

GARY TIPLER & ASSOCIATES

Historic Preservation Consultants

807 Jenifer St., Madison, WI 53703

gtipler@tds.net 608-286-1844

May 5, 2010

Urban Design Commission
Al Martin
amartin@cityofmadison.com

Re: Winnebago-Merry Streets Development

Dear Commission members:

I write to ask that the Commission consider the historic preservation aspects of the site along Winnebago Street proposed for development in the current proposal by APEX.

The first is a call for the preservation of the land form, the rise of land reflecting the historic crossing at the Yahara River, which during settlement times was called the Catfish Creek. The rise permitted the crossing of the creek, dating back thousands of years, and was the route used and referenced in accounts of the retreat of Blackhawk in 1832, during the Blackhawk wars. The retreat and resulting demise of the Native American tribes, permitted the settlement of the Great Northwest and establishment of the Wisconsin Territory.

That location across the Yahara was also the fording spot for the early settlement and development of Madison beginning in April, 1836, and was maintained as the principle route for decades, until the arrival of rail in 1854. It was used for people arriving on foot, horseback and stagecoach during the Territorial and early Statehood years. It continued to be important location as for first local railroad bridge across the river to connect Madison with the East, for the street car routes and for the State highway routes. It continues to be an important arterial among city streets.

The ridges east and west of the river bear archeological evidence of their early Native American histories, as well.

The second important feature of the site along Winnebago is the turreted Victorian house, which was built by Dr. Willam Hurd in 1892. The turret of the house is oriented toward the river view to take advantage of the view down the Yahara particularly toward Lake Monona (see attached photo, c.1910 on page 3). Dr. Hurd was highly regarded as a pioneer dentist in Madison. In about 1908 he built his dental clinic with an apartment above on the river side of his lot. It is the other building, which remains on this site today.

The Dr. Hurd house is important, not as an example of architecture, rather as part of the historic development of the city and changing perceptions and desirability of living near water, which was previously thought to be unhealthy. However, with development in medical and related sciences in the late 1800s, these locations were reconsidered. The Hurd house preceded the development of the Yahara River Parkway by the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, which occurred

between 1903 and 1906, thus is perhaps the first house to be oriented to the river between Lakes Mendota and Monona.

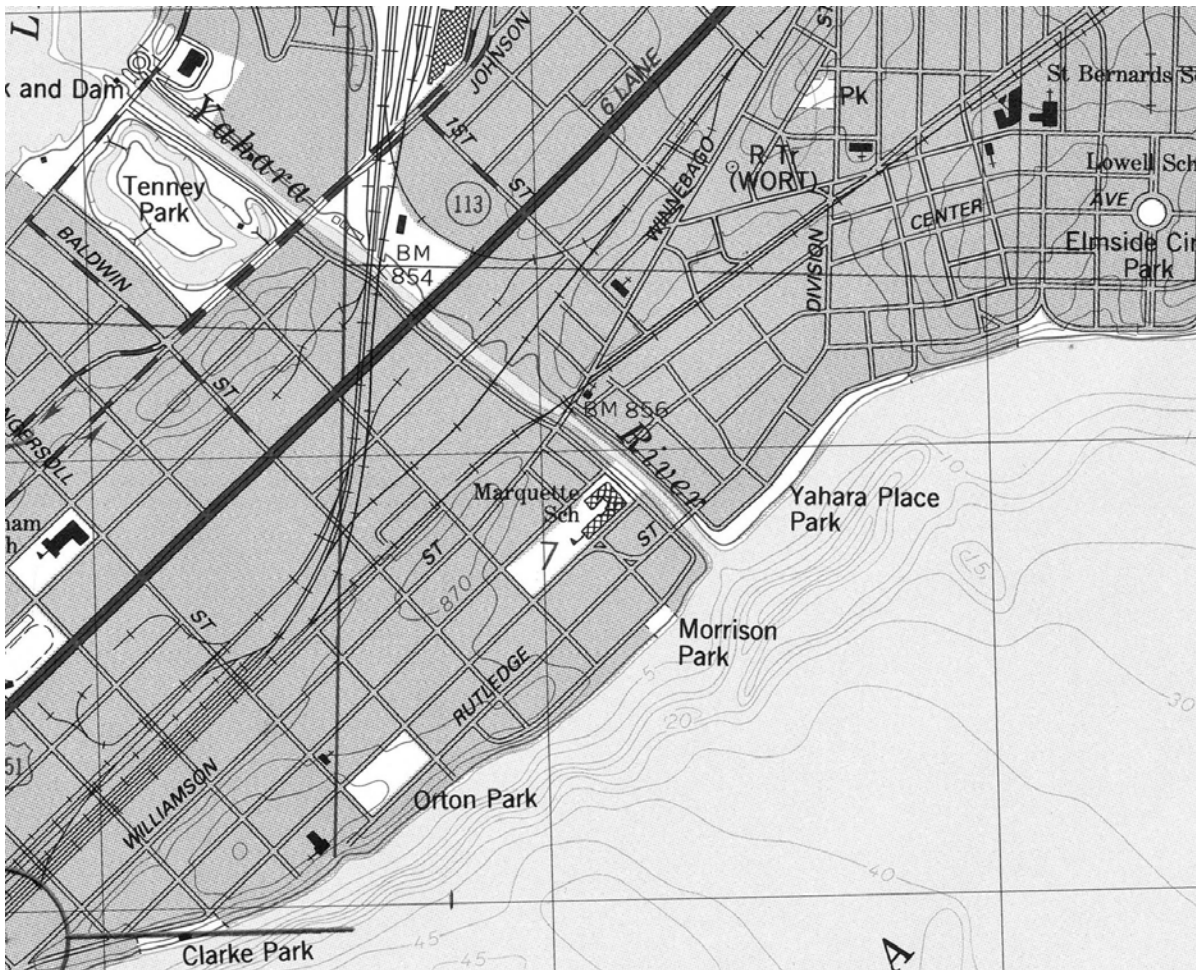
While the Hurd house isn't an architectural specimen, it is worthy of preservation. In spite of the recent years of poor alterations and lack of maintenance, it retains important character-defining features and materials, though some are hidden beneath siding. Details of porches can be created by any talented and discerning restoration-minded architect and contractor. Even the former clinic and apartment building could be renovated and restored if there was the will to do so.

Therefore, I recommend that the preservation of the original remaining geological land form of the site, its archeological heritage potential, and the Dr. Hurd House, as significant pieces of Madison's prehistoric and its development history.

Sincerely,

Gary Tipler

ILLUSTRATIONS



USGS Topography map indicating the land forms and ridges in the isthmus.



Dr. Hurd House and clinic, c. 1910, looking along Yahara River Parkway across Winnebago Street. Photo: Wisconsin Historical Society, by Charles N. Brown, Image ID 3956.



Dr. Hurd House and clinic, c. 1910, looking along Yahara River Parkway across Winnebago St. Photo: Wisconsin Historical Society, Charles N. Brown, ID 3956.

(Further photos of the site and buildings may be easily seen on flickr.com, Search words: Hurd, Yahara. or Winnebago, Yahara.)