

Bailey, Heather

From: Lorien Draeger <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, January 7, 2023 4:52 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Oppose making 1617 Sherman a landmark

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Hello Members of the Landmarks Commission,

I am writing because I strongly oppose making 1617 Sherman a historic landmark. The petitioners are interpreting the landmark criteria in way that is laughably broad. Let us extend their reasoning to a few other properties in and around Madison.

Surely Madison mayors are important to local history. Why isn't every place any of the mayors in town ever lived considered a historic landmark?

UW Madison is a prized research university. Many of its faculty and alumni have become Nobel laureates, important politicians, and pioneering artists. Perhaps we should include every apartment, house, dorm room, office, and classroom ever occupied by any of these great people on our list of landmarks?

Madison was also a part of the anti-Vietnam War movement, a vital piece of our national history. There must be dozens of bars, cafes, residences, and other sites where activists met to plan demonstrations and mimeograph leaflets. Wouldn't all of these qualify if we followed the logic of the 1617 Sherman petitioners?

Of course all of these suggestions are absurd. They're absurd because in a vibrant city like Madison there are important things happening, important people visiting, and important movements advancing every day. The locations of these things are not necessarily special. What makes a location special is if something about the location or building contributed to the important thing.

If 1617 Sherman were a Credit Union branch location that was a radical rethinking of how a financial institution building should be designed, that design reflected the values and ideals of the credit union movement, and that was still there to be preserved then I could see making the site a historic landmark. But that's not what's there at all. It's an office building. It is generic. And it hasn't even been preserved over time. Rather it has been repeatedly added to and renovated in order to better suit the needs of new users.

Occasionally there are events so monumental that the location itself may be imbued with importance, but these are rare. It's not like the Treaty of Versailles was signed there. This is just an office building.

Thank you,
Lorien Draeger

Bailey, Heather

From: Peter Williams <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, January 7, 2023 3:00 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Cc: John Rolling
Subject: Filene House

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Hello Landmarks Commission House n members, I Understand that you are voting on the use of the Filene House At 1617 Sherman Ave.

I oppose the proposed demolition of the Filene House planned by Vermillion. Our family lived at Sherman Terrace back in the 1970's and I was the President of our tenants organization. We always treasured the Filene House and of course Tenney Park

As a History PhD, and a 54 year resident of Madison I have always been impressed by the respect Madison shows to it's historical treasures. In 1950 President Truman came to Madison and dedicated the Filene House and recognized the importance of Credit Unions and their members. In my career I also worked at CUNA and saw firsthand the value of Credit Unions.

Let us remember the past and understand it's importance for our present and future. Let us not Destroy History by destroying the Filene House and what it stands for.

Peter W Williams PhD

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Bailey, Heather

From: Paul Bailey <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, January 8, 2023 9:18 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Agenda item 75226

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To whom it may concern,

I'm writing about agenda item 75226, Filene House (1617 Sherman Ave).

I'm concerned that a nomination made after the intention to develop a property is either made in bad faith or makes the landmarks commission process appear to be being used in bad faith—this appearance will rot your committee and public trust in its ability to carry out its required role in Madison. If you approve landmark status on buildings that have already have an intention to build you are not doing your job correctly. The application cites features that have already been removed. If this building was actually important, you missed your opportunity to save it long ago.

Please 1) do not grant landmark status for this building, 2) only take seriously requests that are not post hoc, after the building is being considered for development. Government can work well, and it does so by being proactive.

Current development solves real problems of housing costs skyrocketing in Madison. Telling applicants that you will not take these attempts to further drive up rent and purchase prices in Madison seriously can help mitigate our current housing price spike. Reject this nomination.

Best,
Paul Bailey

Bailey, Heather

From: Mark Condon <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, January 8, 2023 8:16 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Filene House and Landmark designation

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I sent an earlier version of this that contained typos. I have re-edited it.

I'd like to expand on the front-page article published in Sunday's Wisconsin State Journal about the historic significance of the building on Sherman Avenue once known as Filene House, which served as the headquarters of the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) for almost three decades. I retired in 2013 after a 36-year career working for CUNA that began in 1977 at Filene House as an editor on its flagship publication "Credit Union Magazine." When I retired I was a member of CUNA's executive management team responsible for its publishing and market research division at the World Credit Union Center on Mineral Point Road. I also spoke frequently at credit union events throughout the nation on the history of credit unions, especially the socioeconomic trends and conditions that led to the creation of a cooperative banking system. Credit unions are cooperatives owned by their members and are part of the worldwide cooperative movement.

When people in Madison think of CUNA today, they tend to think of CUNA Mutual because of its size. But the acronym CUNA that is still in the company's name indicates its ongoing association with the Credit Union National Association. In fact, it was the association that soon after its own creation in 1935 that formed the CUNA Mutual Insurance Society along with another affiliated company named CUNA Supply. The three separate entities shared management, and the boards of CUNA Mutual and CUNA Supply were the trade association's executive committee. CUNA, CUNA Mutual, and CUNA Supply shared three buildings in Madison, the first at 142 East Gilman Street on Mansion Hill, the second at 1342 East Washington Avenue, a building that still stands and that has served as the location of several prominent restaurants over the years, and then Filene House on Sherman Avenue next to Tenney Park and across the street from Lake Mendota. Filene House served as CUNA and CUNA Supply's headquarters from 1950 to 1979 when they joined CUNA Mutual at its westside location and what became the World Credit Union Center. CUNA Mutual moved out of Filene House in the early 1960s as its growth and business needs became more complex and it needed more independence and physical capacity.

Filene's advocacy for Madison was influenced by his desire to have CUNA located in a centrally located university town, as well as his personal relationship with UW President Glenn Frank, who had been his personal secretary years before. Filene also respected Wisconsin's role as a laboratory of progressive reforms. He knew of and endorsed the university's "Wisconsin Idea." Wisconsin had adopted the only unemployment system in 1932, the year Franklin Roosevelt defeated Herbert Hoover, the Republican incumbent in the White House. Filene, who delivered radio addresses for Roosevelt in 1932 and again in 1936 served on an informal committee to lobby for adoption of the Wisconsin plan as the American plan. Filene and other progressive businessmen--there were not many--modified the plan so its could be introduced as a bill, which it was as part of the Social Security Act of 1935. Filene had long supported an "old age" insurance plan to shore up American household finance. Passage of the Federal Credit Union Act in 1934, the Social Security Act of 1935, the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, and the 1938 Fair Standards Labor Act that created a federal minimum wage were among the reforms Filene advocated.

The 1938 law passed a year after Filene's death in 1937, so he did not live long enough to see them truly bloom in the quarter century after the Second World War. But that quarter century lasted until the 1970s, and it was an unparalleled era of sustained and shared prosperity. I wouldn't know that by the ultra conservative political rhetoric that has dominated Wisconsin politics the past two decades.

While Filene was considered a merchandising genius by his capitalist peers, he was considered a traitor to capitalism by many of the same people. But he wasn't, and he remains one of the world's most respected social and economic reformers of the twentieth century because of his foresight. A devoted capitalist who deeply believed in the need for profits, but he contributed a large portion of his personal fortune to the development of credit unions because he recognized their potential to help create an economically stable and financially secure middle class of an unprecedented size with previously unheard of purchasing power to sustain capitalism during great age American industrialization, especially the era of industrialized mass production. Capitalism needed this market.

Filene's goal was to strengthen capitalism by making it an economic system of greater equity. He believed the greatest appeal of socialism to struggling working people was not socialism itself but the myopic commitment of capitalists and what he called an excessive lust for profit. This lust both enabled political corruption by the influence of businesses, and blinded business people to the struggles of the working class and their importance to a creating the requisite middle class he envisioned as necessary. Credit unions, however, were only one of several reform initiatives that Filene advocated even though they are justifiably considered his greatest legacy. Filene pursued all these reforms beginning in the early 1900s, and gradual momentum had been achieved in a handful of states, especially Wisconsin that Filene recognized as a laboratory of progressive reforms. But it took the havoc caused by the Great Depression of the 1930s to accelerate federal codification of each of these reforms in response to the severe hardships faced by the nation's people; the increased appeal of socialism as businesses failed, unemployment skyrocketed, and banks failed; and the the growing influence of communism in then 1930s.

Truman's willingness to come to Madison when asked was because of the Cold War that was beginning to more than and that led to Madison being selected as the national headquarters for the United States Credit Union Movement in 1935 and the building of Filene House in 1950 and the presence of President Harry Truman to lay the building's cornerstone. The Truman Doctrine of 1947 pledged support of the United States as a bulwark against the spread of communism. Cooperative credit unions are vehicles of people helping people. Their loans were funded by the funds members deposited by members. The field of memberships are the common bonds of employment, association, or community among others. Thus, the credit union model tends to have strong support among its members, which translates into political support.

Understanding the importance of history often requires physical symbols that anchor in each of us that the realization that our present, for better or worse, is the outcome of past previous trends and events and the decisions we make individually, or enact as laws and policies at local, state, and national levels. Filene House community, state, and nation. Filene House s one of those physical symbols.

This history is why the significance of Filene House to Madison is important. We need to recognize that the amazing success of credit unions in our city, state, and nationally did not begin in Madison, but since 1934 when the Federal Credit Union Act passed and the growth of credit unions accelerated from the slower state by progress, credit unions as financial cooperatives have lifted millions of working-class families into the American middle class. Out of the initial seeds planted for a cooperative banking system, credit unions now play act on a global stage.

Today, United State credit unions serve more than 134 million Americans and collectively have \$2.25 in assets, according to the National Credit Union Association. You cannot drive through Madison or Dane County

without seeing the presence of these institutions owned by their mostly middle-class members. And the the Madison-based World Council of Credit Unions that had its beginning as an interntional division of CUNA in Filene House in the 1950s now serves one billion people and 393 million households in 118 countries . Those credit unions serve as a testament to the importance Filene placed on global movements of cooperation as a way to lift struggling people out of poverty, and to foster world peace.

Consider the phrase "The Debt shall Die with the Debtor." That was CUNA Mutual's founding principle in 1935, and it bluntly states the importance of offering credit life and disability insurance to credit union members. CUNA Mutual pioneered this insurance as foundational to the credit union mission to help credit union households achieve and maintain their finacial viability. Further, if you read the Wisconsin State Journal throughout any year, you will inevitably read about the contributions made by the CUNA Mutual Foundation that since its creation. It has made more than \$43 million in grants to worthy causes, and initiatives of social justice have remained to core to credit unions, CUNA, and CUNA Mutual.

Filene House also played a pivitol role in the modernization of credit unions from mostly small institutions that provided the basics of savings accounts and loans to the full-service financial institutions today. The initial strategies behind modernization occurred at Filene House, and continued at the World Credit Union Center from 1980 onward. The Filene Research Institute in Madison is the think tank and innovation incubator for credit unions. The state credit union leagues such as the Wisconsin Credit Union League that is headquartered in Madison with its own foundation were integral to both CUNA and CUNA Mutual and reman so. It is, a Filene and the early credit union activists perceived, a powerful network of cooperation that has achieved amazing success in American life.

Filene's reforms worked. Naming Filene House as a Madison landmark will serve as a reminder. It is not just another aging business building.

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Bailey, Heather

From: Nicholas Davies <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, January 8, 2023 5:53 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: No to 75226

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear commissioners,

You and I both know what this is. This is an attempt, driven by lakefront mansion owners, to prevent the creation of hundreds of much-needed housing units. They wish to deny these hundreds of future neighbors what they already enjoy: access to Tenney Park, frequent bus service, and proximity to the future public market, and likely the train station as well.

When we as a city accept these spurious landmark designations, we're creating new landmarks elsewhere. New flex lanes on the Beltline. New interchanges on 51. New subdivisions off of 19. Someday soon, those will be historical relics themselves, of an era when we were still in denial of the destructive realities of climate and city sprawl.

We need to acknowledge the legacy of our city's past, but we have a future legacy to be conscious of too.

Thank you,

Nick Davies
3717 Richard St

Bailey, Heather

From: Robert Entwistle <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, January 7, 2023 10:21 AM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Filene House

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

I noticed the proposal to designate Filene House as a landmark. Please consider denying this request.

The building is rather ugly, utilitarian and unremarkable. I understand the historical connection but the city needs to move on and redevelop that area.

Thanks!

Bob Entwistle
2709 Center Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Landmarks Commission:

RE: January 9, 2023, Landmarks Commission Agenda Item 75226
Via Email

I write in support of the proposal to designate the Filene House at 1617 Sherman Avenue as a local landmark.

Filene House is a Madison structure that represents a progressive innovation to help workers, foster mutual cooperative societies, and, through Truman's cornerstone speech, presidential efforts to promote American international aid to develop democratic institutions in other nations. Because of CUNA and its affiliated and support businesses, credit unions continue to play an important intellectual, educational, financial and employment role in Madison's economy.

The nomination document artfully outlines the case for designation of Filene House as a local landmark by the Commission. The Emerson East-Eken Park-Yahara Neighborhood Plan adopted by the Council in the 2016 suggests an option in figure 3B (page 27) for the two parcels which would preserve Filene House while permitting development of the larger rear parcel for other uses such as housing. In this way, the Madison legacy of contributions to the credit union might be physically preserved as well as accommodating other current goals.

For these reasons, I urge the Commission to support the designation of Filene House as a local landmark.

Hickory R, Hurie

Bailey, Heather

From: Niklas Schmidt <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, January 8, 2023 5:14 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Objection to Landmark Designation of the Filene House (1617 Sherman Ave)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Landmark Commission Members,

I am writing in opposition to the motion to designate 1617 Sherman Ave a historic landmark.

If you review the last decade of occupancy and use of this building it is immediately apparent that the inhabitants of Madison and specifically District 12 are in no way served by its existence. I strongly urge you to question the motives of the movement to designate this property a landmark in 2023 when no such efforts have been made by the historic commission, the city of Madison or the neighborhood so far.

I am worried that if this designation occurs it will serve as a blueprint for obstruction efforts by residents opposed to increasing the supply of housing in our city.

I have been hosting friends and relatives in Madison for more than a decade and to imagine that even the most architecture-devoted visitor would consider this property of historic or touristic value is not based in reality.

Please consider your responsibilities to your fellow Madisonians in weighing the statements made in support and opposition to this subject.

sincerely - Niklas M Schmidt

1328 Rutledge St.

Bailey, Heather

From: Mike Z <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 12:22 AM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Opposed to Agenda Item 3, Jan 9th meeting

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

I am writing in opposition to agenda item 3 (leg. # 75226) that seeks to make the property at 1617 Sherman Ave. a city landmark.

After looking over both the nomination and the staff report, I'm a bit perplexed at how this building is historically significant. Even if it is assumed that the CUNA is a historically significant trade organization (which is far from obvious), I don't see much evidence that this building was very significant to CUNA's history. The building wasn't occupied by CUNA until 15 years after its founding, at which point it was one of several tenants. As the application makes clear, because the building itself has no architectural significance the entire application rests on its special historical significance.

I also don't think that being the location of a single minor speech by a U.S. President makes a place historically significant. If this were a possible condition for landmark status, then the spot on MLK where Obama gave his final campaign speech during 2012 must be at least as significant and worthy of landmark status. But of course, neither are historically significant simply because a president gave a minor speech there.

The most telling evidence that this building has inadequate historical significance for landmark status is that it isn't even significant to CUNA itself. Although the organization is well-resourced and maintains an office on the west side of Madison, it has not maintained even partial tenancy in this building or simply sought to compensate the developer for its voluntary preservation. If CUNA doesn't even care about this building, then why should the city of Madison restrict the building's current owner from selling it for redevelopment?

Sincerely,
Michael Zenz
District 12
2609 Dahle St.