

TO: Madison Plan Commission Working Session
FR: Michael Bridgeman, 106 S. Franklin St.
DT: March 8, 2012 (email sent 03.22.12)
RE: Downtown Plan and Key 7

I have reviewed the Downtown Plan and paid particular attention to historic resources. I have previously made remarks on these topics in person or in writing to the Landmarks and Urban Design commissions and well as the Downtown Coordinating Committee.

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Key 7: Build on Historic Resources

Predictability — The narrative calls for “a degree of predictability for the development review process.”(p. 91). The final Plan should be clear, however, that predictability is important for all those vested in historic districts: residents, property owners, the community at large – as well as developers. The Plan Commission should ask that this diversity of interests be stated explicitly in the final document.

Maintenance — While increasing inspection frequency is a worthy goal, it does not go far enough in ensuring the maintenance of historic properties. Regarding maintenance of historic properties, the City should take a lead role in assisting property owners through grants, loans or other means as described in Recommendation 162 (p. 92). Of particular concern is the preservation of Madison’s early sandstone structures, which are unique to this area. Many have suffered from years of winter salt and other depredations.

Landmark nominations — The Downtown Plan recommends that the city complete nominating potential landmarks identified in the 1998 Downtown Preservation Plan. We should be careful not to over-rely on the 1998 plan which is now 14 years old. Expectations of what is or is not historic may have changed. Further, I am not clear how this goal will be achieved since I don’t believe city staff nor the Landmarks Commission can (or has) prepared nominations in the past.

Landmark Buildings and Local Historic District Recommendations — I support Recommendations 166 through 170 (p. 93) about landmarks buildings and local districts. I encourage a policy of matching the boundaries of local and National Register districts for simplicity, clarity and predictability. This is especially true of Mansion Hill.

National Register of Historic Places — I support Recommendations 171 through 174 (p. 95) While National Register status creates some incentives for property owners, the city needs to do even more and pursue actions such as those described in Recommendation 162 (p. 92).