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To: [Madison Landmarks Commission](#)
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Subject: Legistar # 90470- Demolition Review 450 West Gilman Street
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Commissioners--

I am writing to ask that you communicate to the Plan Commission a finding of "b" for the building now known as Arlington Apartments. I also ask you to recommend that the Plan Commission require the developer to furnish documentation of the building as a condition for demolition approval.

Your staff report notes that this building was constructed as the University Hotel. Your staff report notes that no information regarding the building's architect and/or historic associations has been found and that the building "is not architecturally significant."

But I would argue that this building clearly meets the criteria for the "b" finding, i.e. "...that the building has historic value related to the vernacular context of Madison's built environment...but the building itself is not historically, architecturally or culturally significant." Per the applicant's submission, construction date was c. 1890, during an era when the University of Wisconsin was to become acknowledged as one of the US's leading state universities. It was in 1890 that UW Chemist Stephen Babcock developed the Babcock butterfat test which became the standard for grading milk still used today. In 1893 UW History Professor Frederick Jackson Turner enunciated his groundbreaking "frontier thesis" of American history-- an idea which is still cited today. And it was in 1894 that the UW Board of Regents adopted the principle that "whatever may be the limitations which trammel inquiry elsewhere, we believe that the great State University of Wisconsin shall ever encourage that continual and fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth may be found."

The exterior of the building at 450 W. Gilman is remarkably intact. It is a solid representative of the vernacular commercial and residential buildings that were being developed around the expanding UW campus area during the period.

Realistically, this building will be demolished. But its loss is certainly "regrettable." The building should be remembered. It is appropriate to document the building before we lose it. The Preservation Planner can devise appropriate documentation standards for this case. Documentation might be as simple as photographs of all visible facades and measurement of the building's exterior walls and building height. The building's interior spaces appear to have been significantly altered so require no further examination. The cost of such documentation is likely negligible in relation to the cost of the 16-story mixed use project that requires 450 West Gilman's demolition.

In conclusion, I urge you to advise the Plan Commission of your finding of "b" along with the recommendation that demolition approval be conditioned on appropriate documentation.

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