Landmarks Commission
Meeting of July 1, 2024
Agenda #3, Legistar 84153

As a City designated landmark, the boundary change would require a public hearing. (Legistar 52263) As a National Register property, the boundary change would require a new application. (36 CFR §60.14(a)(1): A boundary alteration shall be considered as a new property nomination. All forms, criteria and procedures used in nominating a property to the National Register must be used.)

Both the local and National Register designations were based on architecture and commerce:

- "The building is also significant for architecture because it is an intact example of a turn of the century commercial-warehouse building designed by an important Madison architectural firm, Claude and Starck. It is one of the best examples of its type of construction in Madison."
- "The Widenbeck-Dohelin Warehouse is significant for commerce because it was the main building for an important and unique business in Madison, the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Company, a long-time wholesale supplier of blacksmith and wagon-making materials to these industries. The building is one of a few in Madison that has a relationship to the horse transportation era and the important commercial activities that served the era. The company was also part of the important regional commercial trade that Madison developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."

Would the site's significance for commerce (or, in current language, its association with broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history) be diminished or obliterated with the proposed lot change? The site could not have functioned in its historical context if it only had the proposed lot. Three of the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation focus on spatial relationships, all of which, at a minimum, suggest that the front portion of the lot should be free of buildings:

- Standard #1: "…given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships."
- Standard #2: "The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided."
- Standard #9: "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property."

One could argue that the front portion of the lot already has a building, so that having the new building in a similar location is not a change. However, the existing building was approved under different standards. Up until 2015, the City requirements addressed (1) adverse effect on exterior architectural features and (2) new construction harmonizing with the old. In contrast, the ordinance now requires compliance with the Secretary's Standards for Rehabilitation, including new construction not destroying spatial relationships that characterize the property. The Secretary's Standards also have higher requirements than existed in the mid-1980s.

- MGO 33.01(5)(b)(3), from 1974 to July 2015:
  a. Whether, in the case of a designated landmark or landmark site, the proposed work would detrimentally change, destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which said work is to be done; and
  b. Whether, in the case of the construction of a new improvement upon a landmark site, the exterior of such improvement would adversely affect or not harmonize with the external appearance of other neighboring improvements on such site;
- Current MGO 41.18(1):
  (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

(b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

- Secretary's Standard #9 in 1983:
  Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.
- Current Secretary's Standard #9:
  New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

A question should be the whether the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse would be able to obtain a new National Register listing with the proposed boundaries since historical integrity is required.

> Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it is always grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance.
> Integrity is conveyed through a place's location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Through a combination of these aspects of integrity, we can better understand a place.
> https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/Info-sheet-NR-integrity-2024-05-02_508.pdf

If the warehouse was not approved for a new Federal Register listing, substantial federal tax credits would be lost for any future rehabilitation. Also, if a split in the ownership of the two lots was desired at some point in the future, how marketable would the warehouse be with an irregular lot that only has 5½ setbacks on the interior sides (and the associated risk of rescission under MGO 41.08)?

One could also ask whether, under Secretary Standard #4, the additions completed in 1987 have acquired historic significance in their own right and should be retained and preserved. The additions are almost 40 years old and were built in the early days of historic preservation and were built under standards that are less stringent than todays' standards.

The proposed lot size, an L-shaped with minimal setback on the edges, adversely impacts the historic character or significance of the warehouse. There have been a handful of approvals for a new building on a local landmark site where the lot line was moved or a new lot line created, most recently on Council Crest. None, to date, have changed the boundaries of the landmark site. An alternative would be to move the northeast lot line about 80 feet to the northeast, close to the back portion of the historic building. The open space in front of the back building could be subject to a joint easement between the two properties for an open/amenity space.

Respectfully Submitted,
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