

August 17, 2009

Memorandum

To: City of Madison, Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development  
From: Professor Emeritus Arnold R. Alanen, Ph.D., Honorary ASLA  
Department of Landscape Architecture, UW-Madison  
Subject: Demolition and conditional use and addition to UW School of  
Human Ecology (SoHE), UW-Madison

I am coming before you this evening as someone who, from 1974 to 2009, taught landscape history and historic preservation courses to several thousand UW-Madison students. I also was one of the primary participants in a campus cultural landscape study of the UW-Madison, funded by the Getty Foundation from 2003-06. During my career I played a key role in introducing the cultural landscape concept to the National Park Service, and I have been involved in several similar projects throughout the United States and the world. These efforts played an important role in my selection, this year, as an Honorary Member of the American Society of Landscape Architects, one of the organization's highest honors. I am also representing the Department of Landscape Architecture this evening.

It is important to note that we do not oppose SoHE's desires to enhance its programs by expanding its facilities. The Department of Landscape Architecture, however, is greatly concerned over the proposed destruction of one of the UW-Madison's most important historic cultural landscapes. Although the Department's faculty were not informed about the project until most of the design decisions were made, we have subsequently expressed our concerns several times, both in person and in written form.

The landscape that provides a stunning view of Agricultural Hall from the south and east is the oldest designed exterior space at the western end of campus. The origins of this landscape were established in 1898 when Dean William Henry of the College of Agriculture hired landscape architects to protect the view along Linden Drive.

The landscape that will be severely disturbed by the project is the only remaining expression of the "romantic" landscape that the nationally renowned Chicago landscape architect O.C. Simonds, and his colleagues, proposed during the early twentieth century. Simonds was one of the founders of the "Prairie Style" of landscape architecture, an approach that utilized the unique qualities of the Midwestern landscape as its design palette. Simonds would later design Tenney, Vilas, and Brittingham parks, as well as the Nakoma and College Hills subdivisions in Madison.

After Simonds' proposal was implemented Henry described Linden Drive as an "extended beautiful stretch of sward and shrubbery." Buildings, roads, and walkways have resulted in changes to this landscape, but the only place where the integrity of the original Simonds' design remains is the section that extends southeast of Agricultural Hall toward SoHE.

Later, when the 1907 Larid & Cret plan was prepared for the campus, Linden Drive was identified as a potential "Greater Mall" that would intersect with a "Lesser Mall" (now Henry Mall). The last three campus master plans have continued to emphasize Linden Drive as a potential pedestrian mall.

Today, the two landscapes serve as complementary features that define the Agricultural Campus: the axial symmetry of Henry Mall; and the curvilinear roadway and walkway, as well as the non-formal arrangement of trees and plants, that characterize the Agriculture Hall-SoHE landscape. No other exterior space at the western end of campus reflects such a visible connection between two important periods of landscape design history. The current proposal not only will compromise this space, but the underground parking entrance along Linden Drive will result in a large scar to the campus landscape and the overall setting for Agriculture Hall.