

Bailey, Heather

From: Taylor Blair <taylor@taylor-blair.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 13, 2025 10:45 PM
To: jkemorrison@gmail.com; Duncan, John; knkaliszewski@gmail.com; Taylorm@firstweber.com; rba@stonehousedevelopment.com; Verveer, Michael; Bailey, Heather; Ochowicz, William
Subject: Period Garden Park and 124 E. Gorham Development

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Hello members of the Landmark Commission and related Alders,

My name is Taylor Blair, and I'm a local resident at 303 N. Hamilton. I also serve as the lead volunteer at Period Garden Park, a City of Madison Park that is maintained by volunteers. Period Garden is located at 110 E. Gorham Street, situated between the historic Keyes Residence (now the Hypatia Coop) and the Brown House.

Period Garden Park was established in 1976 following years of advocacy by local residents who opposed development that would have negatively and permanently altered the unique and historic character of our neighborhood. Its history is closely tied to the historic preservation movement in Madison, particularly the designation of Mansion Hill and the adjacent buildings, such as the Keyes House.

Since its creation, the park's aim has been to offer a beautiful and welcoming garden that aligns with the historical period of the Mansion Hill neighborhood. If you haven't had the chance to visit, I highly recommend it! I would be delighted to give you a tour.

Upon reviewing the posted documents, it appears that the potential impact of the proposed development at 124 East Gorham on Period Garden Park has not been considered. The planned roofline will be clearly visible from the garden and will negatively affect the overall historic character of the surrounding area by overshadowing the Brown House and obscuring its historic carriage house.

I kindly ask that you consider the impact of this development not only on the adjacent buildings but also on Period Garden Park, which is one of the most beautiful and unique spaces in Madison.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Taylor Blair
608-213-3674
periodgardenpark.org



May 16, 2025

To: City of Madison Landmarks Commission

Re: May 19, 2025, Landmarks Commission Meeting
Agneda Item 4, [Legistar File 87103](#)
124 E. Gorham St.

Landmarks Commissioners:

At the meeting on May 19, 2025, the Landmarks Commission will be reviewing a request from Bruce Bosben of Apex Real Estate Holdings LLC to take three actions within the Mansion Hill Historic District that also relate to the adjacent and locally landmarked home of Timothy and Elizabeth Brown at 116 E. Gorham St.

1. To combine Lot 15 (124 E. Gorham St. and the site of the Brown Carriage House) and Lot 16 (the Brown residence at 116) of Block 89;
2. To reposition the Brown Carriage House onto the combined lot;
3. And to construct a new building in front of the Brown Carriage House that will have the consequence of screening much of the Carriage House from passers-by on Gorham Street.

The Madison Trust for Historic Preservation takes no position regarding proposed actions 1. and 2., but believes the applicant's current construction proposal would not satisfy the applicable standards for respecting the integrity of the adjacent historic structures.

Historic context

The proposal primarily relates to three existing buildings that were constructed during the period of significance for the Mansion Hill Historic District formally recognized by the City of Madison in 1976: a) the above-mentioned Timothy Brown House at 116, which was initially constructed in 1863 and designated as a city Landmark in 1972; b) the Carriage House¹, also constructed in 1863 at 124; and c) the 1885 house at 130 built by Mr. Brown's son Frank and Frank's wife Minnie.

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¹ In a Sept. 7, 2001, note to the Landmarks Commission, Preservation Planner Rankin wrote: "It is my opinion that the Brown Carriage House is historically and architecturally significant (criteria a. and e.). It is one of only a handful of buildings remaining in Madison connected to the pre-automobile era. It conveys the history of Madison even better than the houses because its reason for being (to house horses) is now obsolete. . . . [Y]ou can read its history in the building itself, with the hay mow doors, etc."

Standards to apply

Preservation Planner Bailey has already identified the standards to be applied to proposed action 3. The key phrase is compatibility with “the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing.” Within these general terms fall attributes such as setback, orientation, height, and roof shape. The Madison Trust acknowledges that coming up with a design that “fits” the character and integrity of adjacent buildings on three sides is difficult. But in this instance, the Landmarks Commission has the benefit of seeing an example of what the 2012 Commission considered to be satisfactory.

Vantage points to consider

The site is most often viewed through the windows of a motorized vehicle traveling East to West on Gorham Street. It is at the top of the biggest hill on that route, something that may be easier to remember when straddling a bicycle. Pedestrians enjoy a stretch of shoulder room on that side of the street because the buildings are set back rather than extending close to the sidewalk. “Mansion Hill” is highly descriptive in that location.

Lesson from history

More than a decade ago, Bethel Lutheran Church parishioners were interested in clearing the only house that remained on its block bounded by Wisconsin Avenue as well as Gorham, Johnson, and Carroll streets. The Steensland House at 315 N. Carroll St., built in 1896 and designated as a Madison Landmark in 1974, stood in the way of having more than one-third of that block a “blank slate” for future development. Bethel partnered with Apex and applied to the Landmarks Commission for permission to move the Steensland House two blocks to the same location (124 E. Gorham St.) now being proposed for a new five-story structure. [Legistar 25827](#).

That [application](#) (see pages 18-21) includes several modified photos showing the stately Steensland House perched between the two Brown homes and in front of the carriage house. The integrity of the assemblage of structures remains. The masses relate, the setbacks relate, and the scales relate. The carriage house is not obscured and its distinct purpose remains readable. This 2012 proposal was actually approved by the Landmarks Commission. The proposed move of the Steensland House to 124 E. Gorham St. ultimately did not take place.²

In contrast, the proposed new building “looms” like a five-story barn with a double garage door much closer to the sidewalk. Its scale is oversized relative to 116 and overwhelming relative to 130. Compare the size of the dormers on 130 and the dormers on the proposal. The proposal would break up the integrity of the historic district.

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² After approval by Landmarks, Bethel chose to withdraw the 2012 application. The Steensland house was later moved within its original block, where it is now tucked into a formerly vacant corner outside the primary Bethel structure.

Conclusion

The request to approve the current design should be denied because it is out-of-scale for the site and would almost completely block the highly significant Carriage House from being viewed along Gorham Street.

Sincerely,

Rick Chandler

Rick Chandler
President
Madison Trust for Historic Preservation