

November 14, 2022

Landmarks Commission

Dear Commissioners,

72 years ago, President Truman dedicated Filene House,¹ 1617 Sherman Avenue, the international headquarters of the Credit Union National Association, a building currently occupied by My Choice, Wisconsin. 5000 people attended the event. The president said “Credit unions offer people who have few resources a way of getting funds when they need them.”² The activity of credit unions “is a tribute to the values of thrift and self-help and mutual assistance.” He went on “This building will service credit unions in the United States and Canada, and other areas of the Western Hemisphere. It will be a truly international headquarters--and, as such, it symbolizes the international character of cooperative activities. In whatever country they may be found, these activities speak a common language and have a common goal.” He used the words “cooperate” and “cooperative” 13 times in his remarks as he went on to discuss problems in other registers of concern. He used the expressions “common language,” “common goal,” “common destiny,” “common cause,” “common welfare,” “common defense” and “common good.” He calls our attention to our collective life together. This building tells a story infused with central democratic values.

Though Truman had been here in Madison two years before and there had not been a presidential visit since 1932, there would not be another presidential visit for another 42 years.

¹ Named after Edward Filene, pioneer of credit unions in the United States.

² All quotes are from President Harry Truman’s Address at Dedication of the Credit Union National Association’s Filene House, Madison Wisconsin. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/132/address-dedication-credit-union-national-associations-filene-house>

The building is beautiful. In conjunction with the Tenney Locks, we use it as a landmark to give directions to friends visiting Sherman Terrace. Its mid-twentieth century modern style is pleasing to the eye. The thirty-four 7-foot by 7-foot glass windows on the two-story facade reflect the light of the sky in the late afternoon and the evening, and mirror the clouds at sunset. Its brown and cream color brick not only evoke other buildings in Madison from the same era, but they, too, add to the beauty of the natural color palette, all framed by the mature maples and pines.

I would be surprised if there were anyone currently living in the neighborhood who remembers a time when this building was not part of the local landscape. Its presence evokes the passage of time as well as continuity with the past and hope for the future.

At the Urban Design Commission meeting of October 26, commissioner Jessica Klehr asked the question: “Did the developer consider converting the present building? And if not, why not as I have seen (the architectural firm) Potter Lawson do wonderful things with conversion?”

Instead of demolition we would like to see conversion explored more thoroughly as the needs of the present and the future do not have to be satisfied at the expense of erasing the past.

Sincerely,

Larry Nesper

Sherman Terrace Neighborhood Association



November 14, 2022

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Re: Landmarks Commission demolition review
1617 Sherman Avenue, Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Heather and members of the Landmarks Commission:

At the upcoming November 14 meeting, the Landmarks Commission will informally review the above property proposed for demolition. We wish to add the following written response into the public record for consideration at this meeting and will look forward to discussing at this meeting.

- The firm that designed 1617 Sherman does not believe there is architectural significance to the building. Potter Lawson's predecessor firm (Law, Law, Potter & Nystrom) was the architect for the existing building at 1617 Sherman. Potter Lawson does not believe there is historical significance in the stripped-classical style of architecture, which is essentially classical, without any of the classical elements that make the building interesting.
- The building's age is not significant for Landmark status. The City of Madison website identifies 182 buildings and sites that have received Landmark status. All 182 are older than the building at 1617 Sherman. The age of the existing building is not historically significant.
- We do not believe this location has significance to the founding of the credit union movement. The movement's founding is traced back to a meeting in Estes Park, CO in 1934 where 52 credit union leaders from 21 states and the District of Columbia met to establish the Credit Union National Association (CUNA). Madison was designated their temporary headquarters. The first headquarter building in Madison was located at 142 East Gilman Avenue which was later demolished in 1940 after CUNA moved to their second headquarter location at 1342 East Washington Street. 1617 Sherman Avenue was the third CUNA headquarter building for approximately 10 years from 1950-1960 before the company outgrew the building. In 1960 CUNA relocated to its fourth headquarters at 5910 Mineral Point Road where it exists today.

- Numerous U. S. Presidents have visited Madison. Truman's visit in 1950 was not his first visit to Madison, nor was 1617 Sherman its purpose. Truman's 1950 visit was focused on delivering a "peace address" at the UW-Madison Field House prior to commencement of the Korean War. Truman's visit to 1617 Sherman was another stop on that trip.

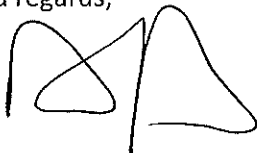
These are the various Presidential visits to Madison:

- Rutherford B. Hayes, 1878
 - Woodrow Wilson, Oct. 26, 1911
 - William H. Taft, May 5-7, 1915
 - Theodore Roosevelt, May 28, 1918
 - Herbert Hoover, Nov. 5, 1932
 - Harry Truman, Oct. 14, 1948
 - Dwight D. Eisenhower, Oct. 28, 1949
 - Harry Truman, May 14, 1950
 - John F. Kennedy, Oct. 23, 1960
 - Bill Clinton, Oct. 1, 1992
 - Jimmy Carter, March 1, 1994
 - Barack Obama, Feb. 12, 2008
 - Bill Clinton, Feb. 14, 2008
- We do not believe the neighborhood and City of Madison consider this building to be significant. City of Madison's Emerson East – Eken Park – Yahara Neighborhood Plan was developed in 2016 as a supplement to the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan with input from neighborhood groups and city staff. The plan recommends that the building at 1617 Sherman "be adapted for use as a residential structure, or for it to be razed and new residential structures built in its place." We have reviewed the feasibility of converting this building to residential and deemed it functionally obsolete for this purpose.

We respect that the City of Madison may consider the cornerstone itself to be historically interesting. Vermillion is willing to donate the cornerstone to the Madison historical society or willing to incorporate it into an historic marker onsite. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on the matter and working with the Landmarks Commission on a path forward.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Kind regards,



Darrin Jolas
Vermillion Development

From: [Victor Toniolo](#)
To: [PLLCApplications](#)
Subject: 1617 Sherman
Date: Monday, November 14, 2022 4:55:12 PM

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Landmarks,

I support the demolition of 1617 Sherman Ave and am curious why landmarks is involved. I think it's a big stretch to consider this building historic in any way

Victor Toniolo