



FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT BUILDING CONSERVANCY

November 21, 2013

City of Madison Planning Dept.
ATTN: Rebecca Cnare
Suite LL 100, Madison Municipal Building
Madison, WI 53703

rcnare@cityofmadison.com

To: The Lamp House Block ad hoc Committee

Denise DeMarb
Anna Andrzejewski
William Gates
Nan Fey
Henry Lufle
Rich Arneson

Subject: Robert Lamp House

Dear committee members:

The Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy is concerned about the future of the Robert Lamp House (1903). As an international preservation organization working to safeguard Wright's remaining built work, we applaud the convening of a special committee to consider the future of the house and the block where it is located.

We have expressed our general view previously in an earlier stage in this process but wish to reiterate several important points. The Lamp House is a Wright building with a very personal dimension. Due to Wright's deep boyhood friendship with Robert Lamp, the architect responded to Lamp's circumstances by designing a house that would allow him special views of both lakes and the city. The significance of the house to Madison, in the heartland of Wisconsin where Wright spent his formative years, is as a little known but significant work in the chronology of Wright's career, since it is one of only two Prairie-style Wright houses in the state capital.

Much care was invested in the siting of this house. Wright would later become famous for his audacious site plans on difficult lots for more famous works but the Lamp House is an early example of how central the site considerations and construction orientation are to Wright's designs. To elevate the house above its neighbors for the sake of the views, Wright raised it two or more feet off the ground, a strategy he rarely employed, and placed it at the rear and at the highest extremity of the east-and-north-sloping lot. Positioning it in

the interior of the block, he reshaped the landscape with retaining walls and to elevate the dwelling even more. He also created an elaborate approach to the house, guaranteeing privacy. Navigating this pathway was an exploration and it was meant to be so as part of the character of this house.

The residential nature of the block is central to this work and its historical context. Encircling this building with six and seven-story or higher construction would be tantamount to its virtual elimination in that it would irretrievably alter the context and further obstruct the views to and from the house, thereby destroying Wright's design intention for the Lamp House.

We urge your committee to recommend that the city preserve the remaining view shed from and to the house, and preserve the neighborhood ambiance, residential character and integrity of the remaining portions of the block. This could be accomplished by establishing a Historic District. Attached are two sketches the first of which delineates the parameters of the ideal district (Plan A). If Plan A is not legally feasible Plan B (also attached) focuses on the northeast section of the block. In addition we recommend utilization of appropriate block specific zoning to recognize the period in the city's development and encourage ownership and maintenance of these residential buildings as you safeguard an unusual work by America's greatest architect.

Sincerely,



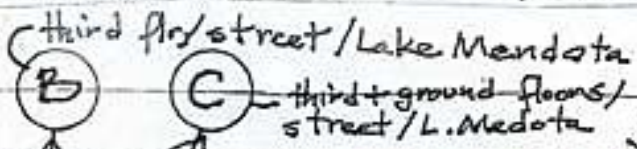
Richard Longstreth
President



Janet Halstead
Executive Director

attachments

cc: Alder Ledell Zellers, City of Madison
Jason Tish, Madison Trust for Historic Preservation
Lois Berg, Wright in Wisconsin
Genell Scheurell, National Trust for Historic Preservation



- PREPARED BY: :
JGT, JH & MB &
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