

To: The Landmarks Commission
From: Michael Langer
Date: November 25, 2013

I did a walk-through of 127 W. Gilman in July of 1979 and with a handshake on the porch I bought the house from an absentee landlord. I lived on the block and had 4 other properties there so it made sense.

Structurally it was a solid building otherwise I wouldn't have bought it. There were some issues with the house, but they were minor. I had to redo the shower on the 1st floor and I replaced the carpet and painted. A few years later I replaced the roof. I also fixed the porch. I did all the basic maintenance.

There was one small fire when I owned the building. In 1982, a tenant with emotional problems tried to set a fire. The fire alarm went off and the fire engines got there almost immediately. There was little damage. You couldn't even smell the smoke. I repainted and fixed spots on the floor and walls.

To make the house more energy efficient, I replaced many of the windows with Pella windows. They're easier to wash. Whenever I had a chance, I always washed the windows inside and out of all the buildings that I owned.

When I sold 127 to Steve Brown on Halloween in 1993-4 it was in good shape. It met fire and all building inspection codes. I had a responsibility to keep the building clean and in order because people were paying rent. I was not an absentee landlord.

When Steve's team presented this proposal to the neighborhood on Thursday night at MATC they said 127 was uninhabitable. They blamed me for the state of that house. That really made me angry. I'm ashamed that people will think I didn't take care of my buildings!

Brown has owned 127 for 19 years. He's done nothing to it. He rented it for 6 years. His team said he was worried about the structural condition of the building so he had engineers look at it and they said it wasn't habitable. Steve Brown is the one who got the building condemned.

His team said there had been a fire in the attic and that there was charring on the roof rafters. When I owned the house there was no access to the attic. There wasn't even an access panel to get into the attic. I have all the permits that go back to 1920 and there is no mention of any fire in that building on any of those permits.

Steve Brown was an absentee landlord so we didn't share the same vision for the neighborhood and downtown. He didn't live near his properties. He didn't know how his renters behaved with their loud parties. His tenants weren't well supervised. He takes care of houses on the outside but the insides are challenged.

My tenants knew that I cared for my buildings and I personally held them accountable for their behavior. My goal was to live downtown, enjoy my neighborhood, and sleep at night.

Michael Langer



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Nov. 9, 2013

The Common Council,
City of Madison, WI

Sub: A Request to Preserve the Historic Parts of the City of Madison

Dear Sir/Madam,

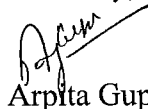
I am a doctoral student at the UW-Madison. I am writing this letter to express my concerns about the gradual erosion of the historic face of the downtown area of the city of Madison in general and about the proposal the recent proposal to demolish the two houses located on the W Gilman Street.

I am currently staying at a historic mansion on the E Gilman Street and the foremost reason behind my decision to live in this area is that it is one of the most remarkable parts of the city. Mansion Hill area is one of the few places in the city that still has a number of such houses. It is the architectural finesse of the old mansions and houses that make this neighborhood so special, and deserve to be conserved for their aesthetic, cultural, and historical value.

I understand the need for development and drive for commercialization. But, the two goals of commercialization and conservation of historic neighborhoods need not be irreconcilable. I have traveled around the world for work and study and have had the opportunity to live in a number of beautiful cities in Europe and Asia, where these two goals have been simultaneously realized remarkably well. Separate areas can be zoned out for the two purposes. Any new construction or renovation in an area that deserves to be preserved for its old world architectural value should be allowed only if it blends in well with the existing structures in the neighborhood. It must be stated that even a single incongruous building is capable of absolutely diminishing the aesthetic value of the whole neighborhood.

An active support from the City Council is absolutely essential for preserving the character, appeal, and memorable face that these houses give to the city of Madison. Thus, in light of the reasons mentioned above, I urge the Commons Council of the City of Madison to prevent the demolition of the houses in this neighborhood.

Thank you,
Sincerely,



Arpita Gupta
S.J.D. Candidate, UW Madison

