North.

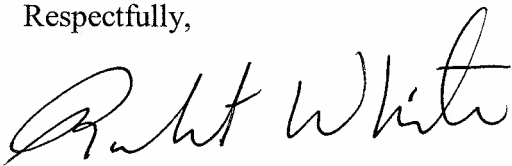
The family name of Otto is one with a long tradition in Ann Arbor. The Otto Band is said to have been the first musical group to perform "The Victors" in public. Harlan Otto, a nephew of the bandmaster, grew up on the 'Old West Side' at 543 South First Street in the 1920's and 1930's. He has stated that his grandfather had been born in a house at the corner of South Fifth and Madison Streets, and still lived there when Harlan was growing up. Mr. Otto says the residents of the relatively newer 'west side' called the neighborhood where his grandfather lived 'Germantown' and considered it 'the old neighborhood'.

In addition to Mr. Otto's grandfather's house, a modest house still in place at its original location, 'Germantown' has a large number of homes, both grand and modest, that are more than the requisite 50 (or even 100) years old. Like the Otto family home at Madison, many of these homes were built or occupied by individuals whose names also continue to ring out in many ways as important Ann Arbor citizens. Eberbach, Goetz, Wahr (founder of an important bookstore in Ann Arbor on State St.), Slauson (for whom a school building on the West Side was named), Schmid (founder of a downtown department store), and Beakes (a family that includes two former Mayors of Ann Arbor) are among the many prominent names whose histories are tied to this neighborhood.

Considering this rich history; the largely extant historic character of the architecture in the neighborhood; the large number of homes in the area from a consistent period of significance spanning from the founding of Ann Arbor to the early 20th century; and especially the interest of residents living inside the boundaries of the suggested district, we feel it is appropriate that the Mayor and Council appoint a committee for studying and recommending the creation of an historic district in the area approximating the boundaries described above, which has been known in the past, and by some in the present as 'Germantown'.

The Boundaries are suggested at this point, and are not meant to include those properties already located within districts along Division and William Streets. The final and proper boundaries of such a district would be among the matters for study by the committee itself.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert White". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Robert White, Chair
On behalf of
Members of the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission