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March 4, 2026

Bridgette Ganter, Senior Civil Manager  
Landmark Construction, LLC  
315 Oconee Street  
Athens, GA 30601

Re: Historic and Architectural Review for:  
433 W. Gilman Street  
Madison, WI

Dear Bridgette:

The following is an assessment of the history and architecture of the property at 433 West Gilman Street in Madison, Wisconsin, prepared by Legacy Architecture, Inc. One of four properties that are planned for demolition to make way for redevelopment to meet the local demand for private university student housing in the heart of the city, the City of Madison Landmarks Commission reviewed the project, and two of the properties along the east side of the 400 block of West Gilman Street were found to possess architectural and historical significance that led to a recommendation to avoid demolition or mitigate its effects.

433 W. Gilman, also known as the Stratford Apartments, was constructed in 1914 as a masonry five-story apartment block with 18 large units. It was built during a period when the City of Madison's population was growing, and density in the city center was considerable. Similar to other apartments developed at the time, it possesses a mix of classical architectural elements combined with the popular commercial style of the period. Since its construction, it has consistently operated as a rental apartment building, though it has undergone notable alterations on the exterior and interior. The Stratford Apartments were identified in the 1998 Madison Downtown Historic Preservation Plan as an individual historic site and again in the 2012 Downtown Plan as a potential landmark, though it has not been designated.

### *Summary*

The Stratford Apartments, located at 433 W. Gilman Street, is a notable architectural example of an early twentieth-century apartment building; however, it is not alone in this regard in the city, as other similar and finer examples of the building type have been listed as landmarks and in the National Register. It also has not been identified by the Wisconsin Historical Society as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A history of alterations and damage has detracted from its overall architectural integrity, and it likely lacks the qualifications to be listed on the National Register. However, some mitigation may be appropriate to document and acknowledge the building's architecture and history.

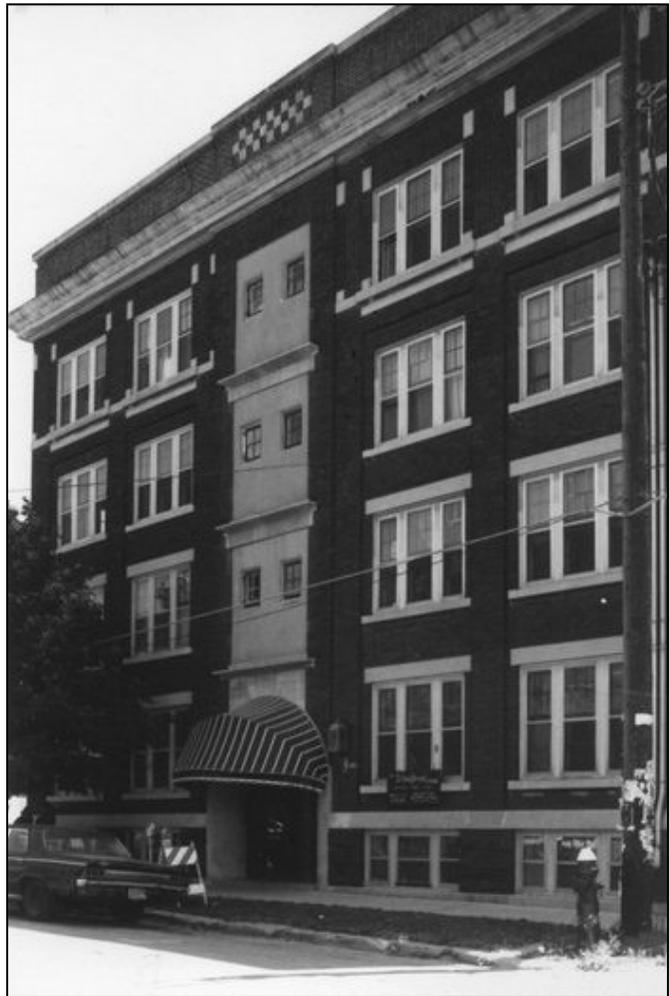
### *Historical Context*

Construction of the Stratford Apartments began in 1914 and was completed by builders A.D. McConnell and John Kelly of Madison in 1915. The building was developed by Vroman and Daisy Mason, who transferred ownership to the Stratford Apartment Company in 1916. Vroman Mason served as the company's manager, secretary, and treasurer, and operated it for decades. The Mason family's address was listed in city directories as 22 North Carroll Street, which has recently been demolished to make way for the Wisconsin Historical Museum. The first tenants of the Stratford were not university students, but a mix of white and blue-collar families.

The National Register Nomination of the Baskerville Apartment Building, located at 121-129 South Hamilton Street in Madison, and listed in 1988, mentions the Stratford Apartments as another example of a building type. The Baskerville, like the Stratford, was constructed in the 1910s and had a similar use and design. These pre-depression era apartments were always masonry construction, between three and five stories. They had between twelve and thirty units, responding to urban density and lifestyles common during the period when the automobile was not yet ubiquitous. These apartments were affordable, convenient, and offered modern amenities of the time. Extremely common in larger Midwest cities like Milwaukee and Chicago, there were about a dozen examples built in Madison. The Baskerville, already listed in the National Register of Historic Places and as a local Landmark, is arguably the best example due to its high level of architectural integrity, which the Stratford Apartments lacks.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps have consistently shown it as a five-story brick building with an interior double-loaded corridor and stairs at the center and rear since its construction, while the building's footprint has not changed. Despite this, the building has undergone notable alterations. A fire, suspected of being arson, occurred in July 1939, and much of the interior was severely damaged, along with some of the fenestration.

Vroman Mason continued to operate the apartments until 1946, when they were sold. The company changed its name to Stratford House, and the building was converted into sixty-nine one-bedroom dormitory units for women. Presumably, this indicated a shift toward renting to students. By the 1950s, the building had nearly 100 tenants, suggesting either that students were



*Stratford Apartments, 1974. Courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society.*

the primary renters and shared rental units or that the interior was subdivided into smaller spaces. During the 1950s and 1960s, the building was exclusively rented to women as a dormitory, a common practice at the time to accommodate students. This changed in 1972, when the makeup of renters shifted to mixed gender, following a trend in Madison and across the country. The Stratford Apartments currently has student rentals in two- and three-bedroom units. Again, indicating that the interior has been significantly altered over time.

### *Building Description*

The Stratford Apartments is a five-story brick masonry apartment building with the first floor raised and the basement level exposed at grade. The main façade faces Gilman Street to the northwest and comes up to the property line and sidewalk. This façade is divided into five bays with the main entry centered. The entry has a pair of metal and glass doors flanked by sidelights, an arched fixed transom with a rounded awning, and a series of steps immediately inside, and is flanked by a curved stone arch on the exterior. The façade is primarily dark red brick in running bond, with cast stone accents at the windowsills and lintels and a large stone cornice at the top. Each window on this main façade is contemporary and tripartite, with a decorative brick diamond pattern between the windows in the bays. Above the cornice is a brick parapet with decorative brick and stone panels and patterns. The other façades of the building lack the decorative elements and use a cream brick in place of the red on the front. The windows are either single or paired, with a stone sill and a low-arch soldier course of brick at the lintel. The south façade has a small window well indent in plan, and the rear has a separate stairwell, hyphenated from the main mass of the apartment building. The windows have been replaced throughout, and the center window openings on the main façade have been removed and filled in with unsightly painted panels, each one with a pair of small, fixed windows. The interior has undergone a series of changes, including dividing the larger historic apartment units into smaller ones and addressing the need for repairs following fires and other damage, as well as updating fixtures and finishes over time. However, there are no additions to the building. The entryway, brick masonry, and overall footprint remain intact. It is difficult to say exactly what the interior is like in terms of integrity. Still, it is known that several remodeling efforts took place in the late 1930s and again in the 1940s, and probably since then, to update and refurbish the apartment units. The historic building's integrity is lacking.

### *Comparative Analysis*

There are several comparable apartment buildings in Madison, such as the Stratford Apartments, sharing a similar scale, use, materials, and early-twentieth-century period of construction. Besides the Stratford, there are the Bellevue, Baskerville, Pinckney, Cass, Hamilton, and Eleanor Apartments, all extant and in good condition. All of them are either grouped around State Street or adjacent to the Capitol Square. Two of them, the Bellevue at 29 East Wilson Street and the Baskerville at 121 South Hamilton Street, are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and as local landmarks and have a high degree of architectural integrity. The Stratford Apartments is not the only example of its building type and style, nor is it the best in Madison.

### *Conclusions and Recommendations*

The Madison Landmark Commission recently found that the Stratford Apartments, located at 433 West Gilman Street, qualifies under Criterion A as a building that "...has historic value based on architectural significance, cultural significance, historic significance, as the work/product of an architect of note, and its status as a contributing structure in a National Register Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and/or as an intact or rare example of a certain architectural style or method of construction." In this case, the building would likely fall under the category of architectural significance as it lacks a strong case for historical or cultural significance.

The Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office's Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory has a record for the property (AHI# 99208), but makes no mention of its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, and there are a couple of other similar apartments already listed in the City of Madison.

A mitigation approach of recognition rather than direct preservation may be appropriate, similar to how certain federally funded projects under Section 106 guidance will record, study, and honor a historic property being removed. This can take the form of written and photographic documentation, the installation of a memorial, such as a historic marker, plaque, or wall text, and images integrated into the new design.

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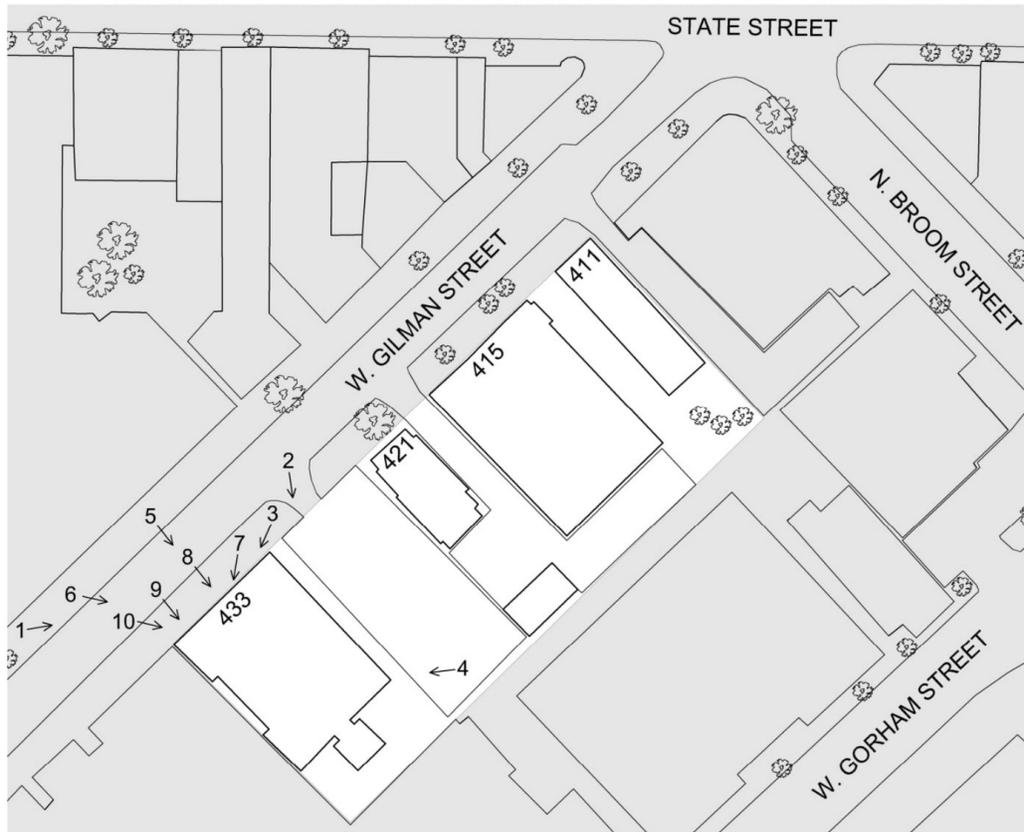
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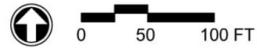
*Photography*



**LEGEND**

1 → PHOTO NUMBER & VANTAGE POINT

**KEY PLAN DIAGRAM**





*Photo 1: The west side of the 400 block of West Gilman Street shows all four subject properties.*



*Photo 2: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, facing southeast*



*Photo 3: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments facing southeast*



*Photo 4: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, facing southwest*



*Photo 5: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, facing east*



*Photo 6: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, facing northeast*



*Photo 7: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, facing south*



*Photo 8: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, façade detail*



*Photo 9: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, façade detail*



*Photo 10: 433 W. Gilman Street, Stratford Apartments, façade detail*