

DATE: June 26, 2019

TO: Landmarks Ordinance Review Committee (LORC)

FROM: Dave Mollenhoff, Chair  
Madison Alliance for Historic Preservation

**SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Ordinance**

The Madison Alliance for Historic Preservation is committed to achieving a state-of-the-art historic preservation ordinance for the City of Madison. Some of you may remember that we played a key role in developing the first phase of the historic preservation ordinance, which was unanimously approved by the Common Council in 2015.

You are now charged with developing a second phase of the ordinance, related to individual historic districts. We think we can help with that. Our members have broad experience in historic preservation, property development, property management, architecture, law, land use planning, public administration and city government, as well as deep familiarity with Madison's historic neighborhoods and historic preservation processes. We have already spent considerable time researching the issues and building consensus.

Madison currently has 5 historic districts, including Mansion Hill, Third Lake Ridge, University Heights, Marquette Bungalows and First Settlement. Other districts may be created in the future. The 5 current districts have diverse historic preservation goals, land use patterns, architectural styles, property characteristics and development challenges (see *Attachment 1*). Current ordinance standards vary within and between districts – reflecting the underlying diversity of the districts themselves (see *Attachment 2*). We think that makes sense.

We agree that current district-specific ordinances (especially those for the older districts, such as Mansion Hill) need to be updated, clarified and improved. However, we oppose “one size fits all” standards for all historic districts, as suggested by the city's consultant. That simply will not work. Standards must be sensitive to the differences that exist *within* and *between* districts. What is appropriate for the Mansion Hill district may be inappropriate for the Marquette Bungalows district, and *vice versa*. Commercial areas often demand different treatment than residential areas. An ordinary house that happens to be located in a historic district should not be held to the same exacting standards as a designated landmark.

District standards should protect the overall character of a historic district, not just individual historic properties. They should address new development, not just the care of existing properties. They should be clear and practical – not vague and open to arbitrary interpretation. They should be developed “from the ground up,” rather than being imposed “from the top down,” so that they enjoy the support of district property owners and residents.

LORC is simply not equipped to spell out legally binding standards for every current and future historic district. Current district-specific ordinances were developed “from the ground up” by district committees, appointed by the alder for each district. After much discussion, we recommend that *the same process be used* to develop new and updated district ordinances. We should start with the oldest ordinance (Mansion Hill) and work our way forward. Standards proposed by the district committees would take effect if and when adopted, in ordinance form, by the Common Council (see current review and adoption process spelled out in Ch. 41, MGO).

LORC *should* spell out guiding principles, a consistent format, and consistent terminology for district committees to use. But it *should not* dictate the actual legal standards that will apply in each district; nor should it simply throw out existing standards that have served well for decades. In the near future, we hope to offer clear ordinance language that would implement this common sense approach.

*Attachments:*

- 1. Summary of Individual Characteristics of Madison's 5 Historic Districts .*
- 2. Summary of Design Parameters in Existing Subchapter 41G (chart)*

*cc: Amy Scanlon, Heather Bailey, Bill Fruhling and John Strange*

## Summary of Individual Characteristics of Madison's 5 Historic Districts

**Mansion Hill**, one of Madison's 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 (see page 3)*
- 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
  - o Employment – large commercial (west end of Williamson)
  - o Mixed Commercial/Residential (mostly the rest of Williamson)
  - o 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 (see page 3) • (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*

## Summary of Individual Characteristics of Madison's 5 Historic Districts, continued

- Some of Madison's most architecturally significant Queen Anne, prairie style and period revival houses by both nationally-known and 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 (see page 3)*

- 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 (see page 3)*

- 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 (see page 3)*

- 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..

[illegible]