

Daniel Erdman  
1721 Hickory Drive  
Madison, WI 53705

August 2, 2011

Landmarks Commission  
City of Madison  
Madison, WI 53703

Dear Commissioners;

The issue of Landmark status for the Erdman Office building is very much a personal matter for me and one that I have conflicting feelings for. I am a partner with Paul Lenhart in the University Crossing proposed development for the Erdman site.

When my brother's company and owner of the property, Erdman Holdings Inc., first proposed developing the site well over a year ago, it saddened me to realize that it would mean my father's office, which has been a part of my life and which I still drive by daily with pride, would soon be gone. I have always had a reverence for history. I nominated a house I lived in on Mills Street in Madison to the National Register. My wife and I live in a city Landmark home I've cared and nurtured for over twenty years. I also produced and published the biography on my father's life.

Following the decision by Erdman Holdings to sell the property to the UW Health, the opportunity presented itself to become a partner with Lenhart to develop the site. I had considerable thoughts and reflections before I could feel comfortable becoming directly responsible for demolishing a part of my own heritage.

As my father's company grew throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the interior spaces of the building were cobbled together and expanded, always done on a budget, reflective of my father's frugal nature. There are unique spaces in the front portion of the building that I've always admired but the structure is no architectural gem. It was vacated several years ago when Marshall Erdman & Associates was sold and the company moved into a new building in Middleton. What exists today is class B rental space at best on some of the most valuable land on the west side. From a strictly economic viewpoint, the building has become obsolete.

In partnering with Lenhart, I am supporting an infill project that will transform an abandoned property and create a cohesive, mixed use development on the entire 14 acre site. I am also teaming up with a developer I've known and trusted for years, partnered with on a previous development and who I believe has the utmost in integrity and ability.

I feel it's an honor that Jason Tish and the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation have stated that the Erdman office is worthy of Landmark status. But if one considers this issue both from a practical and forward looking perspective (both characteristics my father excelled in), the decision becomes easier to make.

The likely outcome if the structure is given Landmark status is the UW Health will not exercise its option to buy the property and Erdman Holdings will continue ownership of the land and the vacant buildings until another buyer is found. The odds of finding a buyer to develop the entire site around the Erdman Office parcel would be greatly reduced. More likely the land would be sold off in pieces and the resulting development of the site would look similar to the hodge-podge development that exists today along that area of University Avenue.

Marshall Erdman's legacy has its footprints all over this community. I am proud of that. But if the decision is whether to save his office building at the expense of doing something better, of making a significant, long term improvement to the area, I believe the answer is clear and the resulting development will be a fitting evolution on the site where my father spent a career.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Erdman", with a large, stylized initial "D" and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Erdman