

## AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** March 23, 2016

**TITLE:** 223 & 219 West Gilman Street –  
Demolition and Addition to “Chabad  
House” in the Downtown Core District. 4<sup>th</sup>  
Ald. Dist. (41975)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** March 23, 2016

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Cliff Goodhart, Tom DeChant, and Richard Slayton.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of March 23, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a demolition and the addition to “Chabad House” in the Downtown Core District located at 223 & 219 West Gilman Street. Appearing on behalf of the project was Ron Trachtenberg, representing Chabad House. Registered and speaking in opposition were Franny Ingebritson, and Gene DeVitt, representing Mansion Hill Neighborhood-Capital Neighborhoods. The addition will add desired square footage to an existing Jewish cultural institution on the UW-Madison Campus. The addition will read as two buildings to maintain the rhythm on the street. The building materials are still under consideration.

Gene DeVitt spoke in opposition to the project, noting that this isn’t the first time Chabad House has discussed expansion. The neighborhood has taken a position that the houses not come down in this area. Unfortunately the owner has not done anything to maintain the building and needs a lot of work. This home is a contributing home to the Mansion Hill-Capital Neighborhoods historic area. If this building comes down, this will be the start of a slippery slope and we’ll have more high-rises. “This building cannot be saved” is not a common statement that does not always hold true. We have saved 26 buildings in Mansion Hill that have been saved from demolition. There is a way to do this by accommodating Chabad House while also accommodating the neighborhood. There is no reason not to save this building.

Fanny Ingebritson spoke in opposition, while noting her admiration for what Chabad House does for its students. The building is contributing to the Mansion Hill National Register Historic District. The Downtown Plan speaks to creating the same boundary for overlapping national register districts and local historic districts, and these resources must be preserved. People all over the world are drawn to historic areas that tell the story of that particular space and preserving that space is in the interest of everyone. The condition report is not that bad; clearly the house is not beyond repair.

Ron Trachtenberg spoke, noting that the development team is here to work with the Commission on the design, if the other bodies find the demolition appropriate, that the design fits into the environment/neighborhood and meets the architecture standards.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- From the map it looks as though there is a path that connects Peace Park to the parking lot, and in the proposed plan it looks as though the addition would go to a zoning permitted access from the back lot?
  - No there's no path. There is another building here, it's private property.
  - The easement around Peace Park does not connect to our property. There are other easements that involve HopCat, and that is pushing the design in various directions, including the fact that the City will not give us a permanent easement off of our parking lot.
  - There is an egress easement between the two buildings. In order for us to vacate that easement so we can make the addition, we have to provide an additional easement to the building to the east.
- We need to have those easements as part of the submittal package.
- Looking at the floor plans it looks like the predominant use of the building is residential, except for the first floor. Why did you choose not to give the addition a more residential aesthetic?
  - We haven't really made a decision, that's why we are here.
- If you had more of a residential character to that addition it might downplay the connection between the two. I'd like to see that link as a downplayed element between the two. The material, the color, as you develop that there are opportunities to help define that as a link versus it butting up right against the old building.
  - One of the reasons we tried to go smaller with a flat roof is the conflict of opinion with Planning staff.
- There are ways with gable forms, you could introduce shed dormers and other things to break it up a little bit.
- The fenestration on the parking lot side does not look residential at all either.
  - What about allowing this to be more institutional architecture, as a stop to the block where there is a gap, then continues. It's a religious institution, it's a community building more than residential. Should it be more of a contributing solid end to the block?
- I think the whole thing should work as one building when you're all said and done. I'm not so sure about an institutional element that's attached to an older residential building.
- It has the design of a building that's actually quite nice in my mind, but the real question is the context, and that's the question of Mansion Hill and its boundaries. The City has gone back and forth about that parking lot and it might not always be a parking lot. There might be additional residential there, so then you'd have institutional right smack dab in the middle of a residential block. The context question is going to bedevil this and will be a hard one to resolve. I tend to think it ought to look residential.
- I think the bigger question is one we pose to those that address the demolition. I'll talk in terms of that having happened. I don't think that building a new structure should try to look like Mansion Hill; it should be sensitive to Mansion Hill but it should be a structure that was built in 2016. The form you have here is more of an urban form. There are corner buildings in that area. If it is determined that eroding away those existing structures in Mansion Hill is acceptable by whomever would determine that, I don't think it should be a slap in the face by trying to recreate the look of Mansion Hill. Something that is its own modern architecture.
- The discussion of setback, that's key, and looking at the setback along the entire length of this street frontage, whether it's porch, or built face, how strong of a setback exists. The further eroding of the setback actually diminishes the pedestrian aspect of the street by almost opening it up to the parking lot further.

- By reducing the amount of setback we actually help maintain that organization of the street.
- In terms of urban form and pedestrian access, that needs to be studied, while your other challenge architecturally and how do you do an addition that's larger than the original building you're adding on to without undermining that architecture.
- Is there an option to move the house at 219?
- That doesn't address the erosion of Mansion Hill. If the demolition is approved this building has to become something that enhances the character of Mansion Hill.
- The addition to the Quisling building was well-integrated into the existing building, it wasn't a completely different statement.
- Quisling came in before there was a historic district.
- Architecturally you would have relief on Gilman Street if you were to leave the existing historic context and have an addition to the back of the property. Then you're not directly adjacent to this primary façade, you have the opportunity for a secondary architectural dialogue that doesn't directly compete with the front façade.

**ACTION:**

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.