



Agenda Item #: 4
Project Title: Buildings Proposed for Demolition
Legistar File ID #: 68860
Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner
Members: Present: Richard Arnesen, Edna Ely-Ledesma, Molly Harris, Katie Kaliszewski, David McLean, Maurice Taylor, and Ald. Bill Tishler.

Summary

John Rolling, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Melissa Destree, registering in support and wishing to speak
Kirk Biodrowski, registering in support and wishing to speak
Dave Grace, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Amy Squitieri, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Larry Nesper, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Darrin Jolas, registering in support and wishing to speak
David Bertsch, registering in support and available to answer questions
Stacey Rogers, registering in support and available to answer questions
Kevin Revolinski, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Doug Hursh, registering in support and available to answer questions
Nancy Katherine Rost, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Sam Breidenbach, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Lucia Nunez, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Victor Toniolo, registering in support and not wishing to speak

John Rolling spoke in opposition to the demolition of 1617 Sherman Avenue. They have researched the history of the property and submitted a draft landmark nomination because the building is significant not only to Madison’s history, but to national and international economic and social history as well. In 1950, the Filene House was the headquarters of CUNA, which remained in the building until 1979 despite the Mineral Point Road campus opening in the 1960s. CUNA had an unquestioned role as a major player in the Madison economy. This building commemorates Edward Filene, the father of the American credit union movement and social reform movements of the 20th century. President Truman attended the building’s dedication in 1950 and laid the cornerstone. Truman used the occasion to make a nationally broadcast speech on aid to developing countries as a point to contain communism. They said there were additional interesting pieces about how CUNA came to be in Madison. They suggested the commission recommend a finding of very significant historic value to the Plan Commission, in opposition to the demolition.

Melissa Destree spoke in support of the demolition of 2412 Waunona Way. They said that the house was decently maintained but structurally compromised with a damp crawl space. They said that most windows are vinyl inserts, and there were a lot of modifications and additions to the property over the years. They said that it would suit the property to do a new construction.

Kirk Biodrowski of Potter Lawson, representing Vermilion Development, spoke in support of the demolition of 1617 Sherman Avenue. They said that from an architectural standpoint, the building does not seem to represent anything of architectural significance. It was originally designed in 1949 and built in 1950 by Law, Law, Potter, and Nystrom, the predecessor of their current firm, in the modern classical style. They said it was stripped-classical style, bereft of adornment or characteristics that would make it interesting from the classic or modern standpoint. They said that the

building had been added on to a couple times and showed photos. They pointed out that the addition was not in keeping with the character of the building itself, and the entry addition departs greatly from the character of the building by using EIFS and awnings. The 1954 addition is more in character with the building, but one can see some disjointed brickwork and a blank portion in the northeast corner of the building. They said the Truman cornerstone was removed several years ago, and there is not any significance from an architectural standpoint for this building.

Dave Grace said they live in the neighborhood and have worked with credit unions. They said that around 20 years ago, they went through the CUNA training program, which hosts hundreds of credit union employees and still continues today. Part of that training was an assignment to go around Madison and find historic buildings of importance, and it included Filene Park and this building at 1617 Sherman Avenue. This building is still used today in that unique way by hundreds of credit union officials that come to town. In the Tenney-Lapham neighborhood, there are currently three different national and international credit union organizations that still have an active role: the Filene Research Institute on E Washington Avenue, World Council of Credit Unions, and International Credit Union Regulators Network. They said they are not an architect, but they can say that domestic and international credit union people still see this as an important landmark for the history of the movement. Lastly, part of what makes Madison interesting is its progressive history. The credit union system didn't start in Madison, but it moved here in the early 1930s because of the Progressive Era that Madison was famous for. Madison and Wisconsin are well known internationally for their strong cooperative system. Keeping our landmarks that relate to that history is important.

Amy Squitieri, a neighbor of 1617 Sherman Avenue, spoke in opposition to the demolition. They said they were a former Landmarks Commission member and professional architectural historian. They appreciated the research John Rolling mentioned. This building is significant for its important associations with the credit union movement and retains sufficient integrity to convey this history. It should be designated as a landmark. As the proposal moves forward, it should be considered how to reuse the building instead of demolishing it. They also noted the Tenney Park Historic District adjacent to the property, so the proposed project should be sensitive to that. They said the park designer originally envisioned a path alongside both sides of the Yahara River, which would be a good amenity for future housing and the neighborhood to include that proposed path if the site is redeveloped.

Larry Nesper, representing the Sherman Terrace Neighborhood Association, said that Truman dedicated the Filene House, the international headquarters of the Credit Union National Association, and 5000 people attended the event. The president spoke positively of credit unions and noted that this building would serve as an international headquarters for credit unions and symbolize the "international character of cooperative activities." They emphasized the president's speech topic of cooperation and our collective life together and said that this building tells a story infused with central democratic values. They said that while Truman was in Madison two years prior and there had not been a presidential visit since 1932, there would not be another visit for 42 years. Despite others' comments, they said that the building was beautiful. In conjunction with the Tenney Locks, they use the building as a directional landmark for visitors. They said the mid-20th c. modern style is pleasing, and the large glass windows reflect the sky light and clouds. The brown and cream brick are similar to other buildings in Madison of the same era, and they add to the beauty of the natural surroundings. They referenced a comment made by an Urban Design Commission member to consider conversion of the building rather than a demolition. They agreed that they would like conversion explored more thoroughly.

Darrin Jolas, Vermilion Development, spoke in support of their project at 1617 Sherman Avenue. They said they don't believe the building's age is significant enough for landmark status given that all other local landmarks are older than this building. They said that the City's 2016 Emerson East-Eken Park-Yahara Neighborhood Plan recommended that this building be adapted for use as a residential structure or razed. They said that Madison has a long history of presidential visits, and Truman's 1950 visit was focused on an event at the UW Fieldhouse, then he stopped at 1617 Sherman Avenue to lay the cornerstone. They said that they had planned to proposed ways to donate the cornerstone to the historical society or create a monument, but they found that the cornerstone had already been removed from the building along with the time capsule that went with it. They said that the founding of the credit union movement did not happen at this

location; Madison was a temporary headquarters because of its location in the middle of the country. They detailed the various buildings in Madison that CUNA has resided in, pointing out that 1617 Sherman Avenue was the third headquarters building before they outgrew it and moved to the Mineral Point Road headquarters. They believe the cornerstone that Truman helped lay is at CUNA's current headquarters.

Ekberg said that staff recommends a finding of no known historic value for the properties at 6604 Odana Road, 6209 Mineral Point Road, 3100 E Washington Avenue, 4522 E Washington Avenue, 1309-1311 Theresa Terrace, and 1401-1403 Theresa Terrace.

Ekberg provided background information on the property at 2412 Waunona Way, noting that it is within the boundary of a known burial site, the Waunona mound grouping (DA-1403, BDA-0609). She said that the applicants would need a request to disturb from the state. Kaliszewski asked if the burial site was catalogued or uncatalogued. Destree said that it was uncatalogued and added that they are in the process of documenting everything necessary for the state, though nothing of significance has been identified on the site to date. Arnesen suggested a finding of no known historic value for the house, and Harris said she was leaning toward a finding of b because of the location within the burial site. Kaliszewski agreed.

Ekberg said that the Landmarks Commission reviewed a proposed partial demolition of the building at 402 W Wilson Street in April 2022, and now the applicant is proposing a full demolition. She asked if that changed the commission's previous finding that the building had historic value related to the vernacular context of Madison's built environment, but the building itself is not architecturally or culturally significant. Commissioners agreed to move forward with their previous finding.

Ekberg provided background information on the property at 1617 Sherman Avenue. Taylor said that the building clearly has cultural and historic significance because of the president laying the cornerstone and it being a CUNA site beginning in the 1950s. Kaliszewski agreed there was some historic significance associated the property and looked forward to additional information they may see in the local landmark nomination. She suggested a finding between b and c. Arnesen disagreed with a finding of b because the building was significant, and Taylor agreed. McLean responded to the developer's letter, which said that the building wasn't old enough to be significant. McLean said that typically, 50 years is considered historic. Bailey added that for local Madison landmarks, we don't have a 50-year rule, so a landmark can be of any age and it is simply based on the areas of significance. McLean said that the Emerson East-Eken Park-Yahara Neighborhood Plan referenced by the developer said that if one were to raze and reconstruct this building, it would need to be in line with the City's medium residential development standards, which he thought was 2-5 stories, and the proposal for this property was higher than that.

Action

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Ely-Ledesma, to recommend to the Plan Commission that the buildings at 6604 Odana Road, 6209 Mineral Point Road, 3100 E Washington Avenue, 4522 E Washington Avenue, 1309-1311 Theresa Terrace, and 1401-1403 Theresa Terrace have no known historic value. The motion passed by voice vote/other. Taylor recused himself from the review of the property at 3100 E Washington Avenue.

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Harris, to recommend to the Plan Commission that the building at 2412 Waunona Way has no known historic value, but it is within a known archaeological and burial site that is historically and culturally significant to our tribal partners. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by McLean, to recommend to the Plan Commission that the building at 402 W Wilson Street has historic value related to the vernacular context of Madison's built environment, but the building itself is not architecturally or culturally significant. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

A motion was made by Tishler, seconded by McLean, to recommend to the Plan Commission that the building at 1617 Sherman Avenue has historic value based on cultural and historic significance related to the national credit union movement and President Truman's speech at the dedication of the building linking the work by CUNA at this site to an international effort to support small businesses and applicants that could not receive funding through traditional banks, which Truman saw as helping to fight communism as part of his Point Four Program, a significant initiative of his presidency. The motion passed by voice vote/other.