

January 9th, 2023

City of Madison's Landmarks Commission.

Dear Commissioners

I hope that this note finds you well. First, thank you for your service to the City of Madison. I am writing today regarding agenda item 3, (75226)- Review of Landmark Nomination for the Filene House (1617 Sherman Ave). As someone who strives to understand history, I appreciate efforts to explore if any building is worthy of landmark status. Despite having lived in Sherman Terrace (next door to the site), and after witnessing many iterations of this building, I had no idea of this site's connections with credit unions. Perhaps regrettably, I am cognizant, because of the proposed project and subsequent news coverage, that I might be one of a few people living in Madison who has heard the name Filene before.

It appears to me, that somewhere in Massachusetts, where Filene founded the Credit Union National Extension Bureau or Estes Park, CO where CUNA was founded, would have sites that deserve more historical considerations than 1617 Sherman Avenue. In addition, please understand that as a Black man, any association with Harry Truman, an avowed racist, despite his support for the credit union movement, doesn't merit any consideration in my humble opinion. While I understand that your work is often complicated as you must consider certain criteria, as an alderperson, I truly believe that this potential project will offer the City of Madison a greater benefit than "landmarking" this building.

In closing, I believe that there can other ways to honor CUNA's or Filene's contribution. With a park named after him, across the street, and the potential to name a connecting road after him, we can adequately honor their histories without hindering this proposed project.

Sending you all my best wishes and care

Brian Benford

Aldersperson, District 6

Bailey, Heather

From: Ethan Budreau <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 10:00 AM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Review of Landmark Nomination for the Filene House (1617 Sherman Ave)

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

Dear Landmark Commission,

As a homeowner on Sidney Street, 4 blocks from 1617 Sherman Avenue, I am writing to oppose landmark status for Filene House.

I believe the primary motivation behind the pursuit of landmark status is to prevent the development of new housing in an area that desperately needs more density. This would be a short-sighted decision and would only perpetuate the housing shortage and contribute to rising rental costs and homelessness in the community.

A community is made of its people, and the well-being of those people should be the highest priority. The development of new, affordable housing is critical in prioritizing the people. It directly impacts the vibrancy of a community, and it allows more people to live, work, and contribute to the community.

I urge the decision-makers to carefully consider the needs of the community as a whole and to prioritize the well-being of the community's residents over the preservation of this building.

Thank you,
Ethan Budreau

Bailey, Heather

From: Bill Connors <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 10:15 AM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Smart Growth Comments on Nomination to Designate Filene House as a Landmark

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

Landmarks Commission:

I am writing to provide Smart Growth's perspective on the nomination to grant landmark status to the Filene House at 1617 Sherman Ave, Legistar #75226.

This is another example of weaponizing the landmarks ordinance to greatly diminish the scope of, if not kill, a worthy redevelopment project that would create additional housing density--something Madison's city government says is needed everywhere in Madison, including the isthmus. The added cost and diminished revenue from incorporating the existing office building into the redevelopment project probably would be financially fatal to the project--and the neighborhood residents who oppose the redevelopment project know that. The landmarks ordinance is all about giving Madison's privileged residents the power to stop development in their backyards.

Placing on this site a statue of Edward Filene or President Harry Truman or a plaque commemorating the role of CUNA in supporting the national credit unions movement and President Truman's speech at the Field House would be sufficient to recognize and preserve the memory of those historical events.

Please note that the description of President Truman's speech on May 14, 1950, at the Field House on the University of Wisconsin-Madison's website contains no mention whatsoever of dedicating the construction of the Filene House on Sherman Ave:

According to the State Journal, Truman visited Madison to give a "peace" address to a crowd at the UW-Madison Field House and a nationwide radio audience. "No one nation can bring about peace," Truman told listeners at the Field House. Just weeks later on June 25, 1950, hostilities began between North and South Korea, pulling the United States into that bloody conflict.

That visit by Truman was unique in the university's history because it was for a policy purpose rather than a partisan campaign visit, Canon notes.

Bill Connors
Executive Director
Smart Growth Greater Madison, Inc.
608-228-5995 (mobile)
www.smartgrowthgreatermadison.com

25 W Main St - 5th Floor, Suite 33

Madison, WI 53703

Bailey, Heather

From: Brittany Grogan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 12:46 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Opposing legistar item 75226

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

Dear Landmarks Commission,

I am writing to oppose the designation of the Filene House (1617 Sherman Ave) as a historical landmark. I strongly believe that this building does not meet the criteria for landmark status, and the current effort to designate it as such is being done in bad faith in order to prevent new housing in the neighborhood.

This building has not played a significant role in the history or culture of our community. In fact, it has been largely ignored and forgotten until a development proposal was made to turn it into much-needed housing. Our community is facing a severe housing shortage, and converting this unused building into apartments would provide a valuable service to our residents.

Furthermore, the building itself is not architecturally significant and does not possess any unique historical features. I have lived within a mile or so of the site of this building for the past 7.5 years: for the past year and a half on nearby Sidney Street, for three years before that in an apartment on East Washington, and for three years before that in the Rivers Edge apartments on Fordem Avenue, which are directly next to the site. In all of those years, I had not once ever even noticed the building or heard anything about it. Considering the supposed desire is to commemorate the site's connection to the credit union movement and not the building itself, it would be appropriate for a sign or plaque to be installed while allowing the building to be transformed into something actually useful.

I love living on the near East side, and wish to welcome many more neighbors to live here as well, but it's becoming more difficult as the supply of housing is not keeping up with demand, which is causing soaring rents and the displacement of people who can no longer afford to live here. Designating this building as a landmark would only further exacerbate these issues, and I urge you to reject the proposal to do so. If the desire to preserve the building was genuine and not just being used to prevent the construction of apartments, this nomination would have been submitted long ago. We cannot continue to value property over the lives and wellbeing of the people who live in our city.

Sincerely,

Brittany Grogan

Bailey, Heather

From: Ann Jablonski <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 1:29 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Support Designation of 1617 Sherman Avenue as landmark

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

To: Members, City of Madison Landmarks Commission
Re: 1617 Sherman Avenue--"Filene House"

I am writing today in support of a proposal to designate 1617 Sherman Avenue as a Madison landmark and ask you to forward this recommendation to the City Council for approval.

1617 Sherman Avenue, or "Filene House" as it was called (to honor Edward Filene, its founder) until CUNA Mutual and the World Credit Union HQ moved to its new campus on Mineral Point Road in 1979, has an intriguing history involving the economic and social evolution of the middle class in Europe and the United States. Apart from promoting economic opportunity here, coops and credit unions became a core economic principle in the post-WW II US foreign policy of containment. They became cornerstones within federal laws that fostered economic policies in the developing world through the creation of USAID (1961).

Derived from German social movements in the 1850s, the credit union--The People's Bank--segued through Quebec and Massachusetts, where Edward Filene was instrumental in promoting progressive economic business policies. Credit Unions spread throughout the US: Wisconsin joined the movement when the state legislature adopted enabling legislation in 1913. By 1935, Madison came to be at the heart of this movement and the home of its international headquarters on Sherman Avenue.

Filene House was not completed until 1950, when President Truman came to the UW Field House to dedicate it and outlined his proposals to contain communism by promoting economic security. That in itself is remarkable. The actual building benefitted from physical donations--marble fixtures and walls, for example--made by other state credit unions, and would surely be worth preserving to foster future appreciation of our history.

So let's not let this history slip away. Filene House symbolizes a fascinating socio-economic account of 19th and 20th Century evolution in Wisconsin, the US, Europe and developing nations.

Thank you,

Ann Jablonski

Bailey, Heather

From: Jane and Ross <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 12:54 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Filene House

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I think it's a ridiculous proposal to build a 440 unit apartment in the location where a landmark building stands. Not to mention an outrageous idea to tarnish the beauty of that area and so close to the Yahara River.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Bailey, Heather

From: Ed Jordan <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 2:56 PM
To: Melissa Coons; PLLCApplications
Subject: 1-9-23 Landmark Commission 75226

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Hello,

We are writing in support of the Landmark Nomination for Filene House at [1617 Sherman Ave.](#) The history as presented by John Rolling is significant both locally and nationally. We believe a historically significant building should not be destroyed. It should be absorbed into and reused in the planned redevelopment of 1617 Sherman Avenue. Just as credit unions strive to make the financial system accessible to the community, a development of this size should also strive to keep our neighborhood accessible to the community. What would be a better way to do this than to save the structure, make it a centerpiece of the development, and present itself as an egalitarian gateway to the community and Tenney Park.

Thank you.

Ed Jordan & Melissa Coons

[22 Sherman Ter #6](#)

Bailey, Heather

From: Lindsey Lee-CC <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 1:33 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: 1617 Sherman Avenue

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Dear Landmarks Commissioners,

Concerning recommending that the structure at 1617 Sherman Avenue be given landmark status--

A good measure that could be used to make this decision is to ask the question "is there reason to believe that anyone in the future will say 'it was a real shame that this building was allowed to be torn down back in 2023?'"

There is not a measuring device that could be calibrated finely enough that would register a yes.

As with the Struck & Irwin decision from two months ago, the Landmarks Commission and it's staff needs to stop being myopic and stop engaging in Disneyland "magical kingdom" style historical preservation.

The Landmarks Commission is not a graduate-level seminar. It should try to square its deliberations and decisions with reality.

If you decide to support giving this worn-out unremarkable building landmark status, I am afraid you will further erode your credibility in our city.

Have a nice meeting tonight,

Lindsey Lee
731 Williamson Street

Sent from my mobile phone

Bailey, Heather

From: Linda [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 11:19 AM
To: Bailey, Heather
Subject: Legistar 75226 Agenda item #3

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I support the landmark designation for the Filene House.

Some writers have urged denial of landmark status because the City needs more housing and that density prevents sprawl. That is not one of the standards under MGO 41.07(2). The standards are clearly defined and are explained in the staff report.

- The Comprehensive Plan balances various goals, and housing is not the only goal that matters. The Comprehensive Plan also states: "Madison has long valued its historic and cultural resources - from 2,000-year-old mounds to 50-year-old post World War II buildings. Madison's history, and the places that contribute to that history, are important to preserve for residents, visitors, and future generations to experience."
- One might even ask whether there is a housing crisis. The American Community Survey table DP104 for 2021 reflects a rental vacancy rate of 4.9% for Madison. (The American Community 5-year data is what the City used in the 2022 Housing Snapshot Report.)
- Of the 43,772 acres of land comprising Madison, historic districts and landmarks comprise 839 acres, or 1.92% of Madison's landmass. Increased density would not be thwarted by designating the Filene House a landmark.
- Madison has 182 landmarked properties, some of which are within historic districts. A new local landmark has not been created in 9½ years. This is proof that the City is not arbitrarily creating landmarks and thereby contributing to any housing shortage.

Nor is it relevant that this nomination comes after the submission of a development proposal. The ordinance does not have any timing requirement. As noted in the staff report, landmark status is not a bar to development. And, as is human nature, people may not think about what might be lost until there is actual danger of that potential loss.

Linda Lehnertz

Bailey, Heather

From: Joe Lusson [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 1:22 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Cc: Heck, Patrick; Benford, Brian; Kurt Stege
Subject: Filene House landmark support

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Landmarks Commission,

I strongly support the well-written landmark nomination for the Filene House, 1617 Sherman Avenue. On its historic merits, this one is a slam-dunk. I urge you to view it on its merits, sending a strong message of support to the city council.

This is another classic example from recent history where we can have a win-win: Adaptive reuse of an important structure that reflects our unique history, combined with new development that will add housing opportunities and economic development. On an 8-acre lot, despite what the development team might say, there is plenty of space for both. But that will only happen if the city takes a stand and insists upon retaining this significant historic asset. Your role in achieving this goal is critical.

Thank you,

Joe Lusson
640 E. Gorham Street
Madison

Bailey, Heather

From: Mary Spoerke <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 1:09 PM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: Support landmark status for Filene House

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

Dear Commission members,

Please find below my written comments in support of landmark status for the Filene House, 1617 Sherman Avenue. Thank you for your work and consideration.

Mary Ellen and Robert Spoerke
326 Marston Avenue
Madison, WI 53703

First, I'd like to extend my gratitude to John Rolling for his excellent work in preparing the Filene House proposal for the Landmarks Commission. While I've always liked that building nestled close to Tenney Park and the Dane County locks, it wasn't until I read Dr. Rolling's history of the Filene House that I really appreciated its role in the democratization of our country's financial history. Credit unions gave ordinary people a chance to buy homes, care for their families, educate their children at a time when banks shut them out. I wonder where we'd be as a nation today without the forethought of that movement.

As a Madisonian and Wisconsinite, I'm proud that our city, Madison, in 1950 was chosen over larger cities, like Boston, to be the headquarters of this national credit union movement and later internationally for the World Council of Credit Unions. It is a history we can be proud of and should preserve so future generations understand that credit unions came into existence to help families financially, not shackle them to debt and high interests rates.

I'd like to share a bit of little known history related to the Filene House. My 93-year-old friend, Allyn Roberts, Ph.D., worked as a psychological consultant with CUNA in the mid-60s. He told the story of being in the office of then CUNA president, Orin Shipe, (sp?) when Hubert Humphrey telephoned from the White House. As you know, Humphrey was vice president in Lyndon Johnson's administration from 1965-1969 and he called to congratulate Shipe on what must have been CUNA's 30th anniversary in 1965. Allyn remembers Humphrey commenting that he was in the White House and Shipe was in Filene House, the two most powerful and largest democratic movements in the world. Humphrey was right – CUNA with the assets of all its credit unions represented the largest financial institution in the world.

I wholeheartedly support landmark status for the Filene House and hope in the future it can be used for work that carries on democratic values of people working together for the benefit of all. I think we owe it to the founders of the credit union movement and to the hundreds of millions of credit union members and employees worldwide to recognize the Filene House as a gem in our nation's financial history.

Bailey, Heather

From: Fran Wong <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, January 9, 2023 10:34 AM
To: PLLCApplications
Subject: 1617 Sherman Ave

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

Dear Committee Members,

I hope you will support the nomination of the structure at 1617 Sherman Ave as a significant landmark for Madison. It is an critical to recognize buildings like this for their importance in the history of Madison.

Your support is imperative to recognizing and preserving this significant historic building.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Fran Wong
1010 Sherman Ave

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)