

## Bailey, Heather

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**From:** Steve Rankin <rankin.sc@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 10, 2025 12:14 PM  
**To:** Madison Landmarks Commission  
**Subject:** Proposed demolition ordinance #86649

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Dear Landmarks Commission:

I agree with the stated position of Ald Marsha Rummel about the dangers in the proposed changes to standards for demolition of existing housing. As noted in the Comprehensive Plan, "protecting the qualities that made existing neighborhoods appealing to begin with" is crucial - unless the whole point of this exercise is to slow growth by making Madison a less-appealing place to live.

The change from to "ensure the preservation of historic buildings" to "careful consideration of requests to demolish principal buildings with historic value" is a loophole big enough to drive a wrecking ball through.

High falutin talk about "affordable housing" means nothing when we demolish affordable housing to replace it with luxury apartments. I could not afford to move out of my house and into the apartments being built in my neighborhood.

Language already eliminated should be restored: "It is hereby declared a matter of public policy that the good maintenance and rehabilitation of existing buildings, the preservation of safe and sanitary housing available at reasonable prices, and the careful consideration and planning of changes in the urban landscape are a public necessity and are required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety, and welfare of the people." Demolition by neglect should not be an option.

While infill housing is desirable under the right circumstances, those circumstances do not include destroying a neighborhood in order to save it. I suspect no individual house in my neighborhood would be deemed to have historic value. To destroy my historic neighborhood because no individual property in it is deemed to have historic value would be a travesty.

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The Landmark commission needs to seriously reconsider the suggested Planning department and attorney changes in Draft 1 of its proposed revisions because they will fundamentally undermine the goal of historic preservation.

In the proposed change (section 28.185), the City of Madison will now “balance Public interest in preserving buildings with historic value with its interest in accommodating the growth of population”. The fact of the matter is that preservation of historic buildings is oriented toward a longer-term objective of protecting the City’s architectural history and the defining characteristics (and ambiance) of local neighborhoods from shorter term interests related to economic expediency, shifting tastes, and development pressures.

The City of Madison has, in fact, documented, the catastrophic loss of its architectural history in documented entitled “Lost Madison: Glimpses into our Disappearing Past” [<https://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Lost%20Madison%20brochure.pdf>]. This document details a tragic legacy of irreplaceable buildings being demolished to make room for parking lots, fast food establishments, and some cases, developments that never materialized. What was not recognized at the time of those decision was that, decades later, such buildings would have significant economic value that far exceeds that of their replacements. For example, large retailers now covet such spaces for their commercial sites. Historical buildings and particularly homes now add value and character to the older neighborhoods, enhancing the desire to be in Madison, WI.

I am sure that in all cases, the decision makers who approved the demolition of historic buildings to make way for parking lots, box stores, and fast establishment believe they were acting in the City’s growth interest. In hindsight, they did the exact opposite.

With this in mind, the discussion regarding preservation of historic buildings at the February 5, 2025 Vilas Neighborhood Association’s sponsored Zoning Forum. There were many detailed explanations and interpretations about historic building demolitions by Heather Baily, Historic Preservation Planner, and Meghan Tuttle, Director, Department of Planning. In the end, Meghan Tuttle, was prompted to comment, they [Planning Dept.] would be willing to go back to the attorney’s office to alter some of wording to include the suggestions made at the forum. The Landmark Commission needs to recommend an additional review of the written document is warranted.

The proposed changes to this Demolition Ordinance 28.185 make it far more likely that short-term economic interests will once again take priority over the long-term interests. The goal of this Landmarks Commission should be to find means to accommodate growth without sacrificing the City’s historical heritage and longer term value. As the saying goes, those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat. Again, the City of Madison has provided the history. Hopefully, the Landmark commission will learn from it.

Regards,  
Eileen H. Thompson,  
311 Campbell Street

**Bailey, Heather**

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**From:** Hooper Lofton <licketyletters@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, February 10, 2025 3:57 PM  
**To:** Madison Landmarks Commission  
**Subject:** Repealing and recreating Section 28.185 and creating Section 41.28 of the Madison General Ordinances related to demolition of buildings to update the approval processes.



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There's a house (the missing middle) that's going to be torn down on the 100 block of Van Deusen to make room for a playground for a conditional use property. The roundabout way that it got to this point makes you wonder if it matters if there's a Plan Commission at all. The school bought the house to increase its capacity, but then later discovered that it could split a classroom in half to achieve the same result, which meant the loss of a dwelling and the addition of commuters. A more recent example of this issue seems to be the grocery stores on Park St. - unless one is replacing the other you might end up with two, apparently. Bad planning!

Recently the city of Madison approved changes to allow the conditional use property on Van Deusen St. to expand, fully knowing that they make absolutely no attempt to be good neighbors, and do fully violate city ordinances daily. Including, but not limited to: noise, trespassing, conspiracy, aggravated harassment, influence peddling, illegal dumping, illegal parking, blocking city services, blocking city fines (parking enforcement), blocking neighbors' driveways, nepotism, tribalism...etc

The Missing Middle, which seems to be Missing, is the enforcement of the zoning principles that already exist to maintain healthy neighborhoods - change happens, zoning fundamentals do not.

I included a picture of salt on the sidewalk in front of the conditional use property - is that not supposed to be cleaned up? It's a rhetorical question because it doesn't matter - they will never be held to account by the city ever.

I'm not sure that it even matters if you streamline the process to more fully develop a property without the additional oversight of the Plan Commission because the Lakes, the Achilles heal, of the region can't hold up to more development anyway. More people needing more water from an impaired hydrologic system just isn't going to work.

If you'd like to remove both salt and carbon from the lakes you should stop killing the beavers, just a suggestion. Otherwise, unless the city is going to truly enforce the zoning codes for all its citizens, what does it matter, it's just a rhetorical debate. Do it this way, do it that way - it doesn't matter.

My family was broken up over On Street Parking in Madison, Wi., and subjected to years of aggravated harassment over the same issue by the City's own agencies. Now those same agencies just approved more of the same by allowing an auto dependent conditional use property to expand rather than having it move to a more appropriately zoned area. Maybe it could move over to Olin Ave. where there are already large empty buildings, with parking lots, rather than tearing down the Missing Middle and subjecting the neighbors to endless Madison misconduct.

You just unnecessarily added stop signs to the intersection of Van Deusen and Colby St., making it a four way stop, at an intersection which you could lie down and take a nap in when the school isn't in session. I know how the city hates to spend money like that, especially for a freeloading nonprofit of rich Madisonians that actively cost the city money. Maybe you should have let (because they are not allowed) parking enforcement do its job before adding the signage to see if that fixed the problem. The signs alone will definitely not solve the traffic issues over there, but traffic enforcement might. Proper zoning would probably help too. The Madison Way will remain to be the ultimate problem here streamlined or not.

Noel Hooper Lofton  
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Sent from my iPhone



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