



THE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BUILDING CONSERVANCY

May 11, 2013

Amy Scanlon
City Preservation Planner, City of Madison
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Stuart Levitan
Chairperson, City of Madison Landmarks Commission,
stuartlevitan@sbcglobal.net

Dear Ms. Scanlon and Chairman Levitan,

For nearly twenty-five years the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, a national and international publically supported not-for-profit organization with headquarters in Chicago, has advocated for the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, who is widely considered as the world's most important architect of the twentieth century. Ten of his American buildings are poised to become United Nations World Heritage sites. We monitor developments with respect to Wright's buildings and landscapes; we work with individuals and communities to reach mutually acceptable conclusions about the welfare of his built work and the adjacent environments. We also provide educational opportunities for the public and our members to learn more about his architecture through the 400 extant Wright structures and landscapes and their importance to the cultural and artistic life of the United States and the world.

It has come to our attention that the City of Madison is entertaining proposals to erect a ten-story hotel and a large, five-and-six-story apartment building along the North Webster Street side of the block in which Frank Lloyd Wright created a home for his best friend, Robert M. Lamp. Wright sited the house in a complex landscape that included extensive views of both of Lakes Monona and Mendota as well as of the Capitol building and other elements of the surrounding cityscape. Some of these views have already been compromised. We are concerned that the proposed further development of the block will further compromise the views and the site, in disregard of the purposes of Wright's designs for the Lamp House and its landscape and hardscape.

Homes are more than shelter. When carefully designed for specific clients and their needs, they are complete environments, inside and out. For Robert Lamp, his best friend from age eleven or so until Lamp's early death, Wright designed a house that would accommodate Lamp's severe handicap (a withered leg) and his intense interest in sailing and boating on Madison's lakes. From the Lamp House roof garden (now enclosed but surrounded by windows), Lamp could view the city he loved as well as human and natural activity on the lakes he loved. To elevate the house above its neighbors for the sake of the views, Wright raised it two or more feet off the ground (unusual for a Wright design), placed it at the rear, highest extremity of the east-and-north-sloping lot, and reshaped the landscape with hardscape retaining walls and fill to elevate the dwelling even more.

He also created an elaborate approach to the house, guaranteeing privacy. It is like a suburban house in an urban environment. Further obstruction of the views to and from the house would demean Wright's designs and intentions. Development projects towering over and surrounding this single family house in the middle of the block would have an enormous negative effect on the Lamp House and would change the neighborhood feel, residential character and integrity of the northwest portion of the block which is important to the Lamp setting. Further, the dwelling is on the National Register of Historic Places and merits all considerations afforded all such properties.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy requests that you consider these facts as you ponder the proposals for the hotel and apartment buildings. Representatives of our organization would be happy to meet with the developer and city officials to discuss the current proposal and the overall welfare of the Lamp House, its landscape, and the surrounding urban district. We respectfully request that you share our letter with members of the Landmarks Commission. Please let us know how we can be helpful in this review process.

Sincerely,

Larry Woodin

President

Janet Halstead

Executive Director

cc: Ledell Zellers, Alder, Second District