

NATIONAL
TRUST
FOR
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION*

Midwest
OFFICE

August 24, 2009

Mayor Dave Cieslewicz
City of Madison Common Council
Room 403, City-County Building
210 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Mayor Cieslewicz and Common Council Members,

I am writing to register the National Trust's opposition to the Edgewater Hotel Redevelopment Project as currently proposed. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the country's largest membership-based non-profit preservation organization. We work with local communities to save America's diverse historic places and revitalize communities.

Madison's picturesque Mansion Hill District has been listed as a National Register District and local historic district because it is a residential neighborhood that contains the largest concentration of high-style architect-designed nineteenth century houses in Madison, including outstanding examples of Italianate, Second Empire, German Romanesque Revival designs. It is also the most intact of Madison's nineteenth century neighborhoods. We vigorously agree with our local partner, the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation (MTHP), that the Edgewater Hotel Redevelopment Project is an imminent threat to the historic character of the Mansion Hill District. This project as presented would undermine the aesthetics, integrity and economic viability of the Mansion Hill Historic District. A significant concern expressed by the MTHP is the sheer size of this massive proposed hotel which would be twice the height of all other buildings in the neighborhood. As proposed, by flattening the hill and topping it with vehicles, the development would block the view of the lake which is a defining feature of the district.

While we are not generally opposed to new construction in historic districts, providing it does not involve the demolition of significant historic resources, infill development needs to be compatible with what currently exists in the district in size, massing, setbacks, materials, etc. The details are generally outlined in the historic district's design guidelines. This protects the historic character of the district and encourages rehabilitation and revitalization of the neighborhood.

Of even greater concern to us is the dangerous precedent that would be set with the approval of the Edgewater Hotel Redevelopment Project in its current form. It would gut the ordinance establishing the Mansion Hill Historic District and it would gut the applicable zoning which contains specific height requirements for buildings in the district. Owners purchase property in historic districts and invest in maintaining and

rehabilitating those properties because of the area's historic character and the assurance that that character is protected by ordinances which define what property owners can do to the exteriors of their buildings. This is much the same as the covenants in subdivision developments that provide a well-defined set of rules guiding appearances in the subdivision. If the proposed development is passed, what assurances do current and future investors in historic districts across Madison have that the character of their neighborhoods will remain intact if their elected government is willing to overturn long-established historic district ordinances whenever a new development project comes to town. Approval of this development will severely undermine the efforts of current owners who are committed to restoration of the deteriorating homes in the district and discourage further rehabilitation efforts.

I have attached the full statement of the MTHP and encourage you and the Common Council to do everything you can to protect the Mansion Hill Historic District from this character destroying incursion. If the National Trust for Historic Preservation can assist the City of Madison in any way in finding an alternative resolution to this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce A. Yeater". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Royce A. Yeater, AIA
Midwest Director

Cc: Historic Landmarks Commissioners
Plan Commissioners
Urban Design Commissioners
Ledell Zellers, Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc.
Michael Bridgeman, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation
Jason Tish, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation
Amy Wyatt, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation
Susanne Voeltz, Mansion Hill Steering Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MADISON TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

MADISON TRUST: EDGEWATER HOTEL PROJECT
MAJOR THREAT TO MANSION HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

MADISON, Aug. 13, 2009 – The Madison Trust for Historic Preservation does not support the proposed expansion of the Edgewater Hotel according to a statement issued today.

“The Madison Trust’s mission is to help preserve the architectural and historical heritage of the greater Madison area through advocacy and education,” said Jason Tish, spokesperson for the organization. “The Edgewater Hotel project, as currently proposed, threatens the Mansion Hill Historic District.”

The Madison Trust cited the following objections to the proposal:

-- The new Edgewater Hotel tower would rise approximately 130 feet from the sidewalk and approximately 200 feet from Lake Mendota. This violates two Madison relevant zoning codes that have been in place for decades. First, it shatters the height limit of Zoning Code R6H whose purpose “is to limit the height of structures... to preserve the historic and architectural character of a neighborhood. No building or structure shall exceed 50 feet in height”. Second, the Office Residence (OR) zoning code is also ignored. It mandates that, “development in this district is expected to enhance the aesthetic quality of the major approach streets and the central part of the city”.

The new hotel tower complex, a massive structure looming at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Langdon Street, would be twice the height of all other buildings in the neighborhood. The tallest buildings on Mansion Hill -- National Guardian Life, Kennedy Manor, and Quisling Towers – were built before the historic district height limit was established in 1976 and are only 5 to 6 stories at street level. The proposed structure will not be set back from the sidewalk nor hidden by mature trees like the current National Guardian Life Building. Prominent from the Capitol building, it will likely impinge on corridor views along Wisconsin Avenue.

-- The developer is asking the city to release public land to for their private interests and control. This sets a dangerous precedent for all of Madison’s historic districts. Developers want the city to sell or lease them the public land fronting the Edgewater garage, which has been public land since the founding of the city in 1836. Even though the street end was vacated for the 1965 Edgewater addition, that questionable action should not be used as a precedent for further destruction of historic districts.

-- Any plan to remake the Edgewater hotel must include a thorough, historically-sensitive restoration of the original Edgewater Hotel tower, which was built in 1948 and is designated an official Madison historic landmark. The current plan does not appear to include sufficient restoration of the now deteriorating original Edgewater, and further includes inappropriate additions to it. Nonetheless, the restoration of the original Edgewater building does not mitigate the damage that will be done to the historic district by the proposed 11-story structure.

-- Few public lake views, visible from the spoke-like streets leading from the Capitol Square, remain. Accordingly, these views should be maintained for all to enjoy. These public views, designed by James Doty when the city was platted in 1836, should be protected—not further obstructed by private development.

The developers plan to raise Wisconsin Avenue up to or above the level of the current central lobby/parking garage of the Edgewater. No accurate renderings have been presented by the developer to allow an educated assessment of the impact on public views.

-- When new structures are built in the Mansion Hill District, the quality of the exterior design needs to reflect and enhance the rich historic character of Madison's oldest historic district-- which has a fine collection of 19th and 20th century buildings. Current renderings of the Edgewater proposal provide inadequate details on the architectural merit of the project.

-- The addition of 120-plus hotel rooms, increased banquet facilities, condominiums, shops, bars and restaurants, a health spa, and a rooftop terrace designed for private special events will increase traffic, truck deliveries, and idling of vehicles beyond the capacity of the residential area at Wisconsin Avenue and Langdon Street. The noise and increased traffic will negatively affect the quality of life in the neighborhood and discourage potential owner occupants.

-- Prospective buyers who would restore the beautiful, old homes in the Mansion Hill Historic District must be assured that the historic character of the neighborhood is highly valued by the city and well-protected from out-of-scale encroachments. Insuring the "quality of life" for residents of historic districts will revitalize and prevent further deterioration of the historic district.

"Developers of buildings within historic districts should work closely with preservation groups, with open discussions during the early idea phase and throughout the building process." said Tish. "When cities, developers and preservation groups work hand-in hand, we have the opportunity to set the gold standard for nationally recognized city development."

The Madison Trust for Historic Preservation is a non-profit organization that helps preserve the architectural and historical heritage of the greater Madison area through advocacy and education. Preservation field services provided by the Madison Trust are assisted by a Partners in the Field challenge grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Madison Trust Web site is at www.madisontrust.org

- End -

Madison Trust contacts:

Jason Tish, 608-843-6060

John Martens, 608-221-2828

This is sent from an unmonitored mailbox so please do not reply to this message. To contact the Madison Trust, use thetrust@madisontrust.org

Cnare, Rebecca

From: Adam J. Plotkin [plotkinaj@██████████]
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2009 11:39 AM
To: dan.stephans@██████████
Cc: Cnare, Rebecca; Fruhling, William
Subject: Clarification on CNI Position re: Edgewater

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Dan,

I wanted to follow up on Rosemary Lee's testimony last night, which I believe gave an inaccurate description of the official position of Capitol Neighborhoods on the Edgewater Proposal. Though I am currently President of CNI, I did not claim to testify as anything other than a resident of the neighborhood last night. Ledell Zellers also emphasized that she was testifying personally, not as a CNI representative. The 22 member board of CNI has not yet voted support or opposition to the Edgewater project, only support for the Mansion Hill Steering Committee's work on the issue. Rosemary's claim that "only 20 members of the 350 member organization" oppose the project is incorrect in both the numbers of opposition as well as the total number of CNI members.

Finally, the reason CNI has not yet taken a position is that it has been an exceedingly difficult process to arrange a neighborhood meeting with Hammes Company. We felt it was necessary to have such a meeting prior to taking a position. While there is a meeting scheduled for tonight, it may not be sufficient to get a good read of where the neighborhood is on this issue. It has been well publicized as a community meeting so there may be a need for another meeting that is more neighborhood focused prior to the Executive Council of CNI taking a position.

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Thank you,
Adam Plotkin
President, Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc.

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Adam J. Plotkin
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