

LANDMARKS COMMISSION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

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Landmarks Commission Administration

Membership

Alder Duncan joined the Landmarks Commission in April 2025.

Meetings

The Landmarks Commission met 17 times in 2025, with 16 regular meetings held virtually and one special meeting held in person.

Policy Manual

Updates to the policy manual were approved on May 19, 2025.

Data

City of Madison Parcels = 82,254

historic parcels (properties in historic districts and landmarks outside of districts) = 2,454

184 designated landmarks (53 are located in historic districts and 131 are located outside)

5 local historic districts = 1,888 parcels in local historic districts

Landmarks Commission Activity

Certificates of Appropriateness: 30 commission, 208 administrative

The Landmarks Commission reviewed 31 projects (alterations, new construction, land combinations/divisions, demolition, and alternative design variances) for Certificates of Appropriateness and approved 30 of those projects, with an approval rate of 97%.

Through the policy document, the Landmarks Commission has provided the Preservation Planner and Community and Cultural Resources Planner with the ability to provide administrative approvals for certain types of work. The Preservation Planner and Community and Cultural Resources Planner administratively approved 208 Certificates of Appropriateness.

Approvals were often amended from the original submittal based on recommendations from the Preservation Planner and/or the Landmarks Commission.

Certificates of Appropriateness				
	Historic District/ Landmark	Landmarks Commission		Staff
		# Requests	# Requests Approved	# Requests Approved
New Construction	MH	1 (LM)	1	
	TLR	1 principal + 1 accessory	2	
	UH	2 accessory	2	
	MB	0	0	
	FS	0	0	
	Landmark	1 accessory	1	
Alteration	MH	0	0	18 (12 + 6 LM)
	TLR	9 (8 + 1 LM)	9	88 (83 + 5 LM)
	UH	3	3	54
	MB	0	0	8
	FS	0	0	6
	Landmark	6	5	34 (+ 11 in HDs)
Demolition	MH	0	0	
	TLR	1 principal addition + 2 accessory (1=LM)	3	
	UH	0	0	
	MB	0	0	
	FS	0	0	
	Landmark	0	0	
Land Division/ Combination	MH	1 (LM)	1	
	TLR	0	0	
	UH	2	2	
	MB	0	0	
	FS	0	0	
	Landmark	0	0	
Alternative Design Variance	MH	0	0	
	TLR	1	1	
	UH	0	0	
	MB	0	0	
	FS	0	0	
	Landmark	0	0	
Total		31	30	208
Approval Rate			97%	100%

Historic Districts:

MH=Mansion Hill

TLR=Third Lake Ridge

UH=University Heights

MB=Marquette Bungalows

FS=First Settlement

Landmark=Designated Madison Landmark

Historic Value Reviews: 60

The Landmarks Commission reviewed 60 building demolition requests for historic value (MGO 28.185(7)4.) and provided the findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission for those determined to have historic value. The commission's process changed when the City updated the demolition ordinance and created a new section in the historic preservation ordinance (MGO 41.28). Previously, all proposed demolitions of principal structures received an advisory recommendation on the historic value from the Landmarks Commission before proceeding to Plan Commission for final approval. Under the new process, the properties where Landmarks Commission find no known historic value, staff now routes them for administrative review and approval. All properties where the Landmarks Commission finds some level of historic value continue to go to Plan Commission for their review and approval.

Adjacent to Landmarks: 3

The Landmarks Commission reviewed three developments that were adjacent to a landmark where Plan Commission and/or Urban Design Commission review were needed (MGO 28.144).

- 1 S Ingersoll Street
- 501 E Washington Avenue
- 425 N Frances Street and 450 W Gilman Street

Other reviews/recommendations: 10

- Two informational presentations for development projects
- Provided an advisory recommendation regarding amendments to the *Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee*
- Recommended approval of a text amendment to the historic preservation ordinance language to update the demolition approval process
- Recommended approval of a text amendment to the historic preservation ordinance to update definitions and amend standards of approval
- Two Section 106 consulting party reviews related to Bus Rapid Transit routes and a charging station
- Approved the language for four new Historic Markers
- Approved the landmark plaque for 633 E Johnson Street
- Approved an update to the Illustrated Design Guidelines to align with the updated ordinance

Designations/Rescissions: 1

The Landmarks Commission referred the landmark nomination for 633 E Johnson Street, the Benjamin and Amy Butts House, to the Common Council for designation. The Common Council approved the nomination on March 25, 2025, and it became the City's 184th designated local landmark.

National Register Nomination Reviews: 2

The Landmarks Commission reviews and provides comments on National Register nominations for properties and historic districts being listed on the National Register as part of Certified Local Government responsibilities. In 2025, the Commission reviewed nominations for the Gay Building at 14-16 N Carroll Street and the Mackenzie House at 2525 Marshall Parkway.

Landmarks Commission Initiatives

Historic Preservation Plan

Staff continues to work on implementing the priority strategies from the preservation plan. The Landmarks Commission approved language for the first set of historical markers and those will be installed in 2026. At its in-person policy meeting, the commission discussed the 5-year check in on the Historic Preservation Plan and directed staff to pursue a CLG grant for a context study of 1960s-1980s civic and commercial architecture. These are resources underrepresented in our surveys of historic resources.

Landmarks Commission Special Meeting

The commission held its annual in-person special meeting to discuss policy, work on implementing the Historic Preservation Plan, and complete some training on parliamentary procedure and Secretary of the Interior's Standards. This meeting fosters discussion between commissioners and staff about policy priorities, separate from the regulatory work of the commission as it administers the preservation ordinance during the regular meetings throughout the year.

Historic Marker Program

The Landmarks Commission approved text for the first batch of signs for the City's new historic markers program. These markers will draw from the Underrepresented Communities Historic Resources Survey to tell a more complete story of Madison's heritage. Staff will bring additional marker recommendations to the commission as funding is available.

Historic Preservation Program

Biennial Postcards

Staff mail a postcard to historic district property owners and to owners of landmark properties every other year, which directs them to the wealth of information on our website regarding the responsibilities of property owners. Approximately 2,040 postcards were mailed in April 2025 (the number of postcards and number of properties with historic designation are different due to duplicate property owners where only one postcard was sent out).

Work of the Preservation Planner

- Participated in the construction review of city-owned landmark and historic buildings
- Assisted city agencies with Federal and State historic compliance review applications, including CDBG environmental reviews
- Completed Section 106 of National Historic Preservation Act compliance review comments on behalf of the Madison Landmarks Commission
- Participated in the Façade Improvement Grant Program staff team
- Judge for both the Madison regional and state-level National History Day competitions
- Completed historic resource inventory for Southwest and Southeast Area Plans
- Served on Board of the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Assistant Treasurer
- Publications:
 - Heather L. Bailey, "Infill Under Pressure: New Development in Madison's Old Places," National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, *The Alliance Review* (2025:3): 21-27.
 - Heather L. Bailey & Edna Ely-Ledesma, "Volunteer Spotlight: Dr. Edna Ely-Ledesma," National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, *The Alliance Review* (2025:3): 41-42.
- Presentations:
 - "Preserving Wright's Legacy in Madison, WI," panel for Frank Lloyd Wright class at UW-Madison, February 2025.

- “Through the Pane Part 2: Managing Window Replacement: Lessons from Local Preservation Programs,” National Alliance of Preservation Commissions webinar, April 2025.
- “Roundtable Discussion: HPC Case Studies in Problem Solving,” Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions, Racine, WI, April 2025.
- “Learning Capitol Ideas in Madison,” bus tour, PastForward Conference, Milwaukee, WI, September, 2025.
- “Historic Context Studies: Putting the People in Preservation,” National Alliance of Preservation Commissions webinar, September 2025.
- “Case Studies in Local Design Review,” Wisconsin Local History & Preservation Conference, Baraboo, WI, October 2025.
- “Prescriptive Standards: An Alternative to Using Design Guidelines as Standards,” Wisconsin Local History & Preservation Conference, Baraboo, WI, October 2025.