PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

June 8, 2026

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Project Name & Address:	**Master Hall** **415 W Gilman Street**
Application Type(s):	Review of local landmark nomination
Legistar File ID #	93082
Prepared By:	Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division
Date Prepared:	June 3, 2026

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject site contains one lot, addressed as 415 W Gilman Street.

Relevant Ordinance Sections:

41.07 DESIGNATING LANDMARKS.

(1) Designation. The Common Council, after considering the recommendation of the Landmarks Commission under sub. (5) below, may designate a landmark according to this section.

(2) Standards. A site, improvement, or site with improvements may be designated as a landmark if the proposed landmark meets any of the following:

(a) It is associated with broad patterns of cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community.

(b) It is associated with the lives of important persons or with important event(s) in national, state or local history.

(c) It has important archaeological or anthropological significance.

(d) It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable as representative of a period, style, or method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

(e) It is representative of the work of a master builder, designer or architect.

(3) Nomination. Any person may nominate a site, improvement, or site with improvements for designation as a landmark. The person shall submit the nomination to the City Planning Division, to the attention of the Preservation Planner, on a nomination form approved by the Landmarks Commission. The nomination shall clearly identify the proposed landmark, landmark site, and document why it qualifies under sub. (2). The Preservation Planner may ask the person to submit additional information and documentation as needed to complete or clarify the nomination. When the Preservation Planner determines that the nomination is complete, the Preservation Planner shall refer the nomination to the Landmarks Commission.

(4) Landmarks Commission Review and Public Hearing. Whenever the Landmarks Commission receives a complete, accurate nomination under sub. (3), the Commission shall review the nomination. As part of its review, the Commission shall publish a hearing notice according to Sec. 41.06 and hold a public hearing on the nomination. The Commission may also conduct its own investigation of the facts, as it deems necessary.

(5) Landmarks Commission Action. After the Landmarks Commission holds a public hearing and completes its review under sub. (4), the Commission shall report to the Common Council a recommendation supporting or opposing the proposed landmark designation. The Commission may recommend landmark designation subject to terms and conditions that are consistent with

this chapter. The Commission shall send a notice of the recommendation to each owner of record of each lot on which the proposed landmark is located at least ten (10) days before any meeting at which the Common Council may act on the Commission's recommendation.

(6) Common Council Action. After considering the Landmarks Commission's report recommendation under sub. (5), and based on the standards under sub. (2), the Common Council shall vote to designate or decline to designate the property as a landmark. The City Clerk shall promptly notify the Building Inspector and the City Assessor of each landmark designation. The City Clerk shall record the designation with the Dane County Register of Deeds at the City's expense.

(7) Voluntary Supplemental Restrictions. The Common Council may at any time supplement the terms of a landmark designation, pursuant to an agreement between the landmark owner and the Landmarks Commission, to enhance the preservation and protection of the landmark.

(8) Recognition of Landmarks. Whenever the Common Council designates a landmark under sub. (6), the Landmarks Commission shall affix a plaque identifying the property as a landmark to the landmark or landmark site. The plaque shall be placed so that it is easily visible to passing pedestrians. In the case of a landmark structure, the plaque shall include the accepted name of the landmark, the date of its construction, and other information that the Landmarks Commission considers appropriate. In the case of a landmark that is not a structure, the plaque shall include the common name of the landmark and other information that the Commission considers appropriate. If the Commission determines that because the landmark is ecologically or culturally sensitive a plaque would be inappropriate, no plaque is required. No person may remove or modify a plaque without approval of the Preservation Planner.

Analysis and Conclusion

The property at 415 W Gilman St is proposed for landmark designation and includes a multi-unit residential structure built in 1965. The property is being nominated for its associations with social history under Criterion A related to housing for UW-Madison's student population, and under Criterion D as an excellent example of Brutalist architecture. The period of significance is 1964-1973, when the interior was remodeled from individual sleeping rooms to studio apartments.

The nomination comes in response to a proposal to demolish the existing building and construct a new apartment building on the site. The City approved the demolition of this structure and redevelopment of the site on April 13, 2026 (see Legistar 91234). Plan Commission required photographic documentation of the exterior of the building prior to its demolition, which the City has now received and accepted as complete.

MGO 41.07(2) Criterion A: It is associated with the broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community

The nomination makes a well-documented case for this property's association with the cultural changes in Madison and how the University and the City shifted its approach to student housing. The Baby Boom generation started attending college in the 1960s, which resulted in the rapid development of new student housing to accommodate the rapid increase in student population. The new housing largely provided for male students in more of a communal living arrangement, and this building featured shared kitchen and laundry facilities with a "house mother" to help care for the male students in addition to a maid service. Rather than single-sex dormitories that largely catered to men, by 1973 the building shifted to studio apartments available to any males and females as independent adults rather than children who needed a "house mother" to care for them and chaperone their activities.

MGO 41.07(2) Criterion D: It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for its representation of a period, style, or method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.
The nomination makes a clear case for this building being an excellent example of Brutalist architecture in Madison. Most high style Brutalist architecture in the City was public or civic rather than being a style used by private developers. While there are other privately-owned apartment buildings in Madison that have Brutalist elements, this building is the most distinctive and artistic.

MGO 41.07(5) Landmarks Commission Action: "…the Commission shall report to the Common Council a recommendation supporting or opposing the proposed landmark designation. The Commission may recommend landmark designation subject to terms and conditions that are consistent with this chapter."
The Landmarks Commission is a referring entity for landmark nominations. The role of the Commission is to review the proposed nomination and decide if the nomination makes a successful case in relation to the criteria in the Ordinance. The Commission's recommendation is made to the Common Council, who will make a final determination on whether the nomination meets the criteria for designation as a Madison landmark. The Commission should make specific findings for their recommendation of approval or denial and any conditions that are consistent with the historic preservation ordinance. The Commission may recommend changes to the draft nomination.

Recommendation

Staff believes the standards for designating the property as a Madison landmark are met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission recommend to the Common Council the nomination be placed on file due to the City approving the demolition of the structure after the public process for demolitions of principal structures, per MGO 28.185 and MGO 41.28, but that it otherwise meets the criteria for designation as a Madison landmark.