

Ad Hoc Landmarks Ordinance Review Committee
October 9, 2014
Revised Oct. 22, 2014
Legistar File #34202 #34577

I'm concerned about the lack of definitions in the Landmarks Ordinance. There are 29 terms that are defined In the City's Public Access Management Agreement with the Edgewater Development. Madison's Landmarks Ordinance has 13 defined terms. I believe there are several terms that need to be added to Sec. (2) Definitions of our Landmarks Ordinance. At this time I am requesting that the following term, "gross building volume" be included. The definition would read:

Gross Building Volume:

Volume enclosed by the entire building envelope, including attics and penthouses. This metric is measured from the outside surface of exterior walls, floors, and roofs. It does not include open covered walkways, courtyards with no roof, balconies, and canopies. Structures that extend beyond the plane of the outside face of the exterior walls such as cornices, pilasters, buttresses, and overhangs are not included.

There is no denying the unquestionable need to define the gross volume of a building (Gross Building Volume) and provide a formula for calculating that measurement. If you are not already convinced of the need for such a standard definition and calculation, the following partial transcript highlights the current nonfunctional process that must be fixed.

Feb. 17, 2014 Landmarks Commission Meeting
Legistar File #32027; 121, 123, and 127 W Gilman (Steve Brown Apartments)

Commission Member: "What is your calculation of the gross volume of your proposed buildings one, two, and three?"

Project architect: "This per AIA calculations--we've been consistent from the very beginning using the exact same calculation methods. Building one is 251,401 cu ft; building two 260,328 cu ft; building three is 234, 366 cu ft. We remain in the 4-5 times the average in the VRA."

Commission Member: "Can you explain the AIA standards?"

Project Architect: "The AIA Standards off the top of my head.....The document begins with a statement that "there is no single standard for calculating the area and volumes of buildings." But, then the document goes on to suggest a number of methods. There's several different ways to do it but the biggest key here is being consistent and the idea that we're actually using an official standard."

Commission Member: "Try to relate the interior calculation to the exterior visuals that the commission must deal with here"...

Project Architect: "The City itself doesn't have a standard. They should probably. It would make our life a lot easier but they don't. So it's up to the interpretation of the applicants and people obviously are going to use numbers that are in their favor or against it. What we try to be is

consistent so every calculation that we've given you is consistent with that. We're open to you as far as how we come up with those numbers."

Alder Zellers: "My question is: Is it apples and apples or apples to oranges? So if you're measuring interior to interior here then.....so again"....

Project Architect: "Again, Alder Zellers, in answer to your question, it's not apples to apples comparison. As we indicated in the AIA document there is no standard of method for volume calculation. In one meeting Mr. Martens said it was a simple calculation of length x width x height calculation. Yes, that's true. That's one method. The length x width x stories is another method. The AIA suggestion is another method. None of these methods when compared against each other stack up as accurate.

In order to do a meaningful comparison in any sort of mathematical calculation you need to be consistent with your methodology so the short answer to your question is, No. The calculation comparison between Mr. Marten's volume calculation, our calculation and the calculation for the VRA--none of those methods are the same, so the calculation comparison is inaccurate, fuzzy, incomplete. It's not great. That's why again without a standard definition of calculation of volume it's a very difficult standard to look to and that's why we've been trying to direct the conversation towards a more **visual perception** of that volume because the mathematical calculation is all over the board."

Section (2) of the Landmarks Ordinance is **Definitions**. We need standard definitions for terms, such as gross volume, that everyone must use.

The visual perception of volume does not work. Perception refers to how a person perceives an object. In other words, perception is in the eye of the beholder -- it becomes a matter of personal opinion. People see what they want to see. That's about as wishy-washy as it gets.

It should be obvious to everyone that it is essential to have standard definitions that everyone must use.

Franny Ingebritson