RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building represented by 2020 Omaha is the applicant of the Pittman Veterinarian Building at 4629 Dodge Street; and,

WHEREAS, the applicant requested on December 14, 2005 that the Pittman Veterinarian Building be designated a Landmark under the City of Omaha’s Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building is an excellent example of the Art Moderne Style of Architecture; and,

WHEREAS, examples of the Art Moderne Style of Architecture exists in Douglas County, but their integrity is compromised or not as well designed; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building is an excellent local example of the streamlined Art Moderne Style prevalent between 1930 through the 1950’s, as applied to a commercial property; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building has many elements of the style: strong horizontal lines and massing, horizontal metal awnings, curved end walls, steel sash windows, glass block windows (in this case curved; very special) and neon business identification sign; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building was designed by John Latenser and Sons, a multi-generational Omaha architecture firm; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittman Veterinarian Building retains excellent physical originality and integrity on the interior as well as the exterior; and,

WHEREAS, the building is also significant for its association with Dr. Arthur D. Pittman, an African-American veterinarian and civic leader; and,

By.................................................................
Councilmember

Adopted.........................................................

.................................................................
City Clerk

Approved.....................................................
Mayor
Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission
Application for Landmark
or Landmark Heritage District

1. Name of Structure: Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building

2. Location / Address: 4629 Dodge Street, Omaha NE

3. Applicant:

   name: 2020 Omaha
   address: 3613 Macy St.
            Omaha, NE 68105
   phone: N/A

4. Classification:

   Category                  Ownership         Status
   0 district                0 public         X occupied
   X building(s)             X private         0 unoccupied
   0 structure               0 both           0 work in progress
   0 site                    0 public acquisition
   0 object

Present Use
   0 agriculture             0 museum
   X commercial              0 park
   0 educational             0 private residence
   0 entertainment           0 religious
   0 government              0 scientific
   0 industrial              0 transportation
   0 military                0 other (explain)
   0 vacant

5. Owner of Property:

   name: Norwest Bank N.A., Trustee
   address: Arthur B. Pittman Trust
            P.O. Box 3959
            Omaha NE 68102
   phone: Antoinette Pittman cell: 312-545-8866

6. Legal Description:

   Briggs Place, Lot 8, Block 7, lots 7 & 100 X 128.5, Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.
7. **Historic Description and Significance:** Please provide as thorough a description as possible. This should include, but is not limited to, architectural styles and features, site elements, landscaping/urban design elements, architects, builders, and owners. Copies of architectural drawings, photos, and similar documents are encouraged. Include a statement explaining why the time/property/district is historically significant. The Landmarks Commission staff will assist you in filling out this portion if necessary. Use additional sheets if necessary.

*North and west facades November 19, 2005*

**Architect:** John Latenser & Sons  
**Built:** 1948  
**Style:** streamlined Art Moderne

**SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

The Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building, located at 46th and Dodge streets in midtown Omaha, was constructed in 1948. A one-story brick streamlined Art Moderne style building, it was designed by John Latenser & Sons, a multi-generational Omaha architecture firm. The building is an excellent local example of the streamlined Art Moderne style applied to a commercial property (National Register Criterion C: architecture). The building is also significant for its association with Dr. Arthur B. Pittman, an African-American veterinarian and civic leader (National Register Criterion B: association with significant persons).

Application cont’d +

**Signature of owner** | **date**
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Please return the completed application to: Preservation Administrator, Omaha Planning Department  
1819 Farnam St., Omaha, NE 68183
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building is located in midtown Omaha on Dodge Street, a major four lane east-west thoroughfare which is also U.S. Route 6. Constructed in 1948, the one story brick streamlined Art Moderne style building is located on the south side of Dodge Street. Adjacent commercial buildings reflect the street’s evolution from the original route of the Lincoln Highway (1913-1928), through a residential Omaha neighborhood to its current use as a major thoroughfare.

East of the Pittman building on the north and south sides of Dodge Street are two brick c. 1920 automobile garages with parapeted main facades. West of the building are commercial properties with c. 1950s -60s facades, including canted glass. Many of these buildings originated as residences; rooflines are still visible.

Near the 50th and Dodge Street intersection are several commercial buildings associated with the historic Dundee area, an early 20th century streetcar suburb later annexed to the city. Notable buildings include the Dundee Theater, constructed in 1920 which represents the city’s only independent movie house. At the northwest corner of 50th and Dodge is Kohl’s Chris’ Rexall Drug, a three story Modern style building constructed in 1956.

The Pittman building has had no significant architectural or structural changes from its original date of construction in 1948. The building is U shaped with the inverted section facing the east façade. A c. 15 foot brick chimney rises above the building near the inverted section. The main façade features a centrally located entrance flanked by pairs of two over six windows with concrete sills.

Main façade November 19, 2005

The main façade is distinguished by large curved, glass block windows on the east and west corners of the building. Beneath these windows are curved brick integral planters. The curved walls with large areas of glass block are typical of the streamlined Art Moderne style. The main façade also features a neon sign with the words “Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian.” The sign is centrally located above a projecting metal band that extends horizontally above the main entrance toward the glass block windows. This element is also characteristic of the streamlined style.
The interior features original furnishings such as terrazzo tile floors, and tan glazed tile walls. The main waiting room/reception area is located through the main door on the north side of the building. On the east side of the reception area is an office with curved glass block window. An original curved coral colored couch is located beneath the window. To the west of the waiting room/reception area is a rectangular shaped examination room. The western most room which also features a curved glass block window is the original operating room. Immediately south of the operating room is a small rectangular shaped laboratory room. A double loaded hallway is located south of the reception area and features kennel areas, and storage rooms. A square shaped fenced dog run is located south of the kennel area, at the edge of the lot.

SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

The Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building is significant at the local level as an excellent example of the streamlined Art Moderne architectural style applied to a commercial building. The streamlined style is part of the Art Deco style, which was popular from the mid 1920s through the 1930s. Art Moderne, and streamlined Art Moderne buildings, popular through the 1950s, were less decorative than the more exuberant Art Deco style. Streamlined Art Moderne is a horizontally oriented style characterized by flat roofs, glass block, banded windows, smooth wall surfaces, tubular steel railings and other elements, evocative of mechanization and industrial design. Its architectural expression paralleled its contemporary designs in airplanes, automobiles, and household appliances.¹

The streamlined style also became associated with roadside architecture and prefabricated buildings such as gas stations and diners. The style also gained prevalence in its application to existing commercial buildings between the 1930s and the 1950s to "modernize" facades through the use of cararra glass, enamel panels, and neon signage.²

Local examples of the Art Deco and streamlined Art Moderne styles include several of Omaha’s most significant buildings. Union Station, now the Durham Western Heritage Museum, is an excellent example of the Art Deco style, designed by California architect Gilbert Stanley Underwood and completed in 1931. The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a city landmark.

The Paxton Hotel, located at 1403 Farnam Street and designed by Chicago architect Joseph McArthur, features decorative exterior: terra cotta details that include geometric shapes and stylized bison (National Register nomination, pending, 2005). A block southwest of the Paxton is the Redick Tower (1930), a hotel also designed by McArthur. The Redick was constructed approximately two years after the Paxton, and exhibits more exuberant exterior Art Deco details (National Register, Omaha city landmark). Two blocks north of the Redick, the former federal office building, constructed in 1932, is modernistic in design, with Art Deco references.

A streamlined Art Moderne commercial building, comparable in scale to the Pittman building is located at 661 N. 50th street in Dundee. The two story brick office building features a flat roof, projecting horizontal bands and glass block wall surface. In 2004, it was determined to be potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.³

The Pittman building represents a relatively rare local example of a small scale streamlined Art Moderne commercial building; it retains a high degree of interior and exterior integrity and was included in the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey in 2003.⁴ The building was designed by the Omaha architecture firm John Latenser and Sons, a multi-generational business started in 1887 by John Latenser, a German immigrant. Between 1887 and the 1930’s Latenser and subsequent generations designed some of the city’s most significant buildings such as the Douglas County Courthouse and the Parlin Orendorff and Martin Plow Company building

² Weber, p. 36.
(now the Ford warehouse apartments). The firm was also responsible for the design of numerous schools, most notably Omaha’s Central High.

A precursor to the streamlined style of the Pittman building is the former Union State Bank building located at 1904 Farnam Street. Designed by Latenser & Sons in a restrained Art Deco style, it was constructed in 1927 and represents one of the city's earliest examples of the Art Deco style.

SIGNIFICANCE: Dr. Arthur B. Pittman

From Ebony magazine, August, 1949

The Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building is also significant for its association with Dr. Arthur B Pittman, an African-American veterinarian and civic leader. A native of Kansas City, Missouri, Pittman received his Veterinary of Medicine degree in 1941 from Iowa State University. Pittman funded his education by working as a dining car porter for the Union Pacific Railroad primarily on the Kansas City to Los Angeles run; he completed his degree in eight years. Soon after his new building was completed on Dodge Street, Dr. Pittman and his practice were a feature story in Ebony magazine. The article noted that at the time Pittman received his education, most veterinary schools “did not maintain the color line” with the exception of the four schools located in the southern states.

Following his graduation with a degree of Veterinary of Medicine in 1941, Dr. Pittman was rejected for military service and went to work in large animal practice which was considered an essential occupation for the war effort. Initially he worked in Texas, then moved to Omaha where his clientele included area farmers and the Aksarben race track. During a 1986 interview with University of Omaha history Professor Dr. Dennis Mihelich,

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6 Ibid., p. 4
7 Ebony, August, 1949, p. 40.
Dr. Pittman was asked if he experienced prejudice working for a predominantly white clientele and he replied, “not at all . . . they all called me doctor.”

Dr. Pittman’s Omaha practice initially began in a rented former gas station in Benson at 6002 Military Avenue. As discussed during the Mihelich interview, a white veterinarian was located approximately six blocks away; as a competing veterinarian, perhaps resented for his success, Dr. Pittman lost his lease. He then moved to 49th and Dodge Streets in a three bay, brick one story commercial building, constructed in 1946. Although the building is still standing and in commercial use, it lacks historic integrity due to a large overhanging mansard roof which overpowers the main façade.

The new Dr. A. B Pittman veterinarian building, designed by John Latenser and Sons, opened for business at the beginning of 1949. The building was described in Ebony magazine as “modern”, and “streamlined,” constructed at a cost of $50,000 with an additional $10,000 for equipment. The year the building was constructed Pittman’s wife, the former Elizabeth Davis, received her law degree from Omaha’s Creighton University, one of the first women to do so and the first African American woman. Admitted to the Nebraska State Bar Association in 1949, she credited her success to her parents, husband, and professors noting that “it was their encouragement that kept me working toward my goal.”

Ebony magazine, August, 1949

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8 Mihelich interview, 1987, p. 5.
10 Ebony magazine, August 1949, p. 40.
While maintaining a successful veterinary practice, Dr. Pittman was also influential in his profession and as a civic leader in the areas of community service and civil rights. He served for example, on the state Veterinary Board, the Nebraska Board of Health, was a University of Omaha Regent, and president of the Omaha Urban League. He was the first African American to serve on the city planning board. Pittman worked to provide decent, affordable housing for all Omaha citizens. In the late 1960’s he was a key developer of some of the city’s first integrated housing. These developments were located at 108th and Nicholas, 28th and Hamilton, and near 108th and Dodge Streets.

In 1972, in recognition of his community service and “efforts to promote the causes of brotherhood in every aspect of Omaha living,” Dr. Pittman received the Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. At the banquet presentation, the dinner chairman said the award to Pittman was “long overdue” and cited his pioneering work in “advancing racial harmony in Omaha.”

Dr. Pittman was also the first person to be awarded an honorary life membership in the Omaha Chamber of Commerce in recognition of his 25 years of continuous service. At the time of his death in 1990, the World Herald cited his importance to the community as a civic leader and role model. It was noted that national leaders of the civil rights movement had an impact, ”...but so did the A. B. Pittmans...local leaders who worked tirelessly in their communities to help the helpless, to change minds and to fight the battles that needed to be fought.”

The streamlined Art Moderne Dr. A. B. Pittman Veterinarian building exhibits a high degree of interior and exterior integrity and is a rare local example of the style used in a commercial property. The building is also significant as the best remaining property associated with the life of the African American civic leader who operated his veterinary practice there from 1949 until his death in 1990.

Author: Carol A. Ahlgren
(402) 661-1912

13 “West Omaha Housing Project to be Integrated,” OWH, August 21, 1966
17 “Dr. Pittman Backed Words with Action for Civil Rights,” OWH, March 12, 1990.
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**North and west facades November 19, 2005**

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Application cont'd on

**Signature of owner**

**Preservation Administrator, Omaha Planning Department**  
**1819 Farnam St., Omaha, NE 68183**  

**TOTAL P. 22**
ORDINANCE NO 39328

AN ORDINANCE to designate the Dr A B Pittman Veterinarian Building at 4629 Dodge Street as a landmark pursuant to the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OMAHA

Section 1 That the Dr A B Pittman Veterinarian Building at 4629 Dodge Street, which is on the following described land, to wit

Briggs Place, Lot 8, Block 7

is hereby deemed historically significant and worthy of recognition for the reasons cited in Landmark Heritage Preservation Resolution attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and made a part hereof by reference

Section 2 That the "Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation Buildings", as may be from time to time amended, are hereby adopted as the design standards to be applied in the enforcement of this ordinance and Chapter 24, Article II, of the Omaha Municipal Code

Section 3 That the Dr A B Pittman Veterinarian Building is hereby designated as a landmark pursuant to Section 24-61 of the Omaha Municipal Code and hereby subject to all of the provisions of this Ordinance and Chapter 24, Article II, of the Omaha Municipal Code
Section 4 That this Ordinance shall be in full force and take effect fifteen (15) days from and after the date of its passage.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER

[Signature]

APPROVED BY

[Signature] 4/16/06
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF OMAHA DATE

PASSED APR 4 2006 7-0

ATTEST

[Signature] 4/16/06
CITY CLERK OF THE CITY OF OMAHA DATE

APPROVED AS TO FORM

[Signature] 2/17/06
CITY ATTORNEY DATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the original document now on file in the City Clerk's Office.

[Signature]

Buster Brown, City Clerk, City of Omaha
ORDINANCE NO. 32328

AN ORDINANCE to designate the Dr. A.B. Pittman Veterinarian Building at 4629 Dodge Street as a landmark pursuant to the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha.

PRESENTED TO COUNCIL

1st Reading MAR 1 4 2006 - Hearing
MAR 1 4 2006 pursuant to City Council Rule 70.1

Hearing MAR 2 1 2006 - Over to
MAR 2 1 2006 pursuant to City Council

Final Reading APR 4 2006
Passed 7-0

PUBLICATIONS

Publication of Hearing Date 3-17-06

Publication of Ordinance Date 4-12-06

BUSTER BROWN
City Clerk