

Stuart Levitan - Chair, Madison Landmarks Commission
Amy Scanlon – Preservation Planner, City of Madison

30 August, 2013

Mr. Levitan, Ms. Scanlon, and Landmarks Commissioners-

We, the undersigned students of the University of Wisconsin and residents of the Langdon neighborhood, request that the Landmarks Commission consider the designation of the Langdon Street district as a Local Historic District under Madison's Landmarks Ordinance (Chapter 33.19). We feel that the unique historic character of the neighborhood is worth protecting and would benefit from the development of a preservation plan and the oversight of the Landmarks Commission.

We value the residential character of the Langdon Neighborhood over the alternative residential options designed to serve the housing needs of University of Wisconsin students. The rich history of UW Greek societies with their historic, high-quality houses concentrated on Langdon St. have combined with historically significant pre-Greek homes to provide a residential experience for students that cannot be found anywhere else in the city. The Langdon St. "Greek Row" is also an essential Madison experience for visitors and UW alumni. The residential experience of the Langdon St. district is a dramatically different alternative to the high-rise apartment buildings in other areas of Downtown that are designed to attract and cater to the needs of University students. It has become clear, with recently approved demolition and construction projects, that this alternative residential experience for students, the traditional Greek Row experience for visitors, and the deeper significance of Langdon district to the history of Madison as a city, is in danger of becoming more like those blocks of massive apartment buildings.

The Langdon Street area developed, along with Mansion Hill, as Madison's most prestigious nineteenth century residential neighborhood. It evolved into a fraternity district between 1890 and 1930 when Greek societies associated with the UW moved to the area and erected numerous distinctive, high-style buildings, executed in period revival architectural styles by some of Madison's master architects, including Law and Law, (later Law, Law, and Potter), Claude and Starck, and Frank Riley. This new construction of Tudor, Georgian, colonial, and Mediterranean revival buildings, alongside the older styles, resulted in an eclectic mix of buildings which distinguishes the Langdon Street historic district from any other area in the city.

We had hoped that the recommendations for the Langdon St. area in the recently adopted Downtown Plan would be effective in helping to maintain the traditional scale and historic character of our neighborhood. However, during the approval process for *The Waterfront* development, those recommendations were ineffective as tools for guiding the evolution of our neighborhood. Therefore, we are asking the Landmarks Commission, pursuant to section 33.19(6)(b) of Madison's general ordinances, to prepare a historic preservation plan for the Langdon St. neighborhood.

We feel that the Langdon Street neighborhood meets criteria a and c of the Madison Landmarks Ordinance as defined at 33.19(6)(d):

"An historic district may be designated for any geographic area of particular historic, architectural or cultural significance to the City of Madison which:

a. Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state or community; or


- b. Is identified with historic personages or with important events in national, state or local history; or*
- c. Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or*
- d. Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual genius influences his age.*

The Langdon Street district is already listed on the National Register of Historic. It has been nominated, determined to meet eligibility criteria (by the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service), and officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district was determined to have significance in the areas of commerce, education, law, social, and architectural history. The National Register nomination itemizes the buildings that make up the district, designates them as "contributing" or "non-contributing" to the areas of historic significance and period of significance, and articulates the rationale for meeting the eligibility criteria.


The unique concentration of period revival architecture, the association with Madison master architects and significant historical figures, and the association with the University and the Greek Community makes Langdon a culturally and historically significant area worthy of conservation under the Landmarks Ordinance. We believe that since the district meets the criteria for the federal National Register program it would, under scrutiny, meet the criteria of the Landmarks Ordinance.

We request that the Landmarks Commission place this request on a future meeting agenda to begin the process of creating a Langdon Street Historic District under the Landmarks Ordinance. Thank you for your earnest consideration.

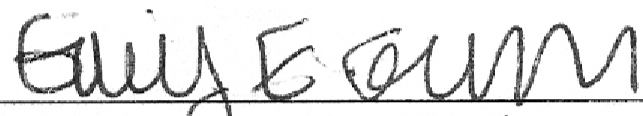
Sincerely,



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