

November 19, 2013

Madison Landmarks Commission
Department of Planning & Development
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-2985

Dear Commission Members:

Please allow this letter to serve as a substitute for my comments that would have been presented at the upcoming meeting regarding Steve Brown's proposed development in the Mansion Hill District. I urge you to share this correspondence, or insert its contents into the meeting minutes.

As someone who has lived and worked in downtown Madison for many years, I have a special affinity for the Mansion Hill neighborhood. While it is true that the neighborhood has many fine examples of gorgeous 19th century Victorian mansions, the properties involved here would never be confused as such. The Landmark Commission was established in 1971 to preserve beautiful and historic buildings. While beauty is often said to be in the eye of the beholder, being historic is more clearly defined. To be historic, the buildings need to (or potentially) be famous, or important to history. The Highlander apartment is neither beautiful, nor historic, and the same can be said for 123 and 127 W. Gilman Street. None of the buildings involved fit the criteria to which the Landmark Commission was established to protect.

Steve Brown is a well-known, trusted developer that has substantially contributed to increasing the appeal of the Mansion Hill neighborhood for decades. If you take a look at 134 West Gorham Street or the renovated property at 141 West Gilman, you can see that Mr. Brown has a commitment to quality. Mr. Brown also takes preservation of the neighborhood seriously, as evidenced by his willingness to relocate the 123 West Gilman property. There is no reason to expect that the proposed development would be anything but a great addition to the neighborhood.

The proposed development was intentionally designed to fit well into the neighborhood. It replaces buildings that are either a severe aberration, such as the Highlander, or are so mundane and commonplace that their existence is inconsequential. A new development will reinvigorate the excitement for the neighborhood. It will attract new residents, such as me, and visitors that will enjoy the beautiful and historic buildings that this commission has preserved for nearly half of a century.

The commission and neighborhood could not ask for a more suited development to be proposed or a more like-minded developer to partner. I urge the commission to work with Mr. Brown and welcome his quality development to the neighborhood. To do otherwise would hinder the very attributes this commission was established to protect.

Sincerely,



Jesse M. Patchak