

From: [Andrew Maier](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: 18-30 N Carroll Street demo/build agenda items comment
Date: Monday, August 28, 2023 11:45:18 AM

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Hello,

I've been a Madison resident for about 15 years now, and am someone who loves this city and the capitol square area. I'm writing to comment on the agenda items regarding the demolition of some older buildings around the square in order to put up a new museum.

Madison is a beautiful place, and I admire the facades of the buildings in question. It will be a shame to see them gone. That said, the reason I love Madison is because it is alive, and to be alive a city has to be growing and changing. It has to be able to meet the needs of the people who live here now, and who will be living here in the future.

I don't know if I, personally, will think the square looks better or is improved by demolishing these particular buildings and installing this particular museum. However, I do know that Madison can't be chained to what it used to be if it's going to continue to be a wonderful place to live into our future. I trust the city staff and the plan commission to decide if this new museum is a good use of this space, but I encourage them to remember that we don't honor the past by wearing its clothes. The beautiful buildings in our city were built at a time where people used and changed the space to suit their needs. We honor them by continuing to live in, grow, and change our city to suit ours.

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Andrew Maier
andrew.eric.maier@gmail.com



August 28, 2023

Dear Plan Commissioners:

Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI) enthusiastically supports the building of the Wisconsin History Center at 18-30 N. Carroll Street in Downtown Madison and urges the Plan Commission to approve the Wisconsin Historical Society's development requests (items 2-4 on the 8/28/23 Plan Commission agenda).

As Downtown Madison continues to evolve post-pandemic, projects like the Wisconsin History Center take on an even greater importance to our community, creating a vibrant magnet within an already established cultural district, drawing hundreds of thousands of locals and tourists working to generate a thriving quality of life, and all located at the most used pedestrian intersection in the state of Wisconsin. The new Wisconsin History Center will truly change Downtown Madison for a generation, creating a place we can all be proud of, telling the stories of our entire community, while helping produce another incredible destination drawing people to live, work and visit Downtown Madison.

DMI wholeheartedly supports the creation of the new Center and asks the Plan Commissioners to support the project, helping take the next step in ensuring this new dynamic and transformative Center becomes a reality. Thank you for all your help and I hope you have a great evening.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jason Ilstrup".

Jason Ilstrup
President
Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI)

Plan Commission
Meeting of August 28, 2023
Agenda #2, Legistar #78192

Demolition approval is separate from approval of new construction. The new construction is to play no part in a demolition decision. In 2021 (Legistar 67074), the Council approved ordinance changes that removed "consideration of the proposed future use. This change is because using a demolition ordinance to deny an otherwise permitted use is likely illegal and using the demolition ordinance to review an otherwise conditional use is redundant." (Although it can be difficult to not intertwine the two issues when the staff report, and the Plan Commission's discussion, merge the two issues.)

The WHS apparently did a report on the two historic buildings proposed for demolition. As quoted in the staff report: "Based on these conclusions, the applicant notes that the Society determined that while the 20-22 N Carroll St. buildings have had a presence on the capitol square for a century, the historic nature of the buildings did not rise to a level of significance that would outweigh the Society's plan to develop a new History Center."

- How the WHS balances the cost/benefit calculation is irrelevant to the demolition decision since the new building cannot be considered.
- The WHS balanced based on its own priorities. City priorities may well differ and argue against the demolition of the two historic buildings. The demolition ordinance does not include the applicant's desires as a standard for approval.

That report is also quoted as saying: "Interior spaces have been significantly changed over the years, and little of the original plan, materials, or finishes remain." So what? Historic preservation in Madison has always focused on the exterior of the building.

That report is also quoted as saying: "In the 120 years since their construction, both buildings have seen frequent modifications at street level as business demands and consumer tastes have changed." The report also notes the second and third story facades are largely unaltered. To the extent that the first floor façade may have changed (which is not known from the staff report), the WHS says the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are "best practices", including: "Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved."

The Downtown Plan articulates nine keys for ensuring the vision for the future of Downtown is achieved. Key #7 recognizes that historic structures contribute to the uniqueness of the downtown. Objective 7.1, which includes 12 recommendations, is to "preserve historic buildings and groupings of buildings that contribute to the essential character of downtown and its neighborhoods."

One recommendation under Key #7 is to complete the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan. The Downtown Plan speaks of how the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan identified potential historic landmark properties after public input, and based on research, context and the City's preservation goals. The Downtown Historic Preservation Plan identified 12 S Carroll through 22 N Carroll as a Commercial Preservation Review area. This proposed designation was not just for those buildings facing the State Capitol, but also through to Fairchild (including the Wisconsin Power and Light building, 1928, and Hotel Loraine, a City Landmark built in 1924).

This grouping of buildings has remained pretty much (fully?) intact over the past 25 years. The other area recommended for the Commercial Preservation Review designation was 1 S Pinckney through 101 E Mifflin (and wrapping the E Mifflin corner). Of the 330 feet of buildings facing the State Capitol on N Pinckney, 176 feet were approved to be replaced with a 9-story building in 2020.

These two Commercial Preservation Review Districts were determined to be of value by the task force that prepared the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan: "The Task Force believes that these two sections of the downtown retain a significant collection of older buildings with a scale and urban texture that add greatly to the pedestrian and aesthetic interest of the downtown area ..." (page 5).

The Plan Commission placed on file the request to demolish buildings on the 400 block of State Street, in substantial part because the 400 block is the last remaining intact block. Similarly, the stretch of 12 S Carroll through 22 N Carroll is the last remaining almost entirely intact stretch of commercial buildings on the Square. As noted in the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan, most of these buildings are eligible to be designated as City Landmarks. These facts make the buildings worth preserving and the demolition permit should be placed on file.

As a side note, not directly relevant to the demolition decision, a new Historical Society museum does not need to be placed on N Carroll. A new museum could become part of the Brayton parking lot site, or it could be located at one of the properties which the State has decided to sell (GEF 2 at 101 S Webster and GEF 3 at 125 S Webster). In fact, such a location could be a boon to business on the Square - small shops, restaurants and coffee shops - since visitors would have a reason to go to the east side of the square and would walk by these businesses, and, hopefully, patronize them.

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda Lehnertz