

From: [Nan Fey](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Comment on Agenda Item #77, Lamp House Block Plan Report
Date: Monday, March 10, 2025 11:42:35 PM
Attachments: [Fey Comments to Common Council 3-10-25.pdf](#)

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Staff: Please submit the attached comments to all members of the Common Council in advance of its 3/11/25 meeting and post them in Legistar File ID# 86824. The text is also provided below. Thank you.

TO: Common Council
FROM: Nan Fey, Chair of the Lamp House Ad Hoc Committee in 2013-14
Plan Commission Chair during Downtown Plan Process 2008-2012
RE: Changes to Lamp House Block Report, Legistar #86824, Agenda Item #77
DATE: March 10, 2025

Three commissions have rejected the original resolution that would have “amended” the report of an official City committee that was subsequently adopted by the Common Council as a Supplement to the Downtown Plan by deleting language and diagrams that supported its conclusions and recommendations. These actions establish an important precedent for respecting the work of duly constituted volunteer committees and protecting the public record. The Plan Commission went one step further, passing a Substitute Resolution that preserves the integrity of the original report and creates an Addendum to provide a record of discussions of the Lamp House Block Report since 2014. Alder Field’s approach, and Staff’s suggestion of an Appendix 5 are much appreciated.

That said, the Substitute Resolution retains language from the original that references past events and speculations about the future that are irrelevant to the purpose of creating an Appendix. **Recommend striking the last two WHEREAS clauses.**

The proposed **Appendix 5** needs revising. The public record already includes reports, recommendations and characterizations of prior discussions; they are not binding on future decision-makers and do not belong here. **A chronological listing of meetings at which the Lamp House Report has been discussed, with links to the Agendas, Minutes and City Channel recordings** will provide a complete legislative history from 2014-2025 up to and including this Council’s decision for review during the Downtown Plan update.

Thank you for supporting these clarifications to the public record.

Nan Fey

TO: Common Council

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Plan Commission Chair during Downtown Plan Process 2008-2012

RE: Changes to Lamp House Block Report, Legistar #86824, Agenda Item #77

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Thank you for supporting these clarifications to the public record.

From: [John Holzhueter](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Lamp House (Agenda item 7)
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 10:46:42 AM

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Common Council meeting of March 1. 2025
Item #7, file 86824

To the Council,

I moved into the Lamp House in 1961 and, as a tenant and volunteer, soon began spending Sundays stripping ugly paint from the originally varnished cypress woodwork. By the 1980s new owners had invited me to move elsewhere but I was chosen to write the history of the house's complex (three dwellings where one mansion had stood to increase housing density downtown--the more things change the more they stay the same, according to the French proverb).

Because Frank Lloyd Wright was involved, and because the dwelling's design was linked to other famous designs like the Larkin Building in Buffalo and Hillside Home School in Spring Green and the unbuilt boathouse on the Yahara River, this is an important small house for Wright and for world architecture, and, for you alders, for Madison's reputation as a cultural showplace and cultural custodian.

Do you, as alders, take care of the city's cultural treasures, its architectural legacies, carefully, thoughtfully, correctly? Well, not if you adopt these resolutions which will weaken the views to the Lamp House and potentially, not add a single unit of affordable housing downtown (I would not be able to live in these relatively inaccessible, high-cost units). Worse, the preservation community will take aim at you, the alders, for your philistinism. Such rubes! And Madison pretends to such sophistication. You have a chance to prove sophistication, preservation-mindedness, and a deep understanding of local history by rejecting this proposal. It is simply offered as a knee-jerk, half-baked, self-serving remedy to a complex problem that a one-block remedy will not heal. Do not fall for it. Fall for the big picture, literally. Fall for what Madison has always stood for: cultural excellence over the almighty dollar.

Jack Holzhueter

From: asaloutos@tds.net
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Opposition to Amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee, Legistar ID No. 86824
Date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025 11:13:49 AM
Attachments: [250311 MEMORANDUM LAMPHOUSE COUNCIL.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Please see my comments in the attached PDF regarding Amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee, Legistar ID No. 86824, which is on the council agenda this evening.

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized capital letter 'A' with a horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alex Saloutos
Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Cell: (608) 345-9009
Email: asaloutos@tds.net

M E M O R A N D U M

Date: March 11, 2025

To: City of Madison Common Council

From: Alex Saloutos

Re: **Opposition to Amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee, Legistar ID No. 86824**

I strongly urge the Common Council to place Alder Field's alternative resolution on file with prejudice. While the Plan Commission has recommended approval, the fundamental issues of process and good governance in amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee (the "Report") remain unchanged. The proposed amendment—whether through direct changes to the text or by appending a new appendix—sets a dangerous precedent for altering formally adopted reports and their recommendations without the involvement of the committees that originally developed them.

If there are discrepancies between the recommendations in reports, plans, and ordinances, the appropriate way to address them is through staff reports prepared for specific policy decisions—not by retroactively amending an adopted report. Retroactively amending a formally adopted report in this way is bad governance—it disregards established processes, weakens transparency, and undermines trust in the city's planning framework.

Reasons for Opposition

1. Undermines the Public Process. The Lamp House Block Report was developed through an extensive public process involving community members, preservationists, and planning experts. It was accepted by the Common Council in 2014 and formally adopted as a supplement to the Downtown Plan. The subcommittee that prepared the report was appointed by the Council. Now, a single alder is sponsoring a resolution to amend it without the involvement of the original committee members.

If the City invites residents and subject matter experts to dedicate their time and expertise to a public planning effort, only to later modify their work without their participation, why would anyone volunteer for such a process in the future? Changing this report in isolation ignores the integrity of public input and sends a message that committee work is not valued or respected.

2. Precedent for Future Amendments. If this resolution is adopted, it opens the door to altering other adopted reports based on shifting political dynamics rather than thoughtful public discourse. City reports and plans should reflect the record of decision-making at the time of their adoption. The Common Council's role should be to consider these reports in policymaking—not to rewrite them years later at the request of a single alder.
3. Conflicts Between Planning Documents Are Common and Should Be Addressed in Staff Reports, Not Amended Reports. It is neither unusual nor problematic for different planning documents to contain varying recommendations and priorities. In fact, conflicting policies exist even within the same plan. The Comprehensive Plan, for example, includes recommendations supporting historic preservation, housing affordability, density, and economic redevelopment—goals that can sometimes be at odds with one another.

Consider the following examples:

- Historic Preservation vs. Increased Housing Density – The city has policies supporting both preserving historic buildings and encouraging denser development, yet these goals can directly conflict when a new project is proposed near a historic structure.
- Affordable Housing vs. Design Standards – The city supports affordable housing, but strict design standards and material requirements can increase construction costs and make affordability harder to achieve.
- Redevelopment vs. Neighborhood Stability – Plans encourage redevelopment of underutilized sites, but they also prioritize maintaining neighborhood character, which can limit redevelopment options.

When these conflicts arise, the proper way to address them is not to amend past reports but to weigh these priorities in a staff report at the time of decision-making.

4. The Proper Mechanism for Addressing Policy Conflicts is a Staff Report. City committees, commissions, and the Common Council regularly rely on staff reports to evaluate the merits of specific development proposals, zoning changes, and policy decisions. These reports serve an essential role by:

- Identifying where inconsistencies exist between different planning documents.
- Explaining how these discrepancies should be considered in the context of the specific decision at hand.
- Providing the Common Council, Plan Commission, and other bodies with objective information to make informed decisions without retroactively altering past reports.

If a policy inconsistency exists between the Report and other city documents, the correct way to address this is through a staff report—not by changing the original report.

5. The Downtown Plan Update is the Appropriate Venue for Revisions. The City is expected to revisit the Downtown Plan within the next two years. This process provides the proper framework for reconsidering issues related to building heights, views, and development policies in a comprehensive and transparent manner. Altering the Lamp House Block Report now, ahead of this scheduled review, is premature, unnecessary, and undermines the Downtown Plan process.
6. The Alternative Resolution is Another End-Around. While Alder Field's resolution does not formally edit the Report, it still attempts to override its original recommendations by adding an appendix. This achieves the same outcome as Alder Bennett's resolution—undermining the original committee's work—without directly modifying the text. The approach may be different, but the result is the same, and it should be rejected for the same reasons.
7. Inconsistent with Other Commissions' Recommendations. Both the Urban Design Commission and the Landmarks Commission recommended that the original resolution be placed on file without prejudice. While the Plan Commission has recommended approval of the alternative resolution—which the UDC and LC have not reviewed—the concerns they raised about amending the Report remain just as relevant and should not be disregarded.

Reconciling Policy Differences Should Be Done Through the Staff Report Process

There are often discrepancies between policies and recommendations in various planning reports, adopted plans, and the zoning code. The appropriate way to reconcile these differences is through a

staff report, which should objectively review these documents, all the relevant standards, and any conflicts.

Amending a formally adopted report—without the participation of the committee that created it—sets a dangerous precedent that undermines the integrity of the city's planning process and discourages future community engagement.

Request to the Common Council

For the reasons stated above and those echoed in numerous public comments, I urge the Common Council to place Alder Field's resolution on file with prejudice. Doing so will ensure that this issue is properly reconsidered during the upcoming Downtown Plan update and prevent a precedent that undermines the work of citizen committees and task forces.

Thank you for your time and consideration.