

Plan Commission 13 April 2026

Public Comment Testimony

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I thank the Commission members and Planning staff for their time tonight and their dedication to making the City of Madison a better place to live.

In the past few years your commission has reviewed and promoted important zoning plans like those at East Towne, Odana Road and initiatives like the Transit Oriented Development Overlay District, all designed to increase affordability and quality of life. As a result of your efforts, Madison has a framework for how to grow.

Interestingly, I've noticed over the past few years that the images that retailers, medical offices, commercial spaces and Destination Madison use to promote a sense of place aren't of their own suburban buildings, but of those on State St, UW Campus, Williamson St and of other older and more eclectic buildings in the City. Even though State St has changed significantly over the past 10 years, it remains the iconic street that defines Madison and is represented in my doctors' and accountant's offices, car dealership, my mom's nursing home, etc. I

As a Plan Commissioner, you can see how approvals of conditional use permits build the Madison of the future. You are aware of the ever present need for more housing and any proposed residential development is a good one because of that need. But as you know, the cost of new construction results in rents at market rate or above. When new construction requires demolition we are often facing a double loss of naturally occurring affordable housing and our unique architectural heritage. A good example is the Continental apartment at 300 E Washington where 26 units of affordable housing in historic, 19<sup>th</sup>-century, vernacular buildings were demolished to build apartments at luxury rental rates.

Whether you like it or not, your commission is the gate keeper for the preservation of affordable housing and the cultural heritage of our City. There are many neighborhoods in the City that are now ripe for development due to changes in zoning. We are seeing rapid gentrification in Bram's Addition on South Park St, ironically forcing out the families that relocated there after the demolition of the Triangle Neighborhood in the 1960s. Affordable housing in Darbo Worthington and along Northport Drive are now under development pressure due to zoning changes.

The preservation of architectural character of State St is also at great risk. The Plan Commission recently approved the demolition of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings at the

top of State St to be replaced by a contemporary building and a parking lot. The eclectic mix of pedestrian-friendly architecture on State St and affordable older neighborhoods is what provides Madisonians their sense of place, the Commission needs carefully to consider its involvement in their preservation or destruction. You are the gatekeepers for our built future.