

**From:** Jason Tish [mailto:madisontrusted@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Friday, November 20, 2009 4:38 PM  
**To:** Cnare, Rebecca; Martin, Al  
**Subject:** Joint meeting of UDC and Landmarks Commission

Ms. Cnare and Mr. Martin-

Below is the text of my 3-minute (OK, 5-minute) talk at the joint UDC / Landmarks Commission on Nov. 18. This is not a full statement of the Madison Trust's official position on the Edgewater proposal, but rather the ideas that I wanted to get across to the joint session at this stage of the proposal. I'd appreciate it if you could make this available to all Commissioners.

Thanks,

--

Jason Tish  
Executive Director - Madison Trust for Historic Preservation  
Local Field Representative - National Trust for Historic Preservation  
P.O. Box 296  
Madison, WI 53701  
ph: 608-441-8864  
fax: 608-204-0711

[www.madisontrust.org](http://www.madisontrust.org)  
[www.preservationnation.org](http://www.preservationnation.org)

We are not out to stop development in Madison. We are not out to stop this project. We understand that to be a livable, viable city there needs to be growth. And that's why all of us are here tonight – because we want to affect growth that is good for us and for our city.

We would like to be able to support a proposal for a revitalized Edgewater Hotel, with a substantial addition. We all agree that the public space that we got from the 1970s addition is a dramatic failure, and that the addition itself does not enhance the hotel.

We would be supportive of a project here that respects the scale of the Historic District, that respects what was stipulated for new construction in the Mansion Hill Historic District ordinance without trying to shoehorn something far out-of-scale with the District just because there are planning and zoning mechanisms that allow it to be approved. In reality, if a project were proposed here that had to conform to all applicable zoning requirements and ordinances it would be dramatically different than the current proposal and likely would fit into the mansion Hill District nicely.

We would support a restoration of the 1947 Edgewater Hotel that is true to the historic character of the building - Overhaul the interior to make it work for new program demands, but do a true restoration of the

exterior – build the dramatic entrance in the original rendering that was never executed, pull the addition away from the northeastern elevation and restore the fenestration there. We are supportive of those plans.

We would even be able to support a project here that shows a disregard for the historical styles in the district. This is an infill project in a Historic District. Many cities' requirements for new infill construction in historic districts stipulate that it reflects current (even forward-looking) aesthetic ideals and cutting edge use of materials, but does so in a way that honors the scale of the District – and the forms of the buildings that make the District significant. So it's a form-based approach to new construction in HDs rather than a style-based approach.

Rockville, MD – “New construction should reflect the 21<sup>st</sup> century while respecting size, scale, massing and materials found within the district, rather than competing with the historic structures. In such a way, complementary new construction becomes part of the fabric of the district, marking changes in the City over time.

Michigan HP Office – Infill design should “Maintain the historic character of the area, while reflecting change with compatible new design that maintains setbacks and alignment patterns of buildings in the surrounding context and Relate to the scale of nearby historic buildings.”

This might require a paradigm shift for the Landmarks Commission, to allow something with a contemporary design rather than forcing historicism - making new designs use ideals and elements of old designs. Many new additions to old buildings (and new infill in HDs) have been dramatically successful even if they're a little hard to swallow at first. I.M. Pei's glass pyramid at the Louvre Museum in Paris, Renzo Piano's Modern addition to the Chicago Institute of Art. The new Jewish Student Center on Langdon St. – a non-contributing student center in Langdon St. HD was demolished to build it, but it's a great contemporary design, and I'll bet that in 50 years we'll be seriously considering its contribution to that District. This Commission approved the Lindsey Lee House in the Third Lake Ridge HD – clearly an example of compatibility based on form rather than style.

We would be supportive of new construction here that

A - - is low-profile with less intrusive massing - maintaining the feel of small-scale residential district.

B – reflects progressive, visionary architecture that implements forward-looking aesthetics and progressive use of materials

C – restores the 1947 Hotel to its true original design

#### Precedent:

A lot has been said about the potential for this project to set a precedent – a precedent for out-of-scale new construction in our historic districts – and Hammes, who is writing their own PUD language, has included a “Bulk Contingency” clause ostensibly to prevent this project from being seen as a precedent.

If the sell-job that Hammes has imposed on this city, our mayor, and our public involvement process - works, and this proposal gets all the approvals and variances it needs to get built, **that** is the precedent.

If the Landmarks Commission issues a Certificate of Appropriateness for this project in this Historic District, despite that it's gross volume is clearly not compatible with the nearby residential properties that comprise the significance of the district, which is the intent of the Historic District ordinance, despite the letter of the law invoking the "visually related area" – **that** is the precedent.

Some people have pointed to the NGL and Verex Bldgs (recent WSJ editorial referred to these) as being **allowed** in the district – I think it's been made perfectly clear at previous meetings that those buildings were built before the HD ordinance was implemented, and that the intrusion of those buildings in the neighborhood was a catalyst for the designation of the District and for the language of the HD ordinance. When crafting the ordinance we decided that we do not want large-scale development in this District.

In the 1960s and 70s virtually every medium and large city on the country enacted a historic preservation ordinance, including Madison. In 1974 we decided that "places of special character or special historical interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, and welfare" of Madison's residents. Then as districts were identified, we decided on guidelines that would provide a reasonable degree of stability to the scale, charm and eloquence of these districts. Since then, the most successful historic districts nationally have been those that draw a hard line on the boundaries, keep tight control of new construction within those boundaries, provide incentives (carrot or stick) for property owners within the districts to maintain the character of their properties, and benefit from promotion of them as attractions for the growing heritage tourism industry. What these two Commissions conclude about this project will be a loud statement of this city's attitude toward its Historic places. If this project is to enhance the Mansion Hill District, it will need to be dramatically modified. And I have no doubt that Hammes Co. and their architects can make it work - if these commissions require it.

Sincerely,

Jason Tish  
Executive Director – Madison Trust for Historic Preservation