

The Case for District-Specific Standards

This paper is the result of a study and analysis of our current subchapter 41G of Madison's Historic Preservation ordinance, the chapter that defines different standards as they apply to each of our five historic districts. Included here are a two-page summary of the character, features, and currently regulated elements in each of those five districts as well as a one-page chart summarizing the existing regulations.

Conclusion

District specific standards were originally crafted to accommodate the unique fabric of each of our historical districts and have been a fundamental and successful part of our Landmarks ordinance for over 35 years.

As much as our existing standards need updating for consistency and clarity, the proposed general standards derived from standards for National Landmark properties are too broad and can result in both over- and under-regulation when applied to the diverse characteristics of our own districts.

Our current *district specific* standards were requested and vetted by the residents of each of the districts. Proposing significant new standards will again require residents' approval and represents a potential political "rabbit hole."

Background

For more detail please refer to the attached description of the unique character of each of our historic districts (pages 3 and 4) and the chart that shows the different design parameters currently addressed in each of the different districts (page 5). Both the chart and the descriptions of each of the districts demonstrate why *district specific* standards are necessary in our update.

- The chart of parameters shows that as new historic districts were added in 1979, 1985, 1993, and 2002 per the requests of each district, there was a steady increase in the number and types of design parameters included for regulation, resulting in inconsistencies between districts.
- Although the lack of consistency between districts is a good argument for standardization, much of the variation is a genuine reflection of the different historical characteristics and the consequent need to regulate different parameters in each district.
- Both Third Lake Ridge and University Heights found it necessary to create three different sub-districts each to accommodate significant differences of historical character *within* those districts.
- The "V's" in the chart show that some districts required individual buildings to be compatible with others within their "Visually Related Area," reflecting the importance of the preservation of the historical fabric of *groups* of buildings, not just single structures.

The Case for District-Specific Standards

Potential Issues with General Standards Only

- Mansion Hill contains ornate Victorians from Madison's original movers and shakers; Third Lake Ridge ranges from old factory buildings to modest working-class homes. Should all of those structures be subject to the same standards?
- The Marquette Bungalows ordinance stipulates that all chimneys must be retained. The reason is that houses are close together, similar sized, and when viewed from the street the chimneys create a strong rhythm. As one resident put it, "Old houses have chimneys". No other district has this concern.
- The Marquette Bungalows district has a very particular and consistent style and existing standards are highly detailed and strict. The similarity between buildings is so strong that it would be inappropriate if new construction did not blend in all ways with the rest of the structures. Other districts are much more varied and don't need such tight control.
- University Heights has standards that are less strict than typical because the buildings in the district are eclectic and varied, with Queen Anne, Prairie, Colonial, Tudor, French and even one International Style house. Residents wanted new buildings primarily to be similar in size to existing but also to have the latitude to be an expression of their own time.
- The First Settlement adopted strict standards for porches and decks because some property owners had built modern deck-style porches that detracted from the streetscape, so standards were adopted that reflected porches from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Such standards are not appropriate for University Heights because the houses in those districts have more varied styles.
- The proposed National Parks Service standards are intended to preserve buildings in a near museum-like quality and they provide tax credits to compensate for that effort. Our districts are not museums and we are not given the tax breaks to maintain that high level of preservation. This issue is especially critical with the common need of replacing or upgrading windows.
- NPS standards are concerned with buildings only, and generally not with the relationships between them. Historic districts are just that: *districts* that are often required to include those relationships. This is reflected in the varied use of the Visually Related Area in our current ordinance.
- NPS standards require *differentiating* the style of additions from that of the original structures. Many owners of structures in our historic districts would like to appropriately *duplicate* existing styles when making alterations and additions; the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation granted a design award for one such project this year.

Mansion Hill, one of Madison's two most prestigious neighborhoods, contains the greatest concentration of intact Victorian houses remaining in Madison, many of which were the homes of Madison's pioneer movers-and-shakers. In 1976 after several of the finest old homes in Mansion Hill were demolished to make way for anonymous apartment buildings and two large insurance companies; residents petitioned to designate it Madison's first historic district.

Features

- Ornate Victorian mansions originally owned by political and business leaders
- Generous setbacks that originally had fine landscaping

Currently Regulated

- Gross volume, height, and setbacks relative to neighbors within 200'
- Façade design

The **Third Lake Ridge** historic district is an area noted for its variety of building types, including a railroad depot, a tobacco warehouse, churches, corner groceries, taverns, imposing mansions and tiny cottages. It was a place where a diversity of people - Germans, Norwegians, and Yankees - lived, worked and shopped. It was designated a historic district in 1979 as part of a revitalization campaign by the Marquette Neighborhood Association.

Features

- 3 distinctly different sub-districts within our current ordinance
 - Employment – large commercial (west end of Williamson)
 - Mixed Commercial/Residential (mostly the rest of Williamson)
 - Residential - Jenifer, Spaight, etc.
- No dominant architectural style, from elaborate Victorian to generic vernacular, all contributing along with their spatial relationships to an original and intact mixed-use development model, primarily working-class.
- No dominant building form; from large-scale brick industrial and commercial through historic multifamily apartments to humble intact single-family homes.

Currently Regulated (varies within 3 sub-districts)

- Height relative to neighbors within 200' (all 3 sub-districts)
- Gross volume relative to neighbors within 200' (2 of 3 sub-districts)
- Lot coverage relative to neighbors within 200' (2 of 3 sub-districts)
- Façade design relative to neighbors within 200' (2 of 3 sub-districts)
- fire escapes/exit platforms relative to neighbors within 200' (2 of 3 sub-districts)
- materials, landscaping relative to neighbors within 200' (1 of 3 sub-districts)

University Heights was platted in 1893 as one of Madison's first suburbs with curvilinear streets and beautiful vistas. It attracted families of university professors and business owners and was designated a historic district in 1985 at the request of neighborhood residents.

Features

- Some of Madison's most architecturally significant Queen Anne, prairie style and period revival houses by both nationally-known as well as some of Madison's finest architects.

- 10 different zoning sections and 3 different sub-districts within our current landmarks ordinance, from University Avenue shopping and campus area high-density residential through both large and small scale residential in University Heights.

Currently Regulated

- Height (varies within 3 different sections)
- Facade area relative to neighbors within 200'
- Many details of façade
- Roofs and architectural details
- Materials
- Some site features

The **Marquette Bungalows** is a cohesive grouping of 47 bungalow houses on two blocks, platted in and all built between 1924 and 1930. At the request of neighborhood residents, the Marquette Bungalows were designated as an historic district in 1993.

Features

- Similar sizes and shapes, with a myriad of different details to distinguish each house with a high quality of construction and detailing, many with leaded glass windows.

Currently Regulated

- Gross volume height
- Façade design and setback
- Many architectural details
- Roofs
- Many material aspects
- Some site features

The **First Settlement** neighborhood was the home of Madison's first residential settlement, dating back to 1837 including the first occupied residence in Madison but after World War II development of the downtown began to encroach on the area, especially in the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1970s pioneer downtowners began to move back to the area and in 2002 residents succeeded in having the Common Council designate the area as Madison's fifth historic district.

Features

- Many nineteenth century modest frame houses with finer brick residences sprinkled throughout.

Currently Regulated

- Gross volume, height, and lot coverage relative to neighbors within 200'
- Façade design and scale (some aspects only relative to neighbors within 200')
- Many architectural details
- Roofs
- Siding
- Some site features

SUMMARY OF DESIGN PARAMETERS IN EXISTING SUBCHAPTER 41G

NOTE! An "X" indicates a there is a specific standard for that parameter in that district; a "V" indicates a standard that requires compatibility with other buildings within 200 feet of the subject building..	(1976) Mansion Hill standards for new only	(1979) Third Lake Ridge			(1985) University Heights			(1993) Bungalow - new & fences	(2002) 1st Settlement - new & alterations & repairs
		TLR1 - Employment - new & alterations	TLR2 - Mixed and Commercial - new & alterations	TLR3 - Residential - new & alterations	TR-C2, C3, C4; TR-V1, V2 - new & alterations & repairs	TR-U1, MNX, TSS, LMX - new & alterations & repairs	TRU-2 - new & alterations & repairs		
SPATIAL QUALITIES									
Gross volume/scale	V	V	V					X	V
Height	V		V (all)		35'	40'	50'	X	V
Lot coverage (mass/space)			V	V					V
FAÇADE									
Area						V (all)			
Articulation of volume (solids/voids)	V		V	V		X (all)		X	
Color						X (all)		X	X
Doors and windows (some w/h)	V			V		X (all)		X	V
Materials			V	V		X (all)			
Primary Entrance									X
Proportion w/h	V		V						V
Scale						X (all)			X
Setback								X	
Texture						X (all)			X
ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES									
Architectural details/trim						X (all)		X	X
Decks									X
Doors and windows								X	X
Fire escapes/2nd Exit Platforms			V	V		X (all)		X	X
Foundations								X	X
Light fixtures									X
Permanent air-conditioners									X
Porches								X	X
Ramps									X
Roof design									
Shape						X (all)		X	X
Material						X (all)		X	X
Dormers						X (all)		X	X
Skylights								X	X
Chimneys								X	X
Shutters									X
Storm windows and doors								X	
MATERIALS									
Color									
Patterns			V					X	
Scale								X	
Siding						X (all)		X	X
Texture			V						
Tuckpoint								X	
SITE FEATURES									
Accessory buildings						X (all)		X	X
Fences								X	X
Garage doors									X
Landscape			V						
Parking Lots						X (all)			
Retaining walls									X