

## **Preliminary Staff Report**

### **Edgewater Redevelopment – 666 Wisconsin Avenue – Mansion Hill Local Historic District Request for Certificate of Appropriateness and Variance(s)**

**Madison Landmarks Commission - November 30, 2009**

#### **Part 1: Request**

The Hammes Company is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the redevelopment of the Edgewater Hotel located at 666 Wisconsin Avenue, in the Mansion Hill Local Historic District. The applicants are also seeking variances from two of the approval criteria, if necessary. Although this is a single integrated project, for the purposes of this report it will be discussed in each of its three component parts: 1) the rehabilitation of the original (1940s) hotel tower and the addition of a story; 2) the removal of the top story of the 1970s addition to create a plaza; and 3) the construction of a new hotel tower, which is an addition to the existing hotel.

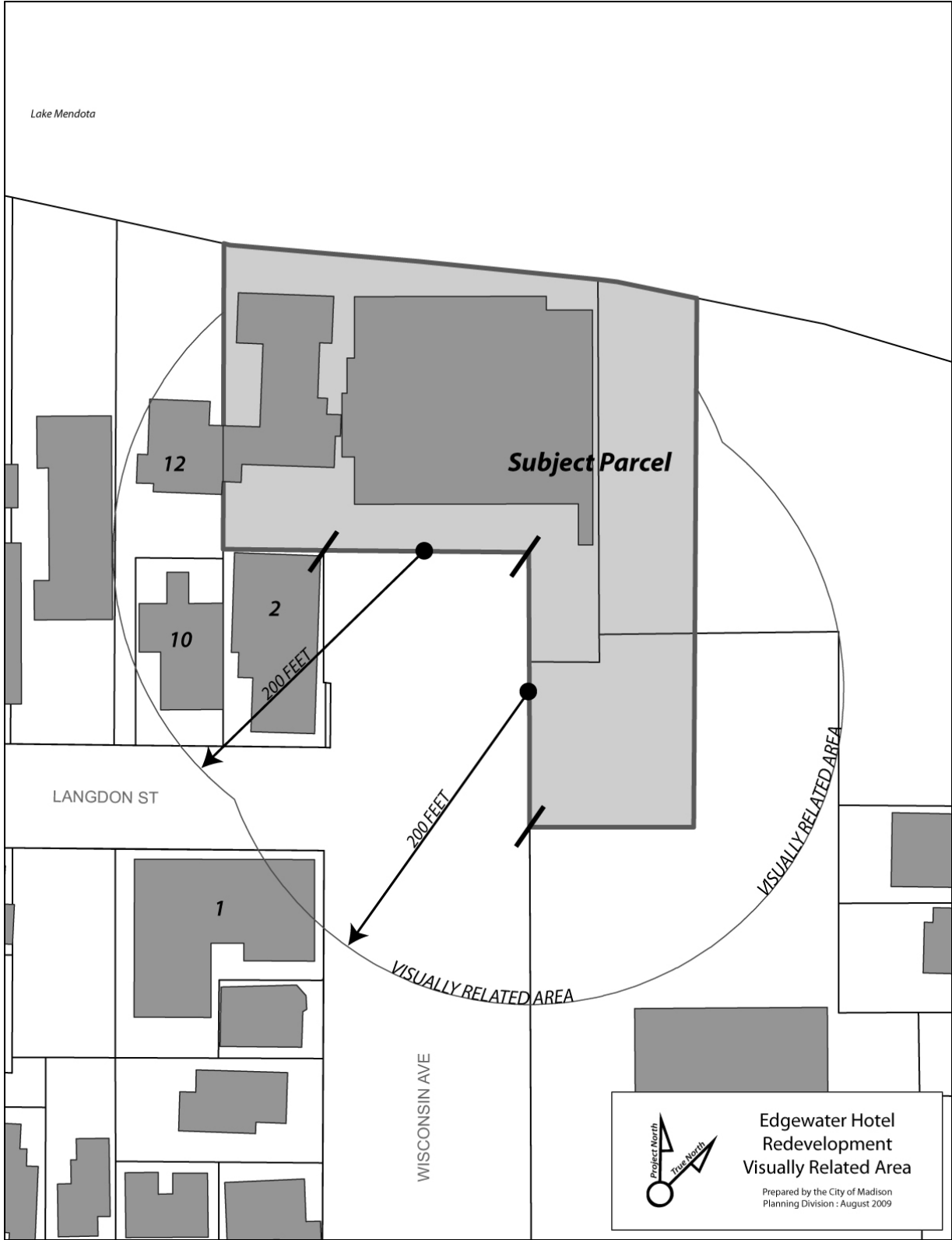
The Landmarks Commission must evaluate this project based on the criteria contained within the Landmarks Ordinance (Sec. 33.19 MGO). Because the Landmarks Ordinance contains different approval criteria based on whether the project involves new construction or additions and alterations to existing structures, and this project involves both, the pertinent criteria will be described with the portion of the project to which they apply. The discussion of the variances requested will also be discussed in the relevant sections. A single Certificate of Appropriateness is being requested.

#### **Part 2: Visually Related Area**

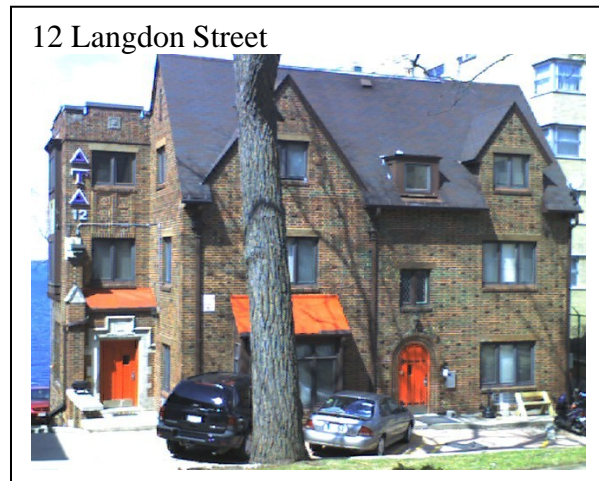
Several of the Mansion Hill Historic District criteria refer to buildings within the Visually Related Area. On the next page is a map of the Visually Related Area for this project, along with photos of each of the four buildings included within the area.

The Visually Related Area for a parcel within a block (not a corner parcel) as specified by the Landmarks Ordinance: “Shall be defined as the areas described by a two-hundred (200) foot circle drawn from the center point of the street side (front) lot line.”

In this case, the development parcel (exclusive of the right-of-way proposed to be leased from the city) has a frontage at the end of Wisconsin Avenue (or ‘project north’ as shown on plans), and along the east side of Wisconsin Avenue (or ‘project east’ as shown on the plans). The Visually Related Area is a combination of 200-foot circles drawn from the center points of each of these segments.



**Photos of Buildings in the Visually Related Area:**



**Part 3: Alterations to 1940s Tower**

The original Edgewater Hotel tower was built in 1946. This is one of the finest Art Moderne buildings in Madison erected for the Quisling family and designed by Kenosha architect Lawrence Monberg. It is a textbook example of the style with porthole windows, metal trim and railings, and streamlined fins shading windows and emphasizing horizontality.

The existing tower will be rehabilitated with repair and replacement of brick, steel lintels, terracotta bands, the reglazing of glass blocks, and new windows that will match the profiles and proportions of the existing windows. The 1970s addition was attached to the east elevation for a significant portion of 2+ stories and concealed views of that elevation from view from many vantage points. This proposal involves the removal of that attachment, revealing the original façade. In this area, matching brick, windows, and architectural detailing will be used to reestablish the original appearance.

A one-story addition is proposed on the top of this building. The design is essentially a continuous glass wall. A new entrance addition is proposed that will emulate the entry as originally designed (but not built) with a curving cantilevered roof as depicted in the illustration included in the submittal. A somewhat expanded and reconstructed Rigadoon Room is also proposed along the lower lakeside elevation.

This component of the project involves alterations to an existing structure. As such, the following sections of the Mansion Hill Historic District requirements apply:

*Sec. 33.19(10)(d) Regulation of Construction, Reconstruction, Exterior Alteration and Demolition.*

*The Commission shall act in these matters specifically as they regard the Mansion Hill Historic District in the manner specified by Madison General Ordinance, Sections 33.19(5)(b) and (c).*

A staff review of the above-cited sections determined that Sec. 33.19(5)(b)4c is the one that is directly relevant to this component of the project:

4. *Upon filing with the Landmarks Commission, the Landmarks Commission shall determine:*
  - c. *Whether, in the case of any property located in an Historic District pursuant to the terms of Subsection (6)(d) hereunder, the proposed construction, reconstruction or exterior alterations does not conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district as duly adopted by the Common Council. (Sec. 33.01(4)(b)3. Renumbered to 4. by Ord. 11,070, 12-6-94)*

The public policy guidelines for the Mansion Hill Historic District were derived from a plan entitled “The Mansion Hill Historic Preservation Plan and Development Handbook”, City Planning Department, 1975. Based on a review of the submitted materials, staff believes that proposed alterations to the original tower are consistent with the objectives and design criteria contained within that plan. However, additional plans need to be submitted showing the architectural details of each elevation of each of these features – the additional story to added, the new entry feature, and the expanded Rigadoon Room element.

#### **Part 4: Alterations to 1970s Addition**

The 1970s addition is a low-rise modern addition that was almost entirely built within the vacated right-of-way of Wisconsin Avenue. From the front, this addition is characterized by a one-story element with a tall fascia. It also includes the entrance to the underground parking structure and vehicular drop-off. Due to the slope of the site, this addition is 5-stories on the lake side.

The proposal removes the top story (approximately 20-feet in height) from this component and incorporates an expansive two-tiered plaza area, circular drive, and entrance to the underground parking structure. The plaza drops a total of approximately 20 feet from the elevation at

Langdon Street. A total of approximately 295,000 cubic feet of the existing structure are proposed to be removed.

Since this component also involves alterations to an existing structure, the above-cited section of the Mansion Hill Historic District requirements apply to this part of the project as well, and is repeated below for convenience:

*Sec. 33.19(10)(d) Regulation of Construction, Reconstruction, Exterior Alteration and Demolition.*

*The Commission shall act in these matters specifically as they regard the Mansion Hill Historic District in the manner specified by Madison General Ordinance, Sections 33.19(5)(b) and (c).*

A staff review of the above-cited sections determined that Sec. 33.19(5)(b)4c is the one that is directly relevant to this component of the project:

4. *Upon filing with the Landmarks Commission, the Landmarks Commission shall determine:*
  - d. *Whether, in the case of any property located in an Historic District pursuant to the terms of Subsection (6)(d) hereunder, the proposed construction, reconstruction or exterior alterations does not conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district as duly adopted by the Common Council. (Sec. 33.01(4)(b)3. Renumbered to 4. by Ord. 11,070, 12-6-94)*

Based on a review of “The Mansion Hill Historic Preservation Plan and Development Handbook”, staff believes that this component is consistent with the objectives and design criteria contained within that plan.

## **Part 5: Construction of New Tower**

The final component of the proposal involves the construction of a new hotel tower that incorporates many neo-classical design elements. The new tower is an addition to the 1970s addition to the original hotel. It is situated on top of a podium that includes a 4-story extension of the 1970s addition topped by a 2-story addition. The new tower extends an additional 8 stories above the 6-story podium. The new structure will be a total of 8 stories at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Langdon Street and 14-stories on the lake side.

The Landmarks Ordinance contains references to “construction,” “exterior alteration,” “new development,” “new structure,” “new building,” “new construction,” and “additions.” None of these terms are defined within the Ordinance, and staff concludes that the terms are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, the new tower is attached to and substantially integrated with the 1970s addition, but is in essence a new structure, so both aspects need to be considered in evaluating this component.

This component of the project must meet all of the following design criteria of Sec. 33.19(10)(e)1.-5. of the Mansion Hill Historic District – Guideline Criteria for new Development in the Mansion Hill Historic District. Below is a discussion of each of these criteria:

**1. *The gross volume of any new structure shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).***

The proposal must be found to be visually compatible with the buildings and environment within the Visually Related Area, as shown above. There are several ways to describe gross volume, including total building square footage and cubic area. Since the ordinance also refers to visual compatibility with “the buildings and environment”, staff also considered the floor area ratio (FAR), which is a measure of the amount of floor area compared to the size of the site a building occupies.

	<b>Estimated Gross Floor Area</b>	<b>Estimated Gross Volume</b>	<b>Estimated Floor Area Ratio</b>
<b>1 Langdon St.</b>	53,600 sq. ft.	589,800 cu. ft.	3.8
<b>2 Langdon St.</b>	19,600 sq. ft.	215,000 cu. ft.	2.3
<b>10 Langdon St.</b>	9,700 sq. ft.	107,100 cu. ft.	1.45
<b>12 Langdon St.</b>	14,500 sq. ft.	159,600 cu. ft.	0.93
<b>Edgewater New Tower (including the podium portion)</b>	164,100 sq. ft.	1,692,200 cu. ft.	3.44 (not including the right-of-way)

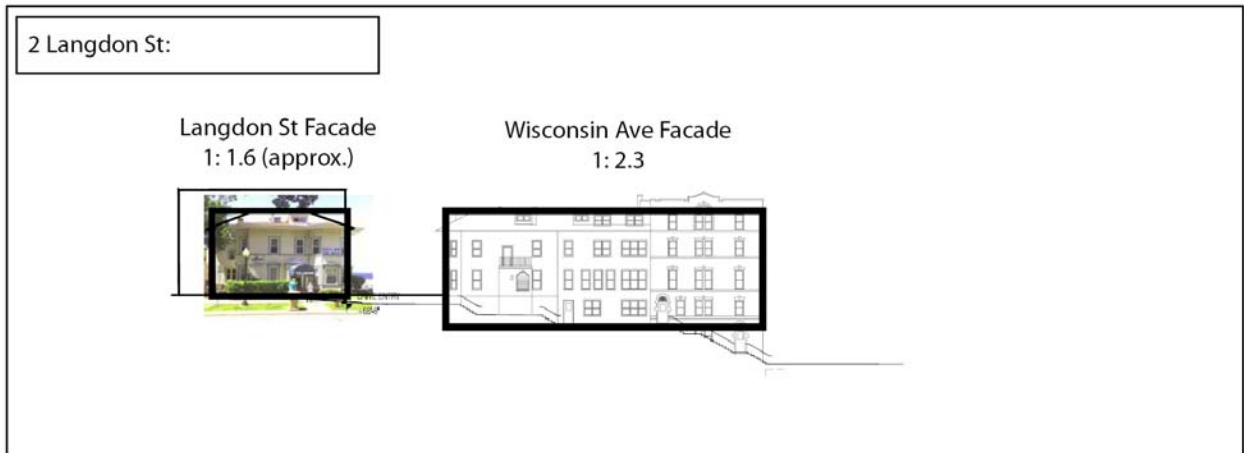
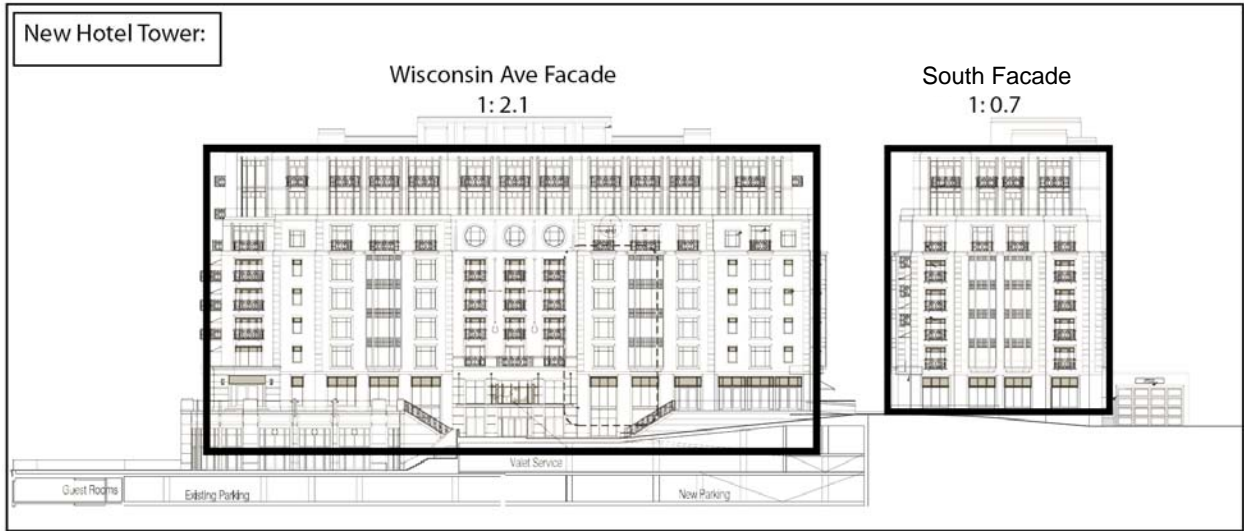
*For buildings in the Visually Related Area, Gross Floor Area and Gross Volume are estimates based on building footprints contained in the application and photographs to determine the number of stories, and are rounded to the nearest 100 sq.ft. The Gross Volume estimates are based on an assumed 11-foot floor-to-floor height. Floor Area Ratio for these buildings was calculated using the Gross Floor Area in the table and lot area from City of Madison Assessor’s Office records and do not include parking. Figures for the Edgewater New Tower were taken from the submitted plans.*

**2. *In the street elevation(s) of a new building, the proportion between the width and the height in the facade(s) shall be visually compatible with the buildings and the environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).***

The proposed new tower has a street elevation that parallels Wisconsin Avenue, even though it also includes a portion of vacated Wisconsin Avenue. Given its location at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and Langdon Street, the elevation that parallels Langdon Street will be prominent; staff also included this elevation in the analysis as it applies to this criterion.

On the next page is a study that compares these elevations of the proposed new tower to the street elevations of other buildings within the visually related area. While the street elevation(s) are substantially larger than the street elevations of other buildings within the Visually Related Area, this criterion relates to “the proportion between the width and the height in the facades”, and based on the illustrations of the next page, these proportions appear to be similar.

Proportions between width and height for street elevations.



Except for the photo of 2 Langdon Street, other information in the above graphic was taken from the application. Note that 10 Langdon Street was not included due to lack of scalable information, and 12 Langdon Street was not included as the building does not have a facade that directly abuts a street frontage.

- 3. The proportions and relationships between width and height of the doors and windows in new street facade(s) shall be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).***

Based on a comparison of the architecture of the proposed new tower to the buildings within the Visually Related Area, staff does not believe that there is an issue with meeting this criterion. The application contains an illustration comparing one window of the proposed structure to one window in 1 Langdon Street (Kennedy Manor) and to one window in 2 Langdon Street. If the Commission feels that a more specific analysis is necessary to make a finding on this criterion, it should request additional information from the applicant.

- 4. The rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the facade of the new structure should be visually compatible with the buildings and environment with which it is visually related (visually related area).***

Staff reviewed photos of the buildings within the Visually Related Area and compared the pattern of solids and voids with the proposed new tower. Based on this evaluation, staff does not believe that there is an issue with meeting this criterion. The application contains one photo of the Langdon Street elevation of 1 Langdon Street (Kennedy Manor) shown next a line drawing of the Wisconsin Avenue elevation of the proposed new tower. If the Commission feels that a more specific analysis is necessary to make a finding on this criterion, it should request additional information from the applicant.

- 5. All new street facades should blend with other buildings via directional expression. When adjacent buildings have a dominant vertical or horizontal expression, this expression should be carried over and reflected.***

The proposed new tower has an overall horizontal expression with a base that has more of a storefront appearance, a middle with a consistent pattern of windows, balconies, solid areas, and other features, and a top which utilizes larger expansions of glass for a lighter appearance. Of the buildings within the visually related area, 1 Langdon Street has a strong horizontal direction, as does 2 Langdon Street along the Wisconsin Avenue elevation. Other buildings within the Visually Related Area are a more square shape without a strong vertical or horizontal expression. This criterion is not specifically limited to buildings within the Visually Related Area. When considering other nearby buildings, the National Guardian Life building has a horizontal expression and other smaller residential buildings have more of a square shape. Staff does not believe that there is an issue with meeting this criterion. If the Commission feels that a more specific analysis is necessary to make a finding on this criterion, it should request additional information from the applicant.



## **Part 6: Variance Request**

The applicants have requested variances, if needed, from criteria 1 and 2 of the Guideline Criteria for new Development in the Mansion Hill Historic District above. Section 33.19(15) of the Landmarks Ordinance provides for variances to be granted and the relevant excerpts of that section are provided below:

### *(15) Variances.*

*(a) Authority. The Landmarks Commission may vary the criteria for review of additions, exterior alterations or repairs for designated landmarks, landmark sites and improvements in any Historic District and the criteria for new construction in any Historic District in harmony with the general purpose and intent to preserve the historic character of landmarks, landmark sites and of each Historic District only in the specific instances hereinafter set forth and only if the proposed project will be visually compatible with the historic character of all buildings directly affected by the project and of all buildings within the visually related area.*

*The variance procedure and standards are designed to prevent undue hardships caused by application of the strict letter of the regulations of this chapter and to encourage and promote improved aesthetic design by allowing for greater freedom, imagination and flexibility in the alteration of existing buildings and the construction of new buildings within an Historic District while ensuring substantial compliance with the basic intent of the ordinance.*

*(c) Standards. The Landmarks Commission shall not vary the regulations of this ordinance unless it makes findings of fact based upon the evidence presented to it in each specific case that one or more of the following conditions is present:*

- 1. The particular physical characteristics of the specific building or site involved would result in a substantial hardship upon the owner as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of the regulations were to be carried out, provided that the alleged difficulty or hardship is created by this ordinance and has not been created by any person presently having an interest in the property.*
- 2. In the case of the alteration of an existing building, the proposed design would incorporate materials, details, or other elements not permitted by the ordinance but which can be documented by photographs, architectural or archaeological research or other suitable evidence to have been used on other buildings of a similar vintage and style in the Historic District in which the building is located, provided that the project will not destroy significant architectural features on the building.*
- 3. In the case of new construction, the proposed design incorporates materials, details, setbacks, massing or other elements that are not permitted by the ordinance but which would enhance the quality of the design for the new building or structure, provided that said new building or structure otherwise complies with the criteria for new construction in the Historic District in which the building or structure is proposed to be located and provided further that it would also have a beneficial effect on the historic character of the visually related area.*

(d) *Authorized Variances.* Variances shall be granted by the Landmarks Commission only in accordance with the standards set forth in (13)(c) above, and may be granted only in the following instances:

1. *To permit residing with a material or in a manner not permitted under this chapter.*
2. *To allow additions visible from the street or alterations to street facades which are not compatible with the existing building in design, scale, color, texture, proportion of solids to voids or proportion of widths to heights of doors and windows.*
3. *To allow materials and/or architectural details used in an alteration or addition to differ in texture, appearance and design from those used in the original construction of the existing building.*
4. *To permit the alteration of a roof shape otherwise prohibited under this chapter.*
5. *To permit the use of roofing materials otherwise prohibited under this chapter.*
6. *To allow use of materials for new construction which use would be otherwise prohibited under Sec. 33.01(12)(f)1.b.*

*(Sec. 33.01(13) Renumbered by Ord. 10,871, Adopted 3-15-94)*

## **Part 7: Staff Recommendation**

Staff has reviewed each of the components of the project against the related criteria as discussed in this report.

Based on the materials submitted, staff believe that the project is consistent with the criteria for alterations to the 1940s tower, and that the Landmarks Commission can find that this portion of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness can be granted, subject to detailed architectural plans showing all elevations of the additional story to added, the new entry feature, and the expanded Rigadoon Room element being approved by staff.

Staff believes that the project is also consistent with the criteria for alterations to the 1970s addition, and that the Landmarks Commission can find that this portion of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness can be granted, subject to the final design details or any minor changes in the design being approved by staff.

Staff believes that the project is further consistent with the criteria 3-5 for new construction for the new tower. However, based on the information submitted to date, staff would find it very difficult to conclude that the proposal can meet criterion 1 for new construction based on the comparative analyses cited above. Staff recognizes that the finding of visual compatibility is informed by the gross volume and size of buildings and their environment within the Visually Related Area and that this decision is one that the Landmarks Commission will need to make based on the information provided to date and the additional information received at the meeting. Staff believes that a case can be made that the proposal meets criterion 2 for new construction. While the street elevation(s) are substantially larger than the street elevations of other buildings within the Visually Related Area, this criterion relates to “the proportion between the width and the height in the facades”. These proportions are similar and to other buildings within the Visually Related Area and the Landmarks Commission may be able to find that this criterion is met. To approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for this portion of the project, the Landmarks

Commission must either find that the project meets all five criteria or grant the requested variance for criteria 1 and/or 2 (unless it determines that the proposal meets one or both of these).

The applicants have stated that additional information on the project and analysis of the Visually Related Area and the requested variances will be presented at the Landmarks Commission meeting on November 30, 2009. The Landmarks Commission should carefully consider the application submitted, the additional materials and testimony presented at the meeting in considering whether the standards for approval can be met.

Respectfully submitted,  
Rebecca Cnare and Bill Fruhling  
Planning Division  
Department of Planning and Community and Economic Development  
City of Madison