



CHARLES QUAGLIANA

Architect, AIA, NCARB

1734 Sawtooth Lane
Madison, WI 53719
(608) 444-9589
quagliana@charter.net

September 9, 2013

Mr. William F. White
MICHAEL BEST & FRIEDRICH LLP
One S. Pinckney Street, Suite 700
P.O. Box 1806 Madison, WI 53701-1806

Re: Gilman Street Development
Evaluation of two properties
Madison, WI

Dear Mr. White,

The following is my report on the properties at 123 and 127 West Gillman Street.

Purpose

The purpose of the research and observations was to investigate the properties and report on their contribution to the Mansion Hill Historic District.

Research

Research efforts included activities at the Wisconsin Historical Society archives and review of the Madison Landmarks Commission files and Madison Neighborhoods web site.

Research indicates that the house at 123 W. Gilman Street dates to 1886 and the 127 W. Gilman property dates to 1893/1896. The properties are within the National Register of Historic Places Mansion Hill Historic District (1976).

I was not able to locate any illustrative photographic images at the Wisconsin Historical Society archives or within their on-line collection. I did find several images of neighboring properties, especially those located on East Gilman Street where more substantial houses are located.

The National Register nomination provided a general historical background and specifics about architectural and historical significance of the district. Many individual properties are described in detail within this 80 page document, for either their historical or architectural significance. The properties at 123 and 127 W. Gilman are not within this group. They are simply listed by street address.

The draft Mansion Hill Neighborhood Plan (2009) is very informative as to what residents and the City envision for the future of this neighborhood. However, the plan lacks any specifics for the 100 block of W. Gilman Street only referencing general neighborhood goals.

Observations

On-site observations were conducted on September 6. Elements open to view were observed, photographs taken, field notes were recorded. The two houses embody the general vernacular vocabulary of worker housing from the late 1800s common in this and similar neighborhoods within the Isthmus. Generally modest in design, detail and finishes, these homes have been converted to multiple tenant student housing.

123 W. Gilman

The property embodies the general form of the stick style, although a simplified vernacular version. Much of the original exterior trim and detail were removed when the aluminum siding was installed. The front porch has been enclosed to create interior living space.

Overall the condition of the exterior is good to fair. There are signs of wear and deterioration, although the building appears generally structurally sound.

The interior has been altered in several remodeling campaigns to provide additional bedrooms. The primary spaces of the first floor, such as the entry hall and living room have been altered. Fragments of original floors, doors, woodwork, windows and stairways remain. Original built-ins have been lost in the kitchen and dining room.

127 W. Gilman.

This is a large Queen Anne influenced vernacular design with hip roof. This house likely featured a tower and decorative glass windows that have been removed. The large wrap around front porch remains, but has been significantly modified. Overall the exterior is in poor condition.

The interior has been torn apart and significantly modified. The primary spaces of the first floor, such as the entry hall, library, parlors and sitting room are not extant. As a result of the many remodeling efforts, it is evident that redistribution of floor loads has created some floor deflections and settlement. Almost all of the plaster wall and ceiling surface exhibit some degree of cracking and delamination. The attic structure is compromised by fire damage and there are numerous second level ceiling failures. The interior is in very poor dilapidated condition. In my opinion, this house is not habitable and unsafe as is.

Evaluation

Condition

123 W Gilman is in fair to good condition. A moderate level of additional repair and rehabilitation work is required.

127 W. Gilman is in very poor and dilapidated overall condition. In my opinion, even with some improvements, this is substandard housing. An extensive level of additional repair and rehabilitation work is required in this building to make it structurally sound, code compliant and safe for multi-tenant housing.

Historical Significance

A judgment concerning historical significance of the properties (the association with events or lives of persons significant in our past) cannot be determined without intensive research into specific activities and their impact.

Architectural Significance

The Architectural significance of these properties cannot easily be associated with the original designer or the architects. According to the National Register nomination, the 123 W. Gilman house may have originally been a rental property. One can assume therefore that is why it is of small scale and of very modest design and detail. The significance of this property is low compared to the district.

Although the 127 W Gilman properties retains the basic features form of the vernacular Queen Anne Style, it has lost the vast majority of those interior and exterior distinctive characteristics (physical features) that commonly are identified with the Queen Anne Style. This property has low significance.

Architectural Integrity

The overall architectural integrity of the 123 W. Gilman house is in the range of 40% (assuming some of the original wood siding remains under the aluminum siding). I estimate that less than 20% of the character defining features or elements, interior and exterior, remain intact in the 127 W. Gilman property.

Architectural Context

It is my opinion that the architectural context of this property remains relatively intact as compared to the districts period of significance (1850-1940). This was a neighborhood dominated by large single family residences with a few scattered apartment buildings. The context of the immediate area was significantly diminished by the construction of high rise housing in the 1960s and 1970s. The adjacent high rise does negatively impact both 123 and 127 contextually.

Summary

123 W. Gilman: Typical vernacular single family residence (rental) from the late 19th century. Certainly not noteworthy historically or architecturally, significant loss of context with the high rise apartment adjacent, moderate loss of integrity, moderate rehabilitation and code related upgrades required for continued use.

127 W. Gilman: Typical large vernacular residence within this neighborhood from the late 19th century. Originally interesting architecturally, but has some loss of context, overall integrity very low, major rehabilitation and code related upgrades required to retain the property.

Conclusion

By the strict definition of the National Park Service guidelines, these two properties are contributing elements within the Mansion Hill Historic District. That is, they are “buildings that add to the historical integrity or architectural qualities of a historic district”. In my opinion, the two properties have little to contribute to the district in the areas of history or architecture; they are simply “placeholders” within the district. They only contribute to the scale of the street and repetition of solid and void spaces along the streetscape.

A secondary aspect of a contributing property is related to integrity. Alterations over time can lower integrity, as is the case with these two properties. Integrity is the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period. Historic integrity enables the property to illustrate the significant aspects of its past. These two

properties have lost significant integrity relegating them to placeholders rather than strong contributors to the district.

Given that the context of the area has changed, considering the properties do not possess a high level of historical or architectural significance, and recognizing the low level of integrity of the two buildings and amount of rehabilitation work required for continued use, I would not consider the retention of either building mandatory, assuming replacement construction is compatible with the district.

If you have any questions or comments concerning these observations and findings, please contact me at (608) 444-9589.

Sincerely,



Charles J. Quagliana, AIA, NCARB
Preservation Architect