

DATE: June 29, 2015

TO: LORC Members

FROM: Franny Ingebritson, Member, Ordinance Committee of the Madison Alliance for Historic Preservation

SUBJECT: A Design Standards Manual: Why Madison Needs One

The Alliance Ordinance Committee has concluded that Madison's revised Landmarks Ordinance will require a "Design Standards Manual." Design standards ensure that proposed projects will preserve the unique architectural and historic character of our historic districts, the structures located within these districts, and city landmarks. Design standards provide consistency and reliability for everyone.

A design standards manual would provide clarity so everyone would know what to expect from design reviews involving:

- changes to the exterior facades of a landmark or building within a historic district
- the use of appropriate materials to rehabilitate a historic structure
- adding an addition onto a building located within a historic district
- new construction of a primary buildings within a historic district

When assessing projects, Madison's Preservation Planner, city staff, landowners, architects, and neighbors will all be on the same page knowing what is required to gain approval for a project. Madison needs a process that is objective and grounded in preservation principals and practice. A design standards manual will help provide such a process.

We make our recommendation to develop and incorporate a design standards manual after discovering that cities with state-of-the-art ordinances almost always have them. Examples include Denver, Savannah, Lexington, and St. Paul. Today, American preservationists realize that such a manual is one of the most essential and effective tools for public understanding and program administration.

Madison city planners and preservationists have long understood the necessity of having a design standards manual. It was no accident that in 1975, one year *before* the Mansion Hill Historic District was created by ordinance, the City Planning Department published *The Mansion Hill Historic District Preservation Plan and Development Handbook*. Staff prepared the booklet in part because they realized that graphics were essential for public understanding and enforcement. The Common Council agreed and on August 4, 1976, they approved *The Handbook*, and voted to include a specific reference to it in the ordinance text: 33.19(10)(g).

In 2009 city planners and citizens collaborated to publish a very impressive document entitled *Mansion Hill Design Criteria*. (<http://www.capitolneighborhoods.org/districts/mansionhill/mansion.html>) This elegant 78 page document was the result of a small City of Madison grant to the Mansion Hill Neighborhood Association. The document features 93 illustrations showing how to do preservation right. Tragically, after all of this work, the City never adopted this extraordinary document. Madison needs a document that provides similar information for the other four historic districts.

Given the critical importance of a design standards manual, we recommend the LORC take the following actions:

1. Require the Landmarks Commission to develop, implement, and update as necessary a design standard manual for the city's historic districts.
2. Outline a process by which the manual shall be created and updated.
3. Make references, where appropriate in the text of the new ordinance, to the design standards manual.
4. Solicit and receive funds for the purpose of creating a "Design Standards Manual."
5. Include language, such as the following placeholder language, in Chapter 33.19 Landmark Commission, (2) Powers and Duties.

To prepare, publish, and update a fully illustrated design standards manual that recommends best practices methods on how to comply with the ordinance standards.

Our further assumption is that due to Preservation Planner Amy Scanlon's extremely heavy work load, this document would have to be prepared by someone else.