

# MADISON TRUST



for Historic Preservation

LOCAL PARTNER

NATIONAL TRUST FOR  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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Jason Tish  
*Executive Director*

To: Madison Plan Commission  
From: Madison Trust for Historic Preservation  
Re: Proposed zoning text, Chapter 28E

26, September 2012

Some of the provisions under consideration for the new zoning would be detrimental to protections for historic places in Madison and could facilitate degradation of historic character in Historic Districts.

Conservation of our cultural places, including buildings and landscapes that put us in touch with our history and heritage, is critical to the cultivation of an identity and sense of Place in Madison.

**Item 5: Section 28.078(4)(a) (Subchapter 28E: Downtown and Urban Districts, p.14)**

This amendment would allow buildings “fronting the primary abutting street” to be built 80 feet wide in areas zoned DR1. This includes much of the locally designated Mansion Hill Historic District and the First Settlement Historic District. This provision would allow 80-foot-wide facades in these districts where the preponderance of buildings that define the character of those districts is considerably narrower. Allowing facades up to 80 feet wide in these areas would have the affect of rewarding agglomeration of adjacent lots in order to redevelop them with larger buildings. Historic District guidelines and demolition review, as we have seen, are not an airtight backup for this kind of deterioration of our historic districts.

We support Planning staff’s recommendation that the maximum building width in DR1 be reduced from 80 feet to 60 feet.

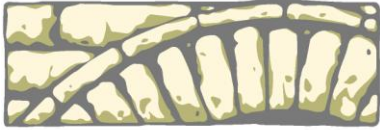
We also recommend (**Item 17**) that the area included in the **Langdon Street Historic District** – the area along Langdon St. to N. Francis St. and north to the Mendota lakeshore – be zoned DR1 as well, and be afforded the benefit of that 60-foot width limit. This would be consistent with the recently adopted Downtown Plan which makes strong recommendations to:

“Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of Contributing historic buildings,” and “Encourage relatively higher-density infill and redevelopment that is **compatible with the historic context** in scale and design.” in the Langdon Street neighborhood.

The Langdon St. Historic District is designated under the federal National Register program and is eligible for the federal Preservation Tax Credit program, a powerful tool that leverages millions of dollars in reinvestment annually in Dane County. If too many of the Contributing properties in this district are demolished or redeveloped the district may be delisted and would lose access to the Tax Credit incentive.

*Dedicated to the Preservation of Madison’s Historic Places*

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## **Item 9: Section 28.181, Table 28M-2 “Notice Requirements”**

This amendment would require notification at least 30 days prior to filing an application for a demolition permit for any building. But **Section 28.185(4)** would require 60 days’ notice for buildings built prior to 1940.

These notification requirements are problematic. Presumably, the exception for pre-1940 buildings is designed to separate those buildings with a higher potential for historic significance from those less likely to have historic significance. However, a fixed date (1940) is an ineffective instrument for identifying potentially significant places because it presumes that historic significance is derived simply from a building’s age. In fact, the standard age for effectively assessing historic significance (established by the federal National Register program) is 50 years, rather than a fixed date. Madison’s own Landmarks Ordinance does not have an age requirement for official historic designation.

We strongly recommend that the 60-day notification period be the standard for all buildings (for the sake of consistency and predictability) with the caveat, already articulated in **Section 28.185(4)(a)**, that the period could be reduced by certain officials. This would allow sufficient time for residents to consider the historic importance of the property and inform city officials.

**We also strongly recommend that the code not use a fixed date (currently a 72-year date) to filter places with potential historic significance, but rather an age requirement such as the 50-year standard.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Tish  
Executive Director, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

*Dedicated to the Preservation of Madison’s Historic Places*

Sept 27, 2012

Madison Plan Commission  
c/o Brad Murphy  
Suite LL 100  
Municipal Building  
Madison WI 53703

Dear Commissioners,

As a very close neighbor (746 E. Gorham St.) and active in the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association (TLNA), I want you to know that I am personally opposed to increasing the allowable density formula for the 800 block of East Gorham and the 300 block of North Livingston for the following reasons.

One: Our neighborhood plan for the Gorham/Livingston/Johnson area clearly states we want more owner-occupied and traditionally scaled homes for this particular area of the neighborhood.

Two: The increase in density is not appropriate for the proximity to the National Historic District and City of Madison Landmarked homes.

Three: There has been no *discussion* of Alder Maniaci's proposal to increase allowable density to the TLNA.

While I am not opposed to new development in our area, it should be done in an open forum with all the stakeholders involved. My first knowledge of this proposal was briefly mentioned at the TLNA meeting on September 13, 2012. Since then, a query of my immediate neighbors indicates they have no knowledge of the proposal.

In summary, I am asking you to reject this proposal and maintain the current zoning ordinances that are congruent with the TLNA plan.

Sincerely,

James Roper  
746 East Gorham St.  
Madison, WI 53703