

**From:** Bill Connors <bill@smartgrowthgreatermadison.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 20, 2021 9:32 AM  
**To:** Mayor <Mayor@cityofmadison.com>; All Alders <allalders@cityofmadison.com>  
**Cc:** Stouder, Heather <HStouder@cityofmadison.com>  
**Subject:** Smart Growth's Comments on Item 8 on July 20 Common Council Agenda

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Mayor Rhodes-Conway and Alders:

I am writing to you regarding item 8 on the agenda for your meeting on July 20, Legistar 65918, the proposed ordinance to amend the Downtown height map in an effort to preserve the remaining view from the top floor of the Lamp House.

Before I speak directly about the merits of this proposed ordinance, I will point out that it seems that every few months, the Common Council adopts or talks about adopting another restriction that will impede increased housing density in some part or all of the city. It is difficult to see how the goals in the Comprehensive Plan to increase housing density and address Madison's housing crisis can be achieved when the Common Council keeps piling up more impediments to housing development.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would read and consider the following email I received from Jim O'Keefe, Community Development Director, in response to a question I asked him about how many housing units the city needs to be constructed each year:

I've discussed this with a colleague, Linette Rhodes, who has worked pretty closely with our housing data. She offers the following:

- We estimate the City's population will grow by about 70,000 people over the next 20 years. That translates into about 40,000 more housing units in that period.
- That compares to the last 20 years, in which we gained 29,000 housing units
- 40,000 units in 20 years converts roughly to about 2,000 units per year. The City's five-year average is 1932 units gained per year; the ten-year annual average (which includes the tail-end of the recession) is 1674 units.

Madison's vacancy rate has hovered between 2-3% in recent years. Based on today's total unit count (125k), that means that in addition to the 2000 per year, we'd also need to add roughly 3,000 units immediately to reach a "healthy" vacancy rate of 5%.

I hope this is helpful.

Jim

[End of quotation from Jim O'Keefe's email]

Historic preservation is good. Increasing housing density is good. But these two goods frequently conflict with each other. How should you balance the desire for these two competing goods?

In the case of the proposed ordinance reducing the height limits on parcels adjacent to the Lamp House, it appears this ordinance will not be effective in encouraging the level of investment in the structure that would be necessary to preserve it (see the letter from Barbara Gordon of the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy). While the ordinance will produce little or no benefit, it will cause a reduction in future housing density in this area of the city. In this case, there is so little benefit to historic preservation that it makes sense to favor increased housing density and not enact this ordinance.

On behalf of Smart Growth Greater Madison, I respectfully request that you follow the advice of George Hall and refrain from adopting this ordinance until there is a feasible plan for preserving the Lamp House.

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