

May 30, 2023 (Updated August 22, 2023)

Plan Commission

Re: Land Use Application Letter of Intent – Demolition Permit

To Whom It May Concern:

The State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Historical Society are proposing to demolish the current Wisconsin Historical Museum at 30 North Carroll Street as well as the adjoining properties at 20 and 22 North Carroll Street. Demolition is anticipated in early 2024. Below is a description of how the proposed demolition complies with Standards of Approval for Demolition.

STANDARDS OF APPROVAL FOR DEMOLITION

1. *The applicant has included information related to any efforts to relocate the building, including but not limited to assessing the costs of relocation, the impact of relocation on city terrace trees, and the structural soundness of the building.*
WHS has not attempted to relocate the 20 and 22 North Carroll Street buildings. They are zero lot line buildings and of such a size that relocation is impractical and not feasible.
2. *The applicant has received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Landmarks Commission under MGO Secs. 41.09(1)(c) and 41.12(3), if applicable.*
The 20-22 North Carroll Street buildings are not designated as City of Madison landmarks or adjacent to a City of Madison designated landmark building. Receipt of a Certificate of Appropriateness is not applicable.
3. *The applicant has received an approved reuse and recycling plan from the City Recycling Coordinator.*
An approved reuse and recycling plan will be submitted to the City Recycling Coordinator prior to reconstruction/demolition. The State Historic Preservation Office is currently working with the State to determine appropriate migration for the removal of the buildings.
4. *The Plan Commission has received and considered the report of the City's historic preservation planner regarding the historic value of the property as well as any report that may be submitted by the Landmarks Commission.*
The City's Community and Cultural Resources planner issued a report for the Landmarks Commission on May 12, 2023 (Legistar File ID # 75031) for the 20-22 North Carroll Street properties. Staff recommended a finding of historic value related to the vernacular context of Madison's built environment, but the buildings themselves not to be historically, architecturally, or culturally significant.
5. *The Plan Commission has received and considered the report of the City Forester regarding the impact a proposed building relocation could have on City terrace trees, if applicable.*
The Applicant has met with the City Forester to discuss the impact of the proposed demolition and construction of the Wisconsin History Center project on the City terrace trees.
6. *The Plan Commission shall consider the condition of the building or buildings proposed for demolition or removal. In order to find this standard met, the Plan Commission may consider a report of the Madison Fire Department, Police Department, and/or Building Inspection Division regarding the proposed demolition, including whether any evidence of a potential fire hazard, unlawful use of the property, public nuisance, or other public health and safety concern supports demolition or removal.*

The Wisconsin Historical Society concluded after an extensive site research and analysis over a

number of years that the best site for the Wisconsin History Center is the current site at the head of State Street at the Capitol Square. It is located in the heart of the City's cultural arts district across from the Capitol and near accessible parking. The program for the new museum of approximately 100,000 square feet will be more than double the current museum program. This required that the building footprint be expanded to construct the new building which led to the acquisition of the 18-20 North Carroll St (Carroll Block) and 22-24 North Carroll St. (Vroman Block) properties. These buildings along with the existing museum building at 30 North Carroll Street will need to be demolished for the new history center. The combined site is the minimum needed to accomplish the new museum program.

In conjunction with purchasing the two Carroll St. buildings the Society's conducted research and developed a report on the two buildings to understand the history and condition of the buildings. The report concluded:

- When the Carroll Block and the Vroman Block were built in the early 1900s, they filled some of the last available parcels on the capitol square. Business blocks with first-floor retail and offices above were a common building type. Designed by the same architects and erected simultaneously, the Carroll and Vroman blocks employed popular styles of the period. In the 120 years since their construction, both buildings have seen frequent modifications at street level as business demands and consumer tastes have changed. At the same time, the second- and third-story facades have remained largely unaltered.
- Interior spaces have been significantly changed over the years, and little of the original plan, materials, or finishes remain. Street-level alterations reflect the rise and decline of retail on the square. The tenants on the upper floors have changed too, from an early mix of tradespeople (dressmaker, bookbinder, photographer) and professionals (lawyer, dentist, engineer) to a narrow range of mostly professional tenants (lawyer, consultant, advocacy organizations). While several well-known individuals and organizations have occupied the buildings over the years, their presence is not associated with significant events or occupancies.

Based on these conclusions, the Society determined that while the 20-22 N Carroll St. buildings have had a presence on the capitol square for a century, the historic nature of the buildings did not rise to a level of significance that would outweigh the Society's plan to develop a new History Center.

The Society has initiated the formal Historic Preservation Office review of the buildings and expects the Office to recommend that the Society take mitigation steps as part of the Society's development plans.

These steps would likely include photographic documentation of the buildings as well as educational displays and panels. In addition, the Society understands the site is surrounded by historic structures and we will be taking care to ensure no damage occurs during demolition and construction.

The Governor and Legislature enumerated the project for this site in 2023-2025 State Budget (Act 19).

Thank you for your consideration,
George E. Austin, Agency Representative
Wisconsin History Center Project
Wisconsin Historical Society