

PC testimony 519-547 W Washington

Thank you Chair Zellers, Commissioners and city Staff.

I am opposed to the demolition request for the 9 buildings. When I look at the facades of these buildings and the interiors of the buildings, I see layers upon layers of the cultural and family history of Madison. Most appear to be in very good shape, with few modifications changing their architectural features.

One of the standards when reviewing demolition requests is whether the building is landmarked or in an historic district. These buildings are not, but they are valuable contributors to the vernacular architectural history of our city. They show that families grew up within a stone's throw of the capitol. Furthermore, without these buildings, our existing landmarks and historic districts lose their context. Removing these 9 buildings from the architectural fabric of the City has a huge impact on our few buildings that are protected.

The staff report evaluates this demolition request with respect to the proposed use. Let us not forget that it is incumbent on the City Planning Division to promote development and thus increase the tax base. However it is incumbent on the Plan Commission to evaluate whether it is appropriate to demolish 24 units of existing, affordable housing stock that contribute significantly to what makes Madison an interesting city. Your evaluation of the demolition must be done without considering the proposed use.

But please oblige me in a thought experiment. Let's say I owned these nine buildings and my proposal in front of you tonight was to demolish them and replace them with 9 3-unit buildings, each with 6 bedrooms. They'd fit perfectly in the DR2 zoning, would increase density, and would improve the energy efficiency of the dwellings. Would the Plan Commission be willing to demolish the existing irreplaceable architecture and its surviving fine woodwork for an increase of 3 units? Does a proposal's increase of 116 units make the demolition more just?

This thought experiment is a gotcha, because state law forbids your considering future use when reviewing a demolition. I ask the commission to think carefully about how you proceed with this exceptionally large demolition request.

Thank you.