

Date: February 5, 2025

To: City of Madison Urban Design Commission

From: George Hall, past president of Wright in Wisconsin, Inc.

RE: February 5, 2025, Urban Design Commission Meeting Agenda Item: 5, Amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee

The Lamp House Block committee was established over a decade ago to provide a history, recommendations and possible strategic plan for the renovation and preservation of Frank Lloyd Wright's Robert Lamp House, the remainder of the historically significant context on the block, while the now existing AC Hotel and Capitol's Edge developments were first being discussed.

I support the amendments to the 2014 Lamp House Block Committee report proposed by Alder Bennett, as these amendments make the report consistent with the 2021 decision by the Common Council not to allow lowering of allowable building heights on the block. Doing this removes confusion over which policy direction should be followed as redevelopment of the remainder of the block is discussed by all the parties, including with city staff.

Over the years, I've participated in leading tours of the home, working with the owner, as well as participating with Architect Peter Rott in the preparation of a condition report on the house. Additionally, I've offered comments during various policy discussions by commissions, and most recently the 2021 Council discussion on height limits.

As Frank Lloyd Wright's earliest remaining structure in Madison, preserving the home and as much of its' context as is feasible is important. I can't stress that enough. This is after all, a National Register building, and a product of Wright's Oak Park studio at a very productive time in Wright's life when Marion Mahoney and Walter Burleigh Griffen were among his associates (and the house bears suggestions of Griffen's participation). But preservation, given the siting of the home, proximity of surrounding buildings that nearly enclose the site, a demand for housing in Madison, and limited street views that provide public benefit, are admittedly a difficult challenge to integrate and resolve.

It strikes me that harmonizing policies through amendment might just aid in getting discussions with interested parties off dead center and enable a collaborative discussion of a conservation plan and sustainable vision for the home to take place.

Thank you for considering my comments.



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BUILDING CONSERVANCY

February 5, 2025

City of Madison, Urban Design Commission
urbandesigncomments@cityofmadison.com

Subject: February 5, 2025, Meeting Agenda Item regarding Amending the Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee

Dear Members of the Urban Plan Commission:

We recognize that in 2021 the Common Council decided not to approve the proposed amendment to the Downtown Height Map in the Zoning Code, which was recommended in the 2014 Lamp House Block report. However, securing the future of the Lamp House and ensuring its preservation and public visibility is an important responsibility for the City of Madison, as recognized in the report, which we feel remains an important guide for this block.

Lake Monona and Lake Mendota are among Madison's key assets and reasons for existence. The Lamp House was situated at the high point in the middle of this block to provide views of the lakes. As the city makes zoning and design decisions that compromise the unique design elements of this house, such as now eliminating its historic views of the lakes, we ask for serious consideration of redevelopment schemes on the block to make the future of the Lamp House more viable. It sits landlocked in a well of taller buildings, and allowing more density and insensitive development to continue to overwhelm the house would substantially diminish the significance and visibility of this historic landmark.

To that end, we urge the Urban Design Commission and the City of Madison to:

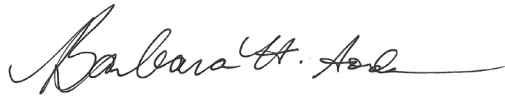
- Insist on designs for the block that allow light and air to reach the Lamp House and preserve its outdoor room, which is an important element of its original design.
- Preserve street views of the house on Butler and Mifflin as a public benefit of experiencing this house.
- Consider a larger, sustainable vision for the future of this important house that provides a holistic development scheme for all of the parcels in play and considers sensitive and appropriate development on the block that balances the preservation and economic viability of the Lamp House and surrounding properties with desired development objectives for the area.

Frank Lloyd Wright was recognized on the World Heritage list in 2019 with the inscription of a series of eight buildings making up *The 20th-Century Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright*. Two of these eight sites

are not far from the Lamp House – Jacobs 1 in Madison and Taliesin in Spring Green. The State of Wisconsin has celebrated this native son architect with the marketing of the Frank Lloyd Wright Trail. Wright enthusiasts from around the globe make pilgrimages to see the Lamp House.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy is the only organization dedicated to facilitating the preservation and stewardship of the remaining built works of Frank Lloyd Wright worldwide. We write in support of the preservation and enhancement of the cultural and historical assets of Madison and its downtown area and urge you to take action to safeguard this important work by America's most prominent architect.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara H. Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barbara Gordon
Executive Director

From: [Poore, Carol](#)
To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: Lamp House report
Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 1:36:50 PM

You don't often get email from carol_poore@brown.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear City of Madison,

I would like to register my opposition to my alder Julia Bennett's proposal to alter the City's rules for what can be built around Frank Lloyd Wright's Lamp House. Throughout her tenure as alder, she has shown very little sympathy for preserving the beautiful historic properties that make our district, and Madison, unique. Her blog report that I received today claims that it is ridiculous to preserve the lake view from this house that was created for a long-dead person and has no understanding for the fact that this view is still an integral part of the charm of this house. If the current residents and neighbors of the house don't know anything about its history, then it could be the task of a thoughtful alder to educate them.

I also support the creation of more affordable housing in Madison, but I am sure that there are other solutions to this problem. I hope the City Council will vote against this proposal. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,
Carol Poore
1 Langdon St., apt. 504
Madison, WI 53703

From: [Vaughn, Jessica L](#)
To: [Cleveland, Julie](#)
Subject: FW: Lamphouse plan
Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 12:23:59 PM
Attachments: [230427-LAMPHOUSE APARTMENTS -options 1-4.pdf](#)
[LAMPHOUSE APARTMENTS-Plan Options \(1\).pdf](#)



Jessica Vaughn, AICP (she/her)
Urban Design Commission Secretary – Planning Division
Department of Planning & Community & Economic
Development
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd | Suite 017
PO Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701
jvaughn@cityofmadison.com
608.267.8740

From: Bruce Bosben <BBosben@apexrents.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2025 12:22 PM
To: Vaughn, Jessica L <JVaughn@cityofmadison.com>
Cc: Bennett, Juliana <district2@cityofmadison.com>
Subject: Lamphouse plan

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Jessica:

Alder Bennett suggested that I send you an email in advance of tonight's UDC meeting, explaining my interest in modifying the recommendations in the Lamp House Block Plan. My concern is that while the plan does set forth requirements for a conforming design, such a design is not actually buildable. Attached are four concepts which would conform to the plan. The need to preserve the views and build only 60 feet wide results in buildings where the exterior surfaces don't contain enough units to pay for themselves. I'm familiar with the critique that developers always want to maximize profits, which is usually true, but this issue goes beyond that. Most developers need to get financing to fund their projects. The numbers on the project, as shown in our drawings, are so bad that the project cannot be financed. Under current entitlements, there is no use for the property where it would pay to remove the existing buildings on 209, 215, 219 and 223 Mifflin.

Unfortunately, these properties have many functional deficits. They are woefully energy inefficient, they lack handicap accessibility, they provide zero off-street parking and they lack many amenities which are desired by modern residents. They provide only 17 housing units and generate less than \$25,000 in annual property taxes. A new project could provide 70-80 housing units and generate over \$500,000 in annual property taxes.

Any development on this site would definitely respect the Lamp House. In fact, our plan is to incorporate the house into the overall development, using it as community space and/or guest

accommodations for residents. I have conferred extensively with the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy, and I believe they support our idea of building a single 6-story apartment building on our Mifflin Street sites, wherein the Lamp House becomes an integral part of the project, thereby assuring its long-term preservation as a working component of a functioning property.

I ask that the committee recommend modifying the Plan to allow for development as described above.

Bruce Bosben

Chairman of the Board

Apex Real Estate Holdings LLC

608-255-3753



OPTION # 1



OPTION # 2

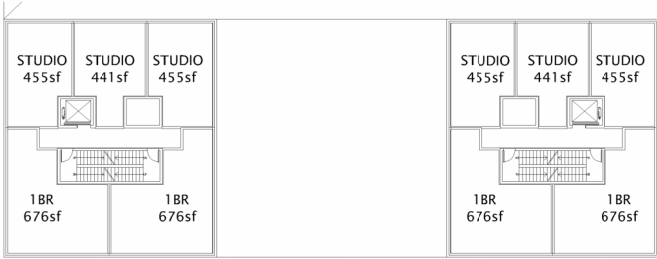


OPTION # 3

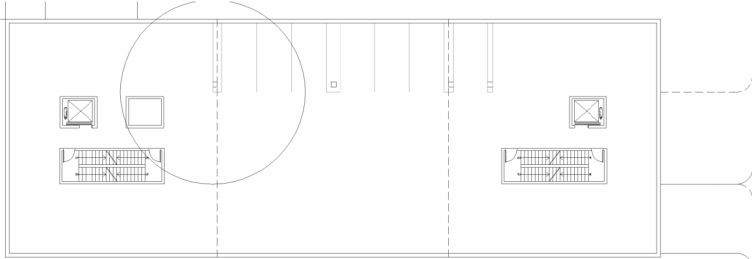


OPTION # 4

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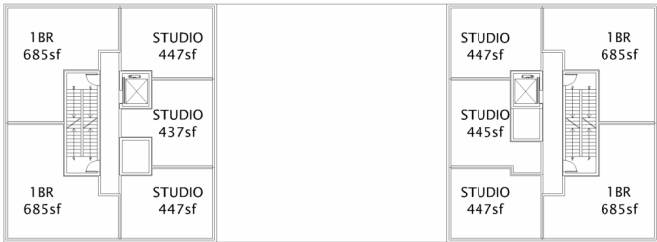


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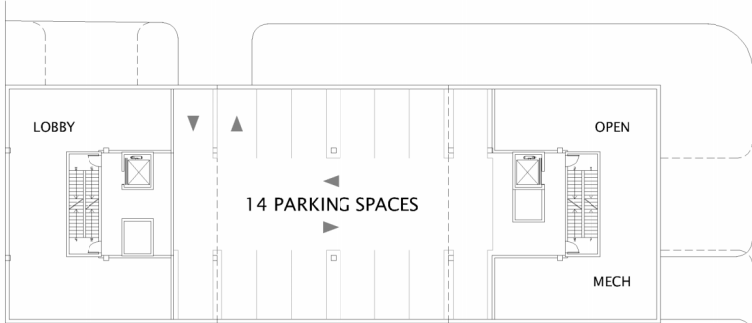


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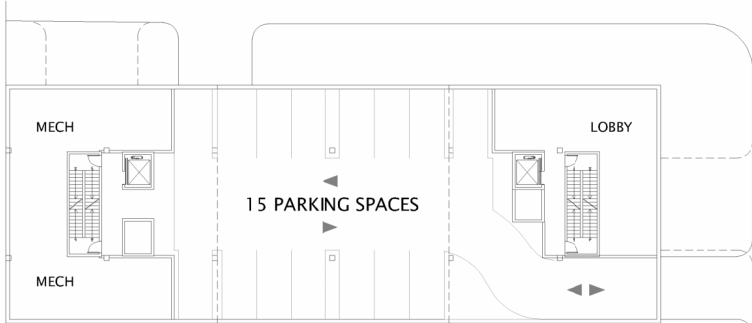
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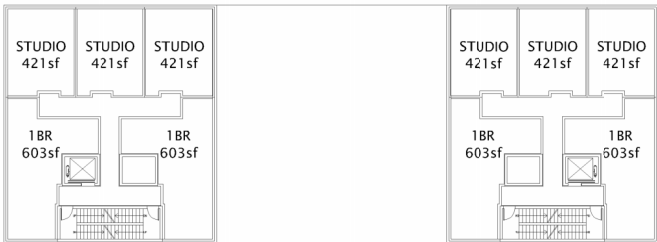


PARKING LEVEL L2

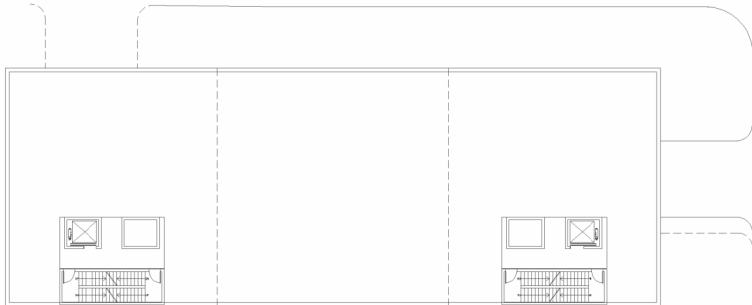


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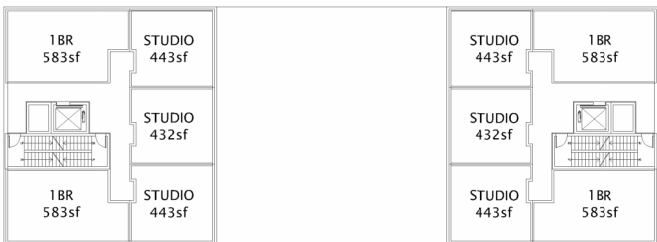


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PARKING LEVEL

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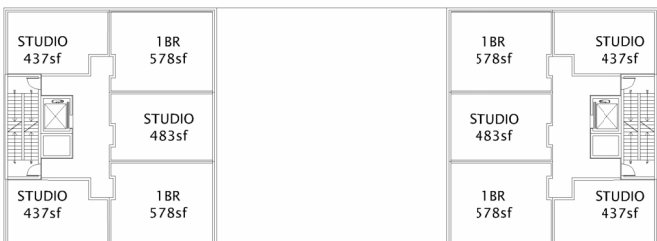


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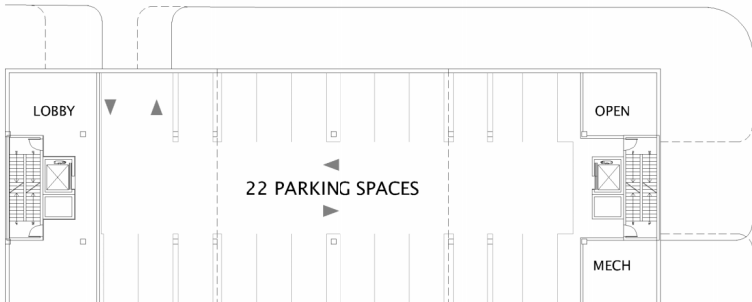


PARKING LEVEL L1

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RESIDENTIAL FLOOR



PARKING LEVEL L2



PARKING LEVEL L1

4 February 2025

Madison Urban Design Commission:

I am one of the few members of the public who attended all the meetings in 2013-2014 of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee. Their final report didn't include everything I would have wished for, but it was solid, reasonable, and well presented. I see no reason to amend the report as submitted even if all of its recommendations have not been adopted.

In particular, the Urban Design Commission should preserve the remaining views to the Lamp House proposed on page 15 of the 2014 report. View 4 was significantly reduced with the construction of the apartment building on North Webster Street. Views 1, 2 and 3 to the Lamp House have been in place for more than 120 years, since it was built in 1904. I can see no good argument for amending this part of the report at this time.

I imagine the owner of the Mifflin Street/Butler Street properties would find it easier (and more profitable) to build a continuous building. The ultimate result will be a wall obscuring views of the Lamp House from all but View 1, the long driveway approach. This would further diminish the presence of this important house that is a Madison Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Lamp House has an important story to tell about Madison's history, the physically disabled man who had it built, and his boyhood friend who so imaginatively accommodated his needs through architecture. Please let that story be told.

Michael Bridgeman
9099 Katzenbuechel Rd
Mazomanie WI 53560
608-334-8051

TO: Urban Design Commission

FR: Jack Holzhueter

DT: February 4, 2025

Protecting Madison's cultural heritage requires vigilance and knowledge. I possess a great deal of the latter when it comes to the Lamp House and Frank Lloyd Wright. In fact I wrote the essay on them for the 1983 Wright and Madison exhibition catalog for the Elvehjem Museum of Art (now the Chazen). I hope some of you have read it because it demonstrates that the house plan involves far more than a building; it involves views of the isthmus and both lakes. This reality is reflected in the recommendations of the plan that you are considering setting aside now.

That would be a mistake, since it would merely aid the selfish purposes of a developer who since around 2006 has been seeking to diminish the Lamp House plan as conceived by Wright. In the early 2000s he had one of his employees telephone me to ask about the wisdom of installing a parking lot in the front yard of the Lamp House, or, perhaps, building a ramp for underground parking there, with grass on top. I responded that neither would be faithful to Wright's vision. And I reported the conversation to Kitty Rankin, then Madison's historic preservation officer. She replied: "Over my dead body."

I hope you have the same guts and vigor as Ms. Rankin in dealing with Mr. Bosben this time around. Be vigilant, be aware of historical precedent, and heed your elders, especially an 89-year-old man you have never met, nor probably heard of, and whose name you cannot pronounce. Jack Holzhueter, 9099 Katzenbuechel Road, Mazomanie, WI 53560 (and I am not making up this address).

TO: Urban Design Commission
FROM: Nan Fey, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee in 2013-14
RE: Legistar #86824 Changes to Lamp House Block Report
DATE: February 4, 2025

Alder Bennett proposes “amending” the work product of a duly constituted City committee which was adopted by the Common Council as a supplement to the Downtown Plan. Changing any language in the report would alter the public record, obscure the actual conclusions of the committee, and mislead future readers of the Lamp House Block report. Given the procedural problems with this Resolution, suggest the UDC recommend to the Council that it be **placed on file with prejudice**.

Speaking as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, the “challenges for future redevelopment of adjacent parcels” were the primary reason for studying the Lamp House block; the report addresses them directly and thoroughly. The Committee, its members and process are described on page 3 and even a cursory review of the whole document reveals the level of detail considered in its recommendations. The landowner who now seeks “flexibility in these recommendations” was aware of the committee’s work ten years ago, although he never shared the drawing of redevelopment he was considering for his properties on the East Mifflin Street side of the block until the report was complete and being discussed by the Common Council. He chose not to engage constructively with the committee when he had the opportunity to influence its conclusions, and now he asks the Common Council to “amend” the committee’s recommendations to make redevelopment easier.

I urge the Common Council, and any board, committee or commission that reviews this Resolution to either DENY or PLACE ON FILE WITH PREJUDICE this effort to amend the language of the report. It is not appropriate to re-write and thereby misrepresent the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, and the Downtown Plan is scheduled to be updated soon through a public process that will thoroughly explore and re-examine these issues.

If the Alder wishes to improve the public record and educate future decision makers on the history of the Lamp House report, recommend proposing an ADDENDUM that presents a 2014 – 2025 chronology through official public records.