

Mansion Hill Neighborhood Association

c/o Eugene Devitt
28 East Gilman Street
Madison, WI 53703

May 30, 2012

Plan Commission Members & Staff
c/o Mr. William Fruhling, AICP
Department of Planning & Community
& Economic Development
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-2985

RE: Proposed Zoning Change for the National Guardian Life Property at East
East Gilman, Wisconsin Avenue and North Pinckney Street

Dear Plan Commissioners:

The Mansion Hill Neighborhood requests that the entire block of Wisconsin Avenue, East Gilman Street and North Pinckney Street be zoned DR1 as is most of the balance of Mansion Hill. When the proposed zoning district map became available, we called zoning staff and were informed that the change was only from OR to UOR. We explained that the entire site was zoned R6H and upon checking, staff explained that because the Verex site was zoned OR that they thought the NGL site would be OR as well. It is not. It has always been zoned for residential use and for years has been R6, and after the Mansion Hill Historic District was formed-R6H, which is its current zoning.

The zoning of this parcel is extremely important for the success of the Historic District. Owners like Eugene Devitt, who owns the remarkable 28 East Gilman across from the Mansion Hill Inn, has been steadily restoring his property for years. Owners like Gene need to be able to have confidence that the neighborhood will remain residential and that its scale and texture will reflect the City's detailed recommendations for the Mansion Hill Historic District.

A little history is in order: In 1963, Wisconsin's largest and most fabulous mansion, the Vilas Mansion, was demolished along with the adjoining Frederikson Mansion on East Gilman Street to make way for the National Guardian Life Insurance building. The destruction of the Vilas Mansion was controversial and unpopular. It, together with other unpopular demolitions, caused Madison to adopt the Mansion Hill Historic District as Wisconsin's first Historic District. Ultimately, the design for the National Guardian Life Insurance building was agreed to and approved by the neighbors and the City Council. The design incorporated deep setbacks more or less replicating the setbacks of the Vilas Mansion. An important feature of the agreement was that the zoning for the entire site remain residential. It was understood that any future development on the NGL site would be residential.

Unlike residential uses, offices or commercial uses often have growing or changing needs. In the case of National Guardian Life, although everyone believed its parking garage would accommodate any possible future growth, a change in NGL's business resulted in the need for a many new parking spaces. The first of these was located at the foot of North Pinckney Street the site of the original Magnus Swenson mansion. Later, Mrs. Hank's (Colonel Vilas' daughter) house at the end of Langdon Street was demolished as a part of the '70s Edgewater addition project. Later, NGL required even more parking and the site of Mrs. Hank's house became a second surface parking lot with the driveway on Wisconsin Avenue. Neighbors and historic preservationists would not normally support commercial surface parking lots in a Historic District, but because of the limited amount of street parking and the needs of NGL, they again supported an NGL surface parking lot. This demonstrates the fact that office or commercial uses create unpredictable demands that can make them inappropriate in a residential setting.

We understand that the committee studying zoning districts has preliminarily recommended that the lakefront NGL site (Magnus Swenson) be changed to DR1. The question is, what would happen to the current building site if the NGL building were to be demolished? Our hope is that the site would be developed as residential property appropriate for the Historic District. Accordingly, we ask that the entire NGL site remain residential and be zoned DR1.

Attached is the map of the proposed Downtown Plan and two pages from the November 2011 Downtown Plan with page 42 indicating generalized future land use for the subject property as "predominantly residential," and page 57 indicating at recommendation 83 "large office employment uses should be limited to existing development, and any redevelopment or infill of these sites should encourage residential as the predominant use." It further recommends, "that new development is compatible with the historic context in scale and design."

I should add that we are happy with NGL as a neighbor. They maintain their property beautifully and have approached us forthrightly when they needed additional parking. The surface parking lots that they had built are exactly what they represented. What we are talking about is not whether or not we like NGL, but what signals we are sending about our seriousness with respect to the Mansion Hill Historic District.

Sincerely,

Mansion Hill Neighborhood Association



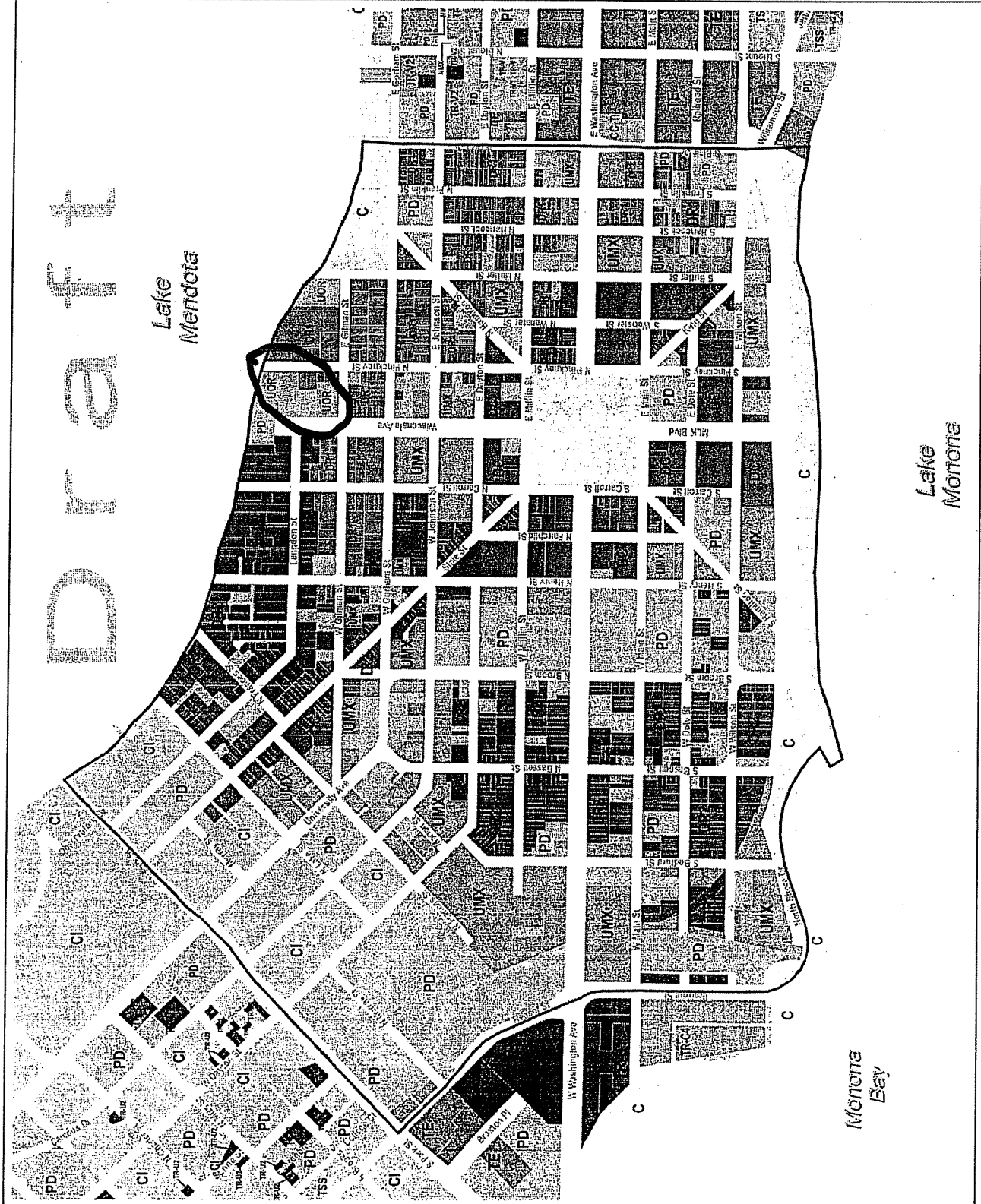
Frederic E. Mohs
Representative

FEM: eeh
Enclosure

**City of Madison
Proposed Zoning Districts
Downtown Plan Area
January 24, 2012**

- Downtown Plan Area
- Potential Zoning Districts
- DC - Downtown Core
- UNX - Urban Mixed Use
- UOR - Urban Office Residential
- DR1 - Downtown Residential 1
- DR2 - Downtown Residential 2
- A - Agriculture District
- UA - Urban Agriculture District
- C - Concreary District
- TR-R - Traditional Residential - Rustic District
- SR-C1 - Suburban Residential - Consistent District 1
- SR-C2 - Suburban Residential - Consistent District 2
- SR-C3 - Suburban Residential - Consistent District 3
- SR-V1 - Suburban Residential - Varied District 1
- SR-V2 - Suburban Residential - Varied District 2
- TR-C1 - Traditional Residential - Consistent District 1
- TR-C2 - Traditional Residential - Consistent District 2
- TR-C3 - Traditional Residential - Consistent District 3
- TR-C4 - Traditional Residential - Consistent District 4
- TR-V1 - Traditional Residential - Varied District 1
- TR-V2 - Traditional Residential - Varied District 2
- TR-U1 - Traditional Residential - Urban District 1
- TR-U2 - Traditional Residential - Urban District 2
- TR-P - Traditional Residential - Planned District
- NMX - Neighborhood Mixed-Use District
- TSS - Traditional Shopping Street District
- MXX - Mixed-Use Center District
- CC-C - Commercial Corridor - Traditional District
- CC - Commercial Center District
- TE - Traditional Employment District
- SE - Suburban Employment District
- SEC - Suburban Employment Center District
- EC - Employment Campus District
- IL - Industrial - Limited District
- IG - Industrial - General District
- PD - Planned Development District
- PD-MHP - Planned Mobile Home Park District
- AP - Airport District
- CI - Campus Institutional District

Planning Division
City of Madison
Prepared January 18, 2012

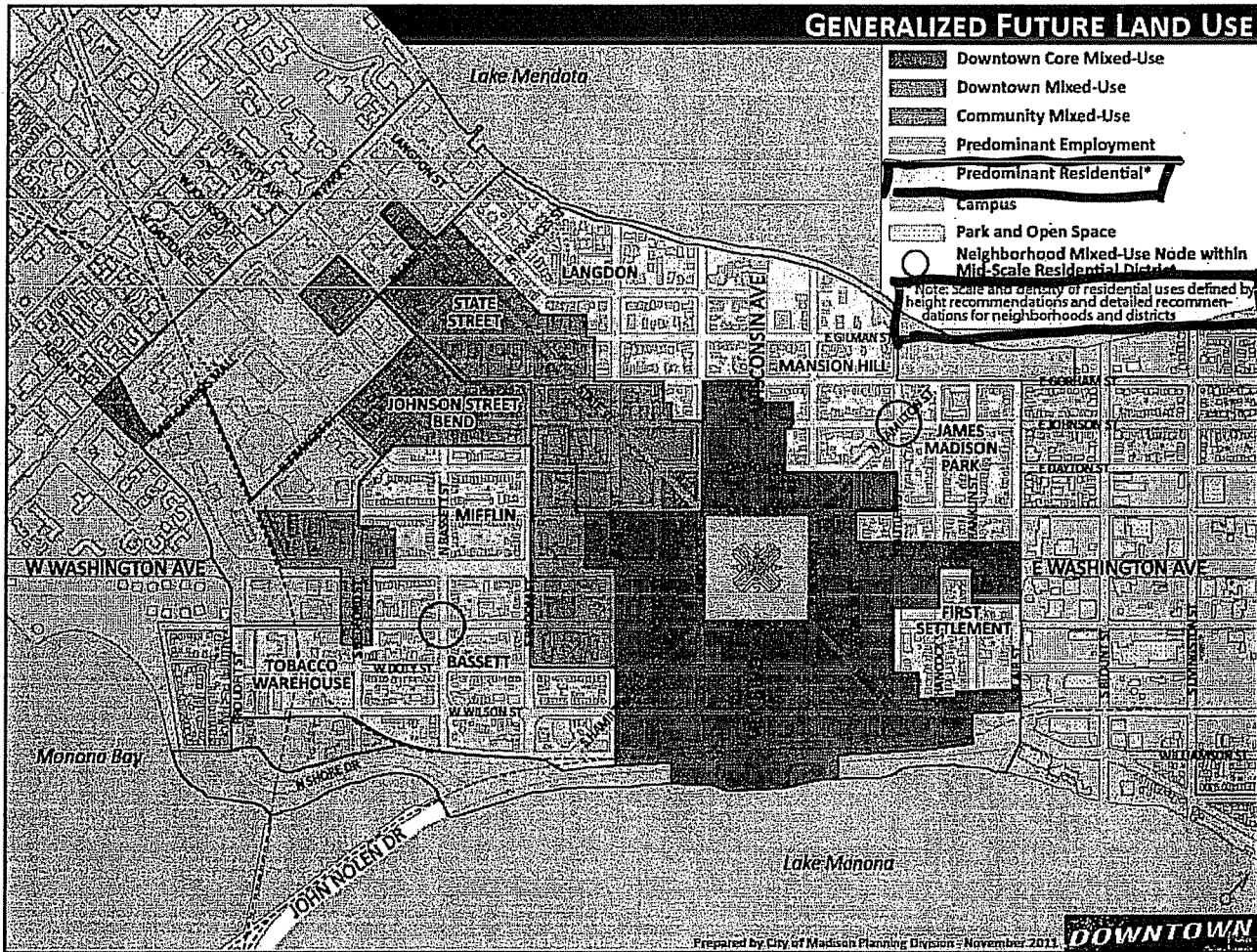


DOWNTOWN *Plan*

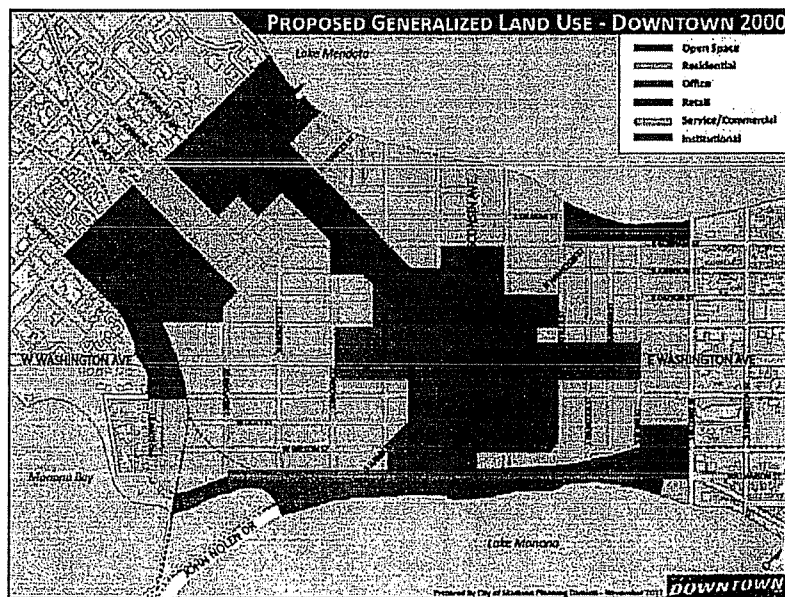
Madison, Wisconsin



November 2011



The Proposed Generalized Land Use Map to the right is from the *Downtown 2000* plan that was adopted by the City in 1989 and is included in this document for historical purposes only. Note that while there are some changes, the overall land use organization is very similar to that proposed in the map above.

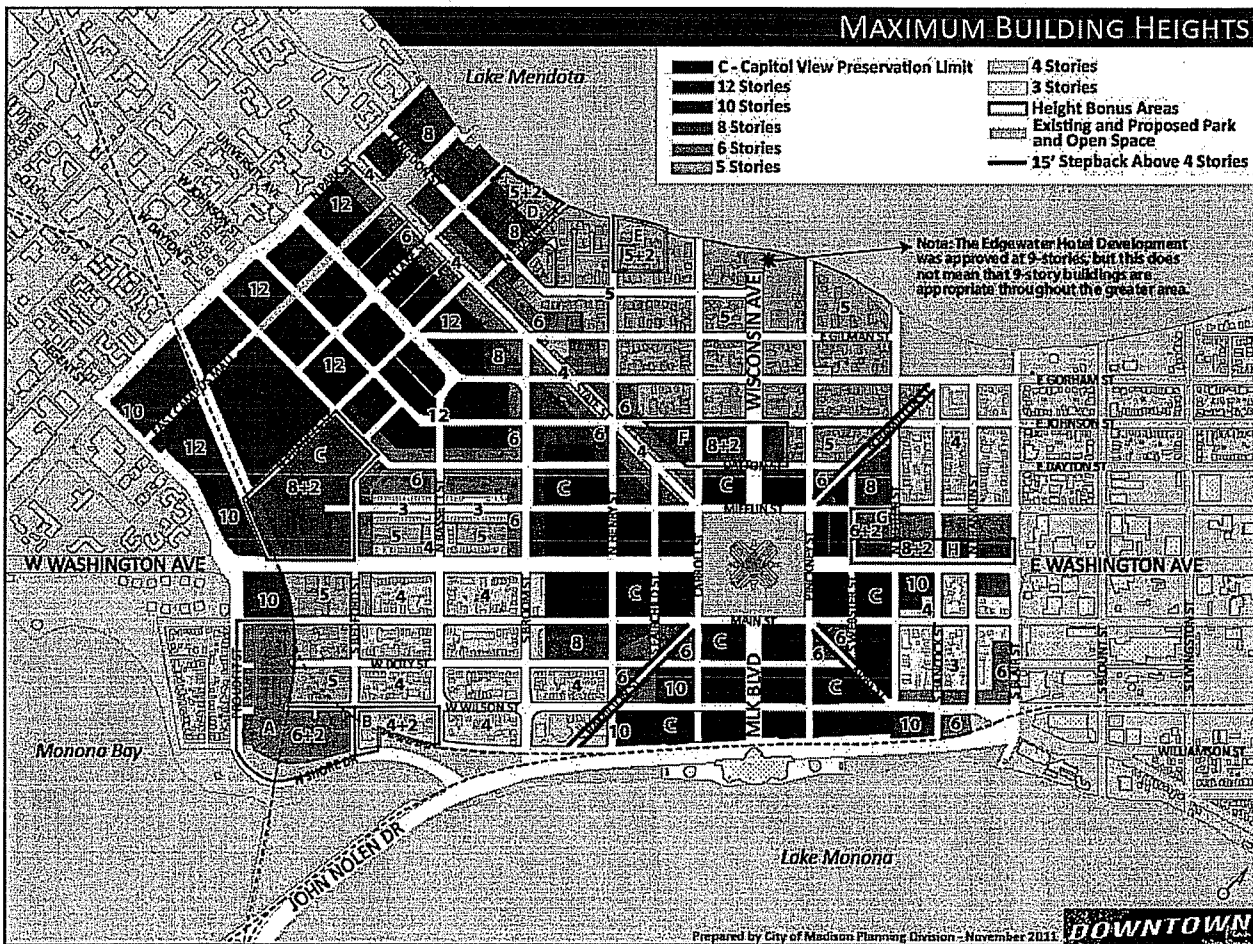


Although it is imbedded across all areas of this plan, land use is the cornerstone of the major plan goal of making Downtown a model of sustainability (see page 105). In addition to generally supporting a mix of uses and relatively higher density, this plan specifically supports the principles of Transit Oriented Development, or TOD. TODs are essentially higher-density mixed-use development areas that are less automobile-centered and are coordinated with, and developed in close proximity to, existing and planned transit centers. The Downtown Core, State Street, and West Rail districts in particular embody many TOD principles.

and buildings with taller floor-to-floor heights should reduce the number of stories accordingly. Also for the purposes of this plan, height is measured from the highest point of a front lot line along a street adjacent to the site, so buildings on the downhill side of a slope might be taller than shown on the low portions of the site.

Rooftops can provide valuable open spaces, such as gardens or patios, in dense urban environments. This Downtown Plan encourages the development of such amenities, including potential amendments to the Capitol View Preservation Ordinance, that may allow the minimum required stair/elevator access to such spaces as an exception to that limit.

During the planning process, several areas were identified with special characteristics that make it reasonable to allow the potential to consider buildings slightly taller than the recommended base height under certain circumstances. These tend to be transition areas located between areas with different development character, recommended building height and scale; or which include existing older structures whose long-term preservation should be encouraged, but may be threatened by the potential for high-density redevelopment. To recognize and accommodate these situations, the Maximum Building Heights Map in this Downtown Plan defines eight areas where buildings may be allowed up to two additional, or bonus, stories if they meet 4 specific criteria that reflect the unique context of the site and its surroundings, and help to advance the planning recommendations for that area. Further explanation on the bonus stories and the criteria for considering them can be found in Appendix C.



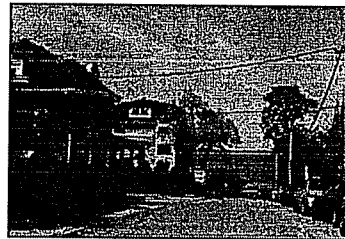
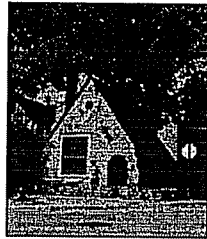
This plan recommends that a local historic district be considered to support the National Register designation and clarify the desire to preserve the historic character. Wholesale redevelopment is not the goal, but a limited amount of new development to replace non-contributing, blighted housing will benefit the area.

Lake access should be enhanced through implementation of the recommended lakefront path and the development of street ends to become viable public spaces. The pedestrian walkway between the lake and Langdon Street should be formalized to enhance its aesthetics and safety and to make stronger connections to the proposed lakefront path. Opportunities for implementing these amenities should be pursued in conjunction with new development that occurs adjacent to these corridors, but that potential should not be justification for approving new development that is otherwise inconsistent with the recommendations of this plan.

LANGDON RECOMMENDATIONS
(continued)

Recommendation 79: Update the Downtown Design Zone standards for the Langdon Street area and incorporate them into the Zoning Ordinance.

Recommendation 80: Explore financial incentives (such as small cap Tax Increment Finance loans or grants) to rehabilitate landmarks, potential landmarks, and contributing buildings within existing TIF districts, including for rental properties.



Scenes from Langdon

Mansion Hill

The Mansion Hill Neighborhood possesses a rich architectural heritage as reflected by inclusion of most of the neighborhood in local and National Register Historic Districts. It contains numerous local landmarks and contributing buildings, most of which were originally very large single-family homes converted to multi-family rental properties years ago. Although it is adjacent to Lake Mendota, public access to the lake is limited by the high number of privately-owned lakefront properties.

The historic character of the area is a major asset for the city and Downtown, and new development should focus on residential opportunities that reflect these historic attributes. Several larger institutional and employment uses are also located in the neighborhood, and ensuring the long-term viability of these uses will also benefit the area. However, Mansion Hill is not viewed as a significant growth area for non-residential uses. Some limited commercial development, such as small-scale cafes or coffee shops along the lakefront in the lower levels of lakefront buildings, may be appropriate. The largest potential site for new development is the land currently owned by National Guardian Life located between their office building and Lake Mendota. Although there has been much speculation about this site's future, a renewed interest has been generated by the approval of the Edgewater Hotel redevelopment

MANSION HILL RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective 4.9: Mansion Hill's historic character is a major asset and establishing a "complete historic district experience" of restored buildings, distinctive streetscape amenities, and a limited amount of new residential development that preserves and reflects these historic attributes should be pursued. The large historic homes provide a diversity of housing opportunities for executives, families, and students.

Recommendation 81: Rehabilitate existing housing while encouraging selective residential infill.

Recommendation 82: Preserve the character of the Mansion Hill Historic District and ensure that new development is compatible with the historic context in scale and design.

Recommendation 83: Large office-employment uses should be limited to existing development, and any redevelopment or infill of these sites should encourage residential as the predominant use.