

DATE: August 29, 2016
TO: Plan Commission
SUBJECT: Item 15: File # 43578— 223 & 219 W Gilman—Demolition and Addition

Madison's historic resources are finite. When they're gone, they're gone forever. I am requesting that members of the Commission give weight to the pages 5-6 in the Staff Report beginning on page 5...."However, demolition of the two-family residence at 219 W. Gilman St. could be seen as contrary to other goals and objectives stated in the Downtown Plan, which places considerable emphasis on the preservation of historic resources within the downtown area....."

In addition, Recommendation 194 of Key 7: Build on Historic Resources states why local and national historic districts should have boundaries that are coterminous to take advantage of both state and national tax credit incentives and reduce confusion.

In 1983, one hundred years after the Henry L. and Mary Gage house was built, the property met the federal criteria for its vernacular architecture and became a contributing property in the newly designated Mansion Hill National Register Historic District.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory of historic residential properties built in Madison in 1883, there are 13 properties that have survived to date—the Gage House at 219 W. Gilman is one of them.

Historic districts are about the whole, not the individual properties. Losing a contributing property within a historic district puts the entire district on a slippery slope. This is the second time the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation has opposed the demolition of the Gage house—once in 2002 and again this year when Chabad house continued to pursue their demolition plans. The letters from the Madison Trust opposing the demolition clearly explain the reasons why this property is important to the integrity of the **whole historic district**.

You have a 1983 photo of the Gage house taken for the Historical Society's inventory. In 1987 the property was purchased by members of a family who owned it until it was sold to Chabad Lubavich in 2012.

Unfortunately the calculated speculation, neglect and dismal stewardship of these previous owners was greatly rewarded when Chabad Lubavitch paid \$470,000 for the property—\$125,000 more than the assessed value. Even then, after all the neglect that the house has endured, the condition report is not that bad. Clearly the house is not beyond repair.

The bottom line is, a vote to allow demolition of the Gage House will set a precedent for future demolitions of contributing buildings within Madison's historic districts. Today this

same degree of neglect and lack of maintenance can be found in most of City's local and national historic districts.

I greatly admire the programming provided to students at the Chabad House. They have been good neighbors and Mansion Hill residents want them to be successful and remain in the neighborhood. Today, despite the non-contributing Lutheran student center at 220 W Gilman and the Buckeye parking lot, the streetscape continues to reflect the historic residential appearance of the Mansion Hill historic districts.

A win-win for Chabad House, the Mansion Hill neighborhood, and all of Madison's historic districts would be a scenario that might look something like this:

- move the porch and original front section of the Gage house forward to match the sidewalk setback of 223 W. Gilman (see photos);
- demolish the later addition(s) to the house;
- restore the front porch and original front section of the house;
- build an attached addition that extends towards the back of the property and connects with 223 W Gilman; and most importantly,
- build an addition that honors the historic 19th century residential streetscapes of the Mansion Hill local and national historic districts.

Thank you for your time.

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