

41.23 - THIRD LAKE RIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT.

(6) Standards for New Structures in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use. Any new structures on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial use that are located within two hundred (200) feet of other historic resources shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways:

- (a) Gross Volume.
- (b) Height.
- (c) The proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facade(s).
- (d) The materials used in the street facade(s).
- (e) The design of the roof.
- (f) The rhythm of buildings masses and spaces.

The Nature and Importance of Preservation in Madison's Third Lake Ridge

Over the last 45 years I have worked as an architect designing renovations and additions in four out of the five historic districts in Madison, as well as a developer within the historic Third Lake Ridge. Because of the tremendous variation and sometimes confusing nature of ordinance requirements from one district to another, it became important for me to summarize and simplify them in order to maintain compliance in my work. Attached is the most recent of many iterations of my attempt to clarify these differences.

It's clear from the chart that the requirements vary greatly from district to district with some of the variation due to the fact that the ordinances were developed over a sequence of time: each district both built on and added to the requirements of previous districts. On the other hand, it's also clear that some ordinances reflect the inherently different architectural characteristics of each district in and of itself.

Since most of the work I've done has been in the Third Lake Ridge, I was always puzzled by why those ordinances seemed to emphasize spatial qualities and not architectural design. After much consideration of the building forms on Williamson Street along with the residential structures in the rest of the district I realized that the intent of preserving those spatial relationships was well-founded.

The Third Lake Ridge, especially Williamson Street, is an amalgamation of diverse architectural styles accumulated over a long period of time. Unlike Mansion Hill, University Heights, First Settlement, or especially the Bungalow District, there is no single style that characterizes the district. Rather, until its recent development desirability, Third Lake Ridge was an extant example of our architectural heritage as it developed organically over a full century, and as such even more importantly as a genuine representation of our social heritage, "warts and all." Real history doesn't apologize or idealize.

Williamson Street exemplified an authentic example of what is now referred to as "traditional" development: a primary transportation corridor lined with working-class structures from different historical periods, typically with owners living above their modest enterprises. This corridor was interspersed with a mixture of single and multi-family units that transitioned toward Lake Monona with more lavish single-family homes, typically owned by bigger business owners, professionals, and politicians. Because of the appropriately deserved working class reputation of the East Side, this part of Madison remained untouched by big development until very recently.

It was the wisdom of those who wrote the ordinance to have seen the value of preserving this intact example of traditional development, the spatial relationships within the whole being more important than the characteristics of its individual parts. And now as the pendulum has swung back to the popularity of so-called "New Urbanism," the value of preserving this last remaining example of "Original Urbanism" is greater than ever.

Critical to the preservation of this rapidly eroding urban fabric are the restrictions on the volume, scale, and the relationship of mass to space that were so wisely and predominantly incorporated into the ordinances for Third Lake Ridge and it is more important than ever that we all acknowledge, understand, and enforce these essential qualities. The unrelenting mass of the proposal for 817 Williamson not only defies our current standards [*MGO Sec. 41.23(6)(a) and (f)*] but adds precedent towards the ultimate demise of the entire district.

John Martens

