

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 14 August 2017

TITLE: Landmarks Commission Review of Historic Preservation Plan (Public Engagement Strategy Draft & Ordinance Standards discussion)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Amy Scanlon, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 21 August 2017

ID NUMBER: 47358

Members present were: Stuart Levitan, Chair; Anna V. Andrzejewski, Vice Chair, David WJ McLean, Marsha A. Rummel, Richard Arnesen, Lon Hill, and Katie Kaliszewski.

SUMMARY:

Historic Preservation Plan consultants Jennifer Lehrke, Bob Short, Jason Tish, and Carolyn Esswein were present.

Staff introduced the Landmarks Commission to the consultants. The consultants introduced themselves to the Commission.

Esswein gave an introduction and overview of the Draft Public Engagement Strategy via PowerPoint.

Andrzejewski asked for clarification that it's not just underrepresented groups that will be contacted as resources. Lehrke confirmed the scope of the project. Rummel asked to whom she should send potential resources to. Staff will receive that information.

Lehrke asked the Commission to discuss the current historic district ordinance language.

Levitan commented on the vast ordinance discrepancies between Third Lake Ridge and Mansion Hill. He also asked why certain restrictions were triggered for new structures, but not for existing structures.

Andrzejewski would like standards that apply to all five Historic Districts. The rest of the Commission also feels that there should be some commonalities between all five. Andrzejewski further said that the language about windows should be more uniform.

Rummel said that she struggles with how the Historic Preservation ordinance standards often conflict with the Zoning Code. The Third Lake Ridge Historic District is a prime example, and described an example along Williamson Street that is restricted to the TSS Zoning requirements.

Arnesen commented on the ambiguity of some of the language and the need to address height issues. Arnesen also commented on the need for consistent window language in the ordinance.

Andrzejewski commented that a lot of the ordinance language discusses “character-defining features.” She questioned whether windows should be considered that, and reiterated the ambiguity around that language. She articulated the need for clarity around that language, as it creates problems in the Commission’s deliberations.

Arnesen and Andrzejewski commented that the “visually compatible” areas are not the best barometer by which to measure appropriateness of new structures.

Hill asked if something could be written into the ordinance (or if it could be a part of the plan) that ensures a new property owner will be informed of potential issues regarding historic preservation.

Andrzejewski asked the Landmarks Commission how they feel about having language in the ordinance about street-level visibility. Rummel said that “visible from the street” is very subjective. Levitan asserted that “facing the street” might be clearer. Staff asked whether it matters if the back of the building fits the character of the neighborhood or not. McLean said that, ideally, it should make a difference, but that’s not always a reality. Andrzejewski commented that if the Commission decides that the back doesn’t matter, it may lead to a slippery slope.

Staff suggested that the ordinance may establish preservation zones, and that areas visible from the street would be treated as a higher priority than areas not visible from the street.

Lehrke asked about the visual language and referenced the National Parks Service. Staff responded that, when tax credits are available as an option, it’s very helpful. Staff isn’t sure if the exact language should be copied, but the current language mirrors what tax credits are granted for.

Rummel referenced solar panels, and the idea that the ordinance has to be lasting and far-reaching into the future.

Staff brought up the issue of siding and expressed dismay that vinyl and fiber cement/composite siding are acceptable replacements to wood siding on historic properties. Arnesen and Rummel indicated that they were comfortable with not allowing for vinyl siding in the language of the ordinance.

Lehrke indicated that reevaluating boundaries of Historic Districts might be necessary, and that the allowance of vinyl siding is destroying the Third Lake Ridge Historic District, in particular.

Levitan brought up the idea of signage to celebrate entering the historic districts. The Commission agreed that it would be a beneficial thing.

Andrzejewski would like to give more attention to sight issues in each district.

Staff indicated that language specific to landscaping is only present in Third Lake Ridge, but language could be added to other districts as part of this process. Levitan voiced his opinion that this should be a priority.

Hill mentioned accessibility ramps and the need to discuss accessibility issues in the ordinance.

McLean brought up windows and the need for more language about them. He also thinks there should be language in the ordinance about the Landmarks Commission's expectations for complete submission materials.

Lehrke asked if vinyl or fiberglass windows should be allowed for replacements at all. Arnesen indicated that, for the most part, he thinks not – but there might be instances where it's all right. Andrzejewski reiterated Staff's suggestion of zones.

Staff brought up the issue of removing features (i.e. shutters & chimneys) and whether or not there should be language specifically regarding removals.

Lehrke circled back to the idea of overarching standards to apply to all five districts. The Commission felt that there should be, especially with respect to windows, and that repairing vs. replacing is always preferable.

Staff suggested that the character of each historic district should be reflected in specific, add-on standards for the district.

ACTION:

No action was taken on this item.