



Project Name/Address: 130 E Gilman Street

Application Type: Certificate of Appropriateness for land division in historic district

Legistar File ID # [42481](#)

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Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Gary Brown, UW-Madison

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for land division of a landmark site in the Mansion Hill Historic District

Background Information

Parcel Location: The subject site is a landmark site located in the Mansion Hill Historic District.

Relevant Landmarks Ordinance Sections:

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.

- (4) Land Divisions and Combinations. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for land divisions, combinations, and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in historic districts, unless it finds that the proposed lot sizes adversely impact the historic character or significance of a landmark, are incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, or fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.

Analysis and Conclusion

The Applicant came before the Landmarks Commission on June 10, 2013 to request a recommendation for land division. At that time the Ordinance gave the Landmarks Commission the authority to review the land division request and provide a recommendation for Plan Commission review. The Historic Preservation Ordinance was revised to give the Landmarks Commission the authority to issue Certificates of Appropriateness for land division and was adopted in July of 2015. The request for land division is returning to the Commission for the review of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

The current lot is large in relation to the lots across E Gilman Street; however, it is waterfront property and the current lot size seems appropriate for its historic context. This property was historically a grand mansion of some of Madison's elite families and then later the official residence of seventeen Wisconsin Governors. Many important social and cultural events took place on this site and certainly many of them were near the water. In 1870 internationally renowned violinist, Ole Bull, married Sara Thorp on the property and according to the landmark nomination, "their wedding was the occasion for the most elaborate festivities Madison had ever seen." Also according to the nomination, Bull is responsible for creating a terraced embankment of Norwegian gardens leading to the lake and a croquet ground.

In 1950 the property was sold to the University of Wisconsin and was most recently used as a student residence hall for Knapp graduate scholars. The date of construction for the boathouse/lifesaving station is unknown, but presumed to be in 1970 or 1971. The Executive Residence was designated a landmark in January of 1972, likely concurrent with or slightly after the construction of the boathouse.

The CSM proposes creating a much smaller lot than what currently exists which may be more consistent with the size of other adjacent lots in the historic district, but somewhat diminishes the historic character of the landmark site. The size of the proposed lots has been revised since 2013. The width of the proposed lot (Lot 1) has been reduced by 10' to meet zoning requirements and the depth of the lot has increased by 40'. While staff is concerned that the size of Lot 2 may allow for future development that may negatively impact the landmark site, it should be noted that lots 1 and 2 will remain the landmark site unless the designation is amended to only include Lot 1. If the designation is amended, Lot 2 may become a site adjacent to a landmark site.

Recommendation

Staff believes that, beyond the structure itself, a contributing factor to the landmark status of the site is the large lawn that slopes down to the lake and that staff would prefer to see the rear lot line moved closer to the lake to aid in preserving the historic landscape and context.

Staff believes that the standards to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness may be met and recommends approval by the Landmarks Commission.