



Report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee

January 2014

January 14, 2014

City of Madison

Report of the Lamp House Ad Hoc Plan Committee

Adopted by the City of Madison Common Council on _____ (Resolution # 32645)

Committee members:

Nan Fey, Chairperson
Anna Andrzejewski, Vice Chairperson
Rich Arneson
Alder Denise DeMarb
William Gates
Henry Lufler
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Process

Recognizing that previous planning efforts in the area had not adequately considered the Lamp House as a historic and cultural community asset, in September 2013, the Mayor and the Common Council created the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee. Six citizen members (consisting of persons with significant knowledge about Frank Lloyd Wright, architecture, and/or cultural resources, downtown development knowledge, and neighborhood residents) and two Common Council members were appointed to advise the Plan Commission and the Common Council about an appropriate vision and special area plan for this important heritage block (Legistar # 31386). The Committee was expected to complete its work as quickly as possible. The Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Committee held 7 meetings as follows:

October 22, 2013 – Orientation and organization. General issues discussion.

October 28, 2013 – Tour of the block and the Lamp House site.

November 12, 2013 – Public design workshop.

November 26, 2013 – Discussion of results from public design workshop (Legistar #32253); framework discussion to begin formulation of plan recommendations, 3-D modeling (Legistar #32252).

December 10, 2013 – Continued discussion from previous meeting and additional 3-D modeling (Legistar #32252).

December 17, 2013 – Formulation of plan recommendations (Legistar #32252) .

January 14, 2014 – Finalize recommendations and report.

Lamp House Architectural Significance

The significance of Frank Lloyd Wright's Madison designs

Few cities have a more potent Frank Lloyd Wright legacy than Madison, Wisconsin. The architect is arguably the most famous person born in Wisconsin and the most celebrated architect of the twentieth century, and Madison is his hometown. In the Madison area, Wright designed 32 buildings, and they spanned nearly every category undertaken during his independent architectural practice, 1893 to 1959. Counting Monona Terrace, 12 were built and 9 still stand.¹ The potential of these buildings for heritage tourism could be substantial.

The architectural importance of Frank Lloyd Wright's Lamp House

The Robert M. Lamp house, constructed in 1903, is a National Historic Landmark and a locally designated landmark². While the Lamp House is one of Wright's most important surviving post WWI structures³ and is Wright's earliest surviving work in Madison, it is also Wright's most personal work in the City; Lamp and Wright were best friends from the time they met as children in the 1870s until Lamp's death in 1916.

The building was sited and designed to optimize Lamp's views of the capitol and Lakes Monona and Mendota and provide a suburban experience in the city by its placement mid-block. Lamp desired to watch sailboat races on the lakes so Wright added fill to increase the elevation of the highest point of the block which was already one of the highest points on the Isthmus, raised the basement well above grade level, and added the roof garden.

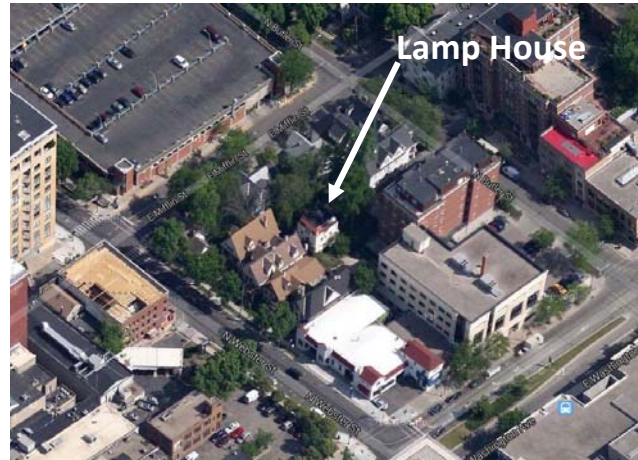
The house is ideally situated between Wright's earlier and more mature work. The compact and affordable floor plan proved popular with middle-class Americans; it was featured in *Ladies Home Journal* in 1907 and has been copied thousands of times since. The roof garden with its full pergola—a Japanese-influenced framework for vines and plants—illustrates Wright's interest in Japanese architecture and allows Wright to integrate the entire landscape including the lake views, the skies, and the constellations. Wright also incorporates a series of compression and release experiences within the physical space along the building entry sequence. The home is one of Wright's earliest experiments with more abstract shapes such as the cube, which would form the basis of many of his later works.

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- 1 See Paul Sprague (ed.), *Frank Lloyd Wright and Madison: Eight Decades of Artistic and Social Interaction*, (Madison, Wisconsin: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 1990), pp. v, 1-7.
 - 2 Jack Holzhrueter, "Lamp House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1976; and Jack Holzhrueter, "Lamp House," City of Madison Landmarks Commission Nomination Form, 1975.
 - 3 See Jack Holzhrueter, "Lamp House History Outline," a paper distributed to the committee on October 22, 2013, pp. 2-3; and Jack Holzhrueter, "Wright's Designs for Robert Lamp," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 72 (Winter, 1988-1989), pp. 83-125.

Significant Characteristics of the Block

This block has the following significant characteristics:

A. Frank Lloyd Wright designed building in downtown Madison



The Lamp House is located at 22 North Butler Street, in the middle of a block that is bounded by North Webster, East Mifflin and North Butler Streets, and East Washington Avenue. The building's location and landscape in the center of the block was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. This downtown block is only one block removed from the Capitol Square.

B. Existing context



Sanborn fire insurance maps are available from several years both before and after the construction of the Lamp House. These maps show the evolution of the parcel configuration, common building size, and relationships of adjacent building footprints. The buildings on this block are largely as they existed when the Lamp House was constructed in 1903. The Lamp House is highlighted above.

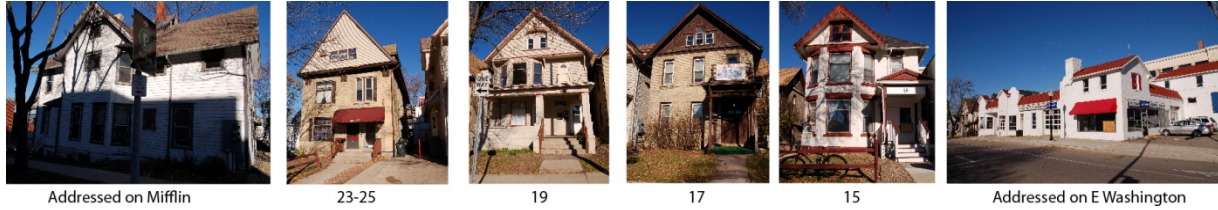
Of particular interest, is that the building currently located at 18 N Butler was originally located toward the center of the block and was moved to allow the construction of the Lamp House and create the entrance view we see today.

These photos show the existing commercial qualities of the East Washington Avenue block face and the residential qualities of the Webster, Mifflin and Butler Street block faces.

East Washington Avenue Façades



North Webster Street Facades



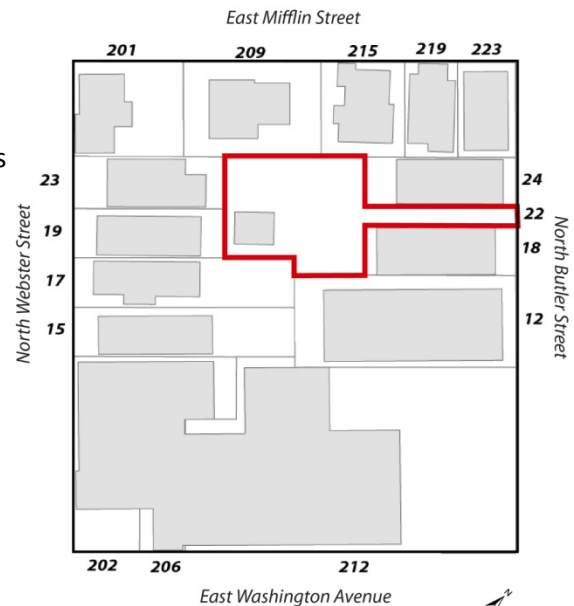
East Mifflin Street Facades



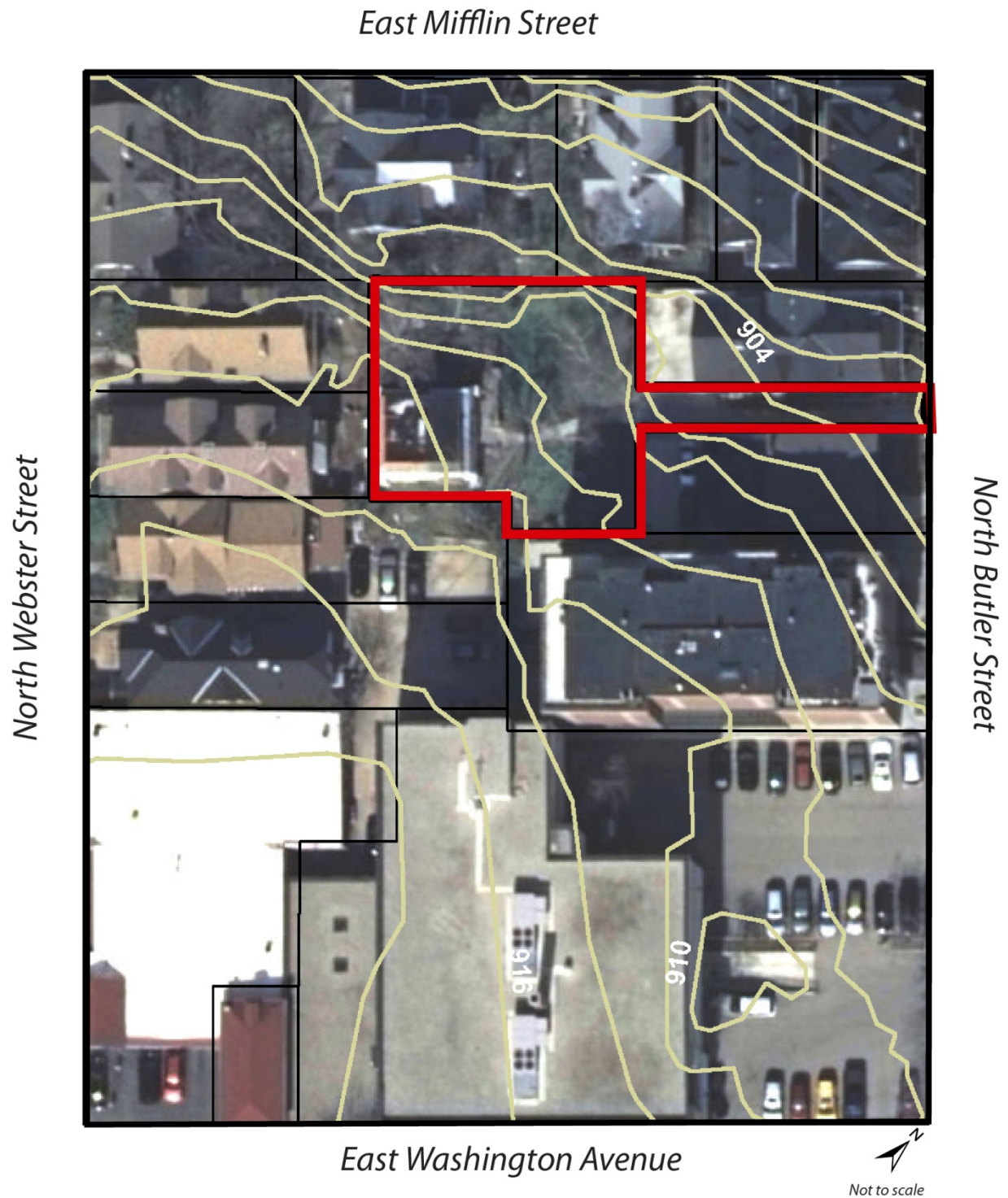
North Butler Street Facades



The map, at right, illustrates the locations of all of the existing buildings on the block. The Lamp House parcel is outlined in red.



C. Topography



This map, showing two-foot contour lines across the entire block, illustrates how Frank Lloyd Wright modified the topography and added fill to create an elevated platform for the Lamp House.

Priority Issues

During the process, a number of significant issues emerged that were considered by the Committee. The initial issues list was generated during the design workshop, with the highest priority issues listed below (the unedited results can be found attached at Legistar #32253):

- How can redevelopment enhance and revitalize the Lamp House?
- The economic value of development including surrounding area.
- Need a plan to preserve the historic character of the block and context.
- Perception of scale for new development from the street.
- Maintain existing views to the Lamp House (Butler and Mifflin are priorities).
- Consider the Lamp House as a cultural object.

Following is an overview of the Committee's exploration of these, and other, issues.



Base Model

An interactive, scaled base model of the existing block was created to understand different preservation and redevelopment approaches. This model was used throughout the process to test different development scenarios, views, and effects of shadows.



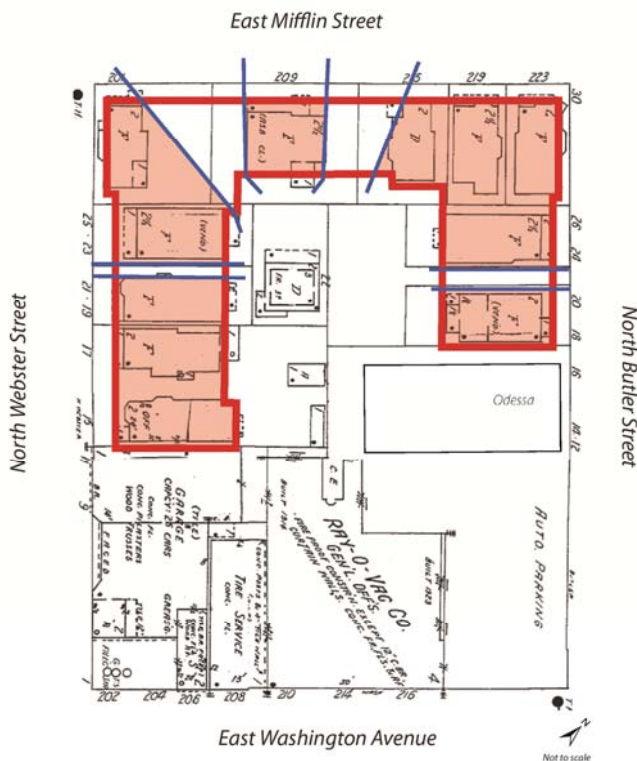
Maximum Building Heights Allowed

When the maximum building heights permitted by the Zoning Code were overlaid in blue, it suggested a capacity for a significant amount of new development.



Buildable Area

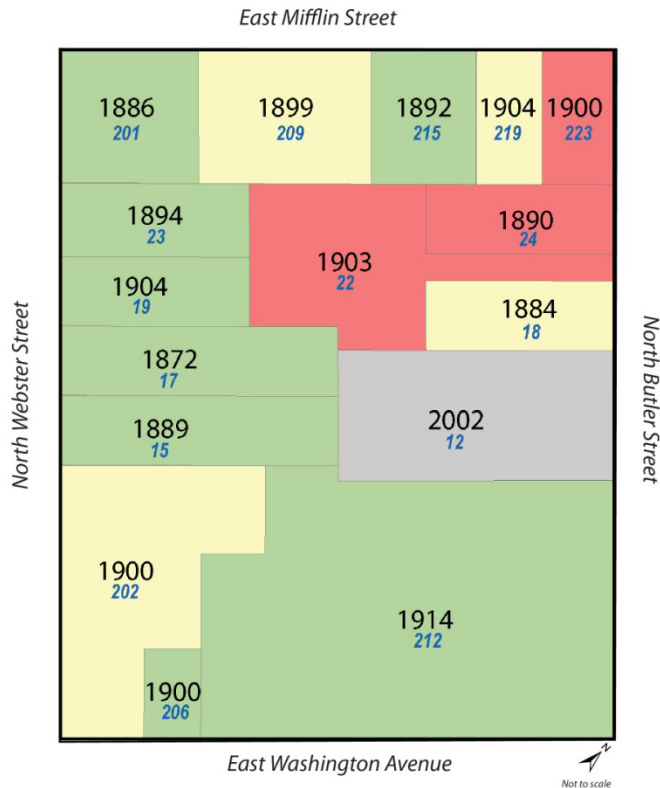
When front and rear yard setbacks required by the Zoning Code are applied to the block, the maximum building area footprint (shown in blue) is extremely limited due to the shallowness of the lots.



Outdoor Room

The Committee considered the historical relevance of the entire Lamp House site. The interface between the site and the adjacent parcels — particularly the location and design of the rear facades of the structures — was of critical importance.

The rear walls of the existing adjacent buildings create an enclosure or “outdoor room” that the Lamp House sits within. This map illustrates the outdoor room concept overlaid on the 1951 Sanborn fire insurance map updated with the Odessa apartment building, built in 2002.



Significant Historic Resources

The Committee also considered the historic context of the block and the relative significance of each property (attached at Legistar #32252). The map to the left shows a concentration of the more historically significant properties in the quadrant of the block closer to the intersection of Mifflin and Butler Streets. It illustrates the remaining historical context of the Lamp House site.



Public Views to the Lamp House

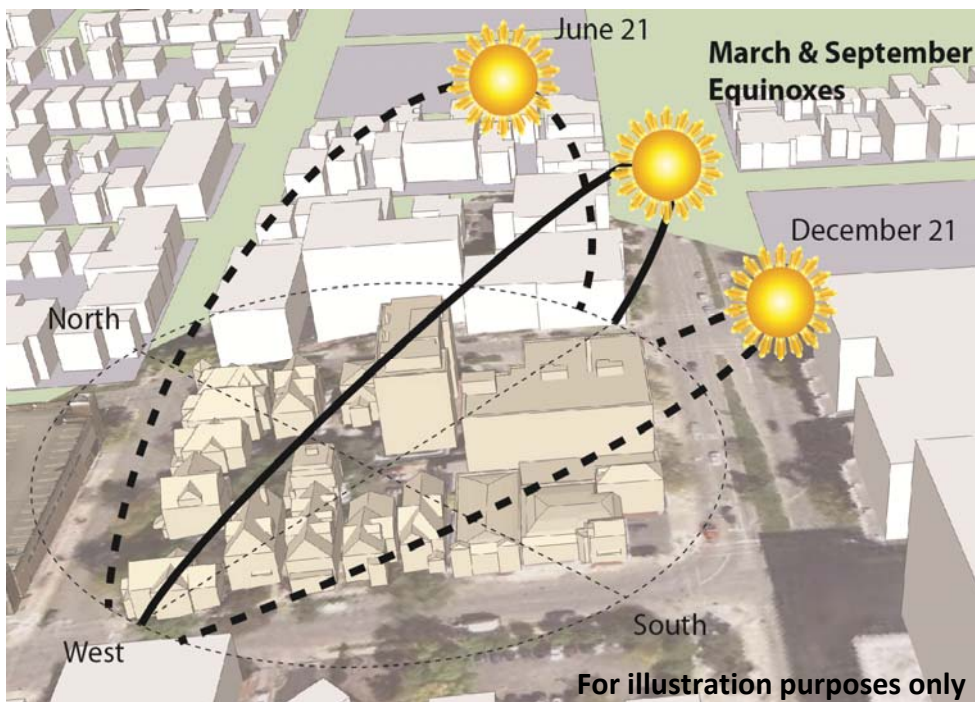
The Lamp House's location in the middle of the block provides very limited views to the house from public property, and the Committee studied and prioritized each of them. This illustration shows the extent of views from the street towards the Lamp House.

It was the intention of the architect to locate the house on the highest point of the site to provide views outward, but also to provide a secluded location to buffer the site from the dense urban environment.



Views to Lake Mendota

Providing a view to the lake was one of the fundamental reasons the Lamp House was located on its current (and original) site. The Committee considered the importance of these views relative to the historic context of the site, and evaluated the current view corridors.



Access to Sunlight

To fully understand the impacts of potential development on the amount of sunlight reaching the Lamp House site, the Committee studied the shadow impacts of different redevelopment scenarios for other properties on the block. While the Committee reviewed numerous lighting conditions, there was intentional focus on the shadows created during the equinoxes.

Vision

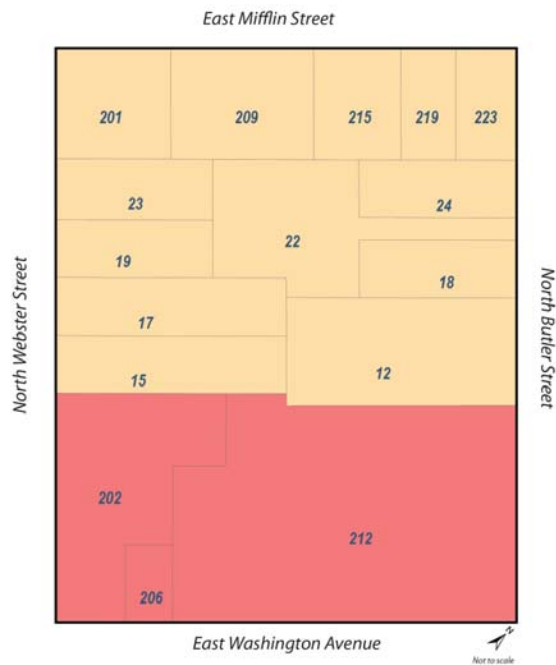
After considering a broad range of issues, understanding the historical context and current conditions, the Committee discussed their collective goals and values to articulate a vision for the block, which is:

The Lamp House Block will be a thoughtful and vibrant built environment that:

- 1) Balances historic preservation and economic development values by encouraging appropriate development around the Lamp House; and
- 2) Recognizes the potential economic value of heritage tourism¹ for the Lamp House when accessible to the public; and
- 3) Preserves the residential character of the area immediately around the Lamp House by retaining the compatible residential scale and feel of surrounding buildings; and
- 4) Protects Frank Lloyd Wright's design for the Lamp House in its current location including associated views to the house from the street and from the house to the lake.

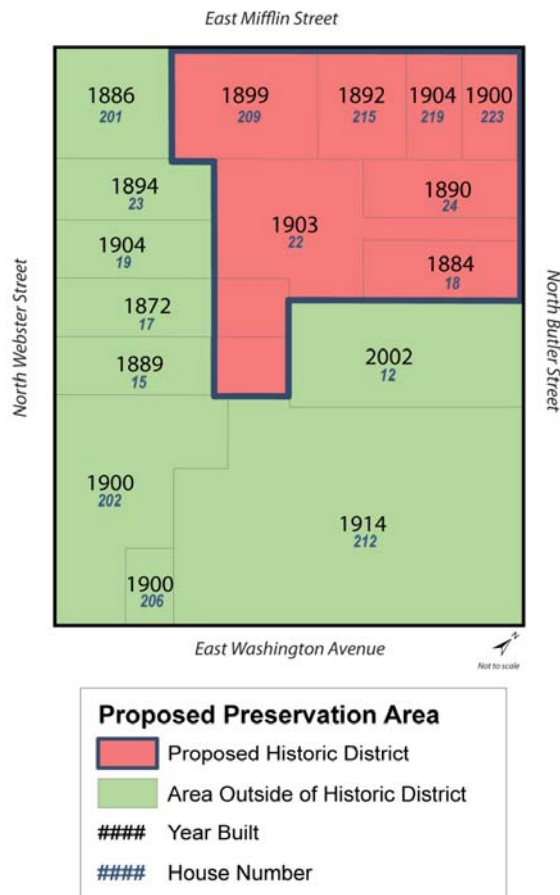
1 The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United State defines heritage tourism as: Travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people to the past. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources.

Recommendations



A. Land Use

The recommendations for Land Uses on the block remain unchanged from the adopted 2012 Downtown Plan. Commercial and mixed-uses are recommended for the East Washington Avenue block face, and residential uses are recommended for the remainder of the block.



B. Preservation

The recommendation for preserving the historic context of the Lamp House block, while allowing for potential redevelopment around it can be realized in a small historic district that focuses on the most significant cultural resources on the block.

Areas in red, below, are recommended to be included in this small historic district, and areas in green indicate potential redevelopment opportunities on the block. The creation of both a National Register Historic District and a Local Historic District would allow for state tax credit opportunities for the rehabilitation and restoration, as well as the protections offered by local district designation.

In addition, the preservation of these historic resources could help to support a growing heritage tourism industry that provides significant economic opportunities for areas with concentrations of historic and cultural resources.

C. Preserve Views to the Lamp House

There are currently four direct views to the Lamp House from the street. These view corridors provide opportunities for the public to see the landmark building and are important in helping visitors and passersby understand the Lamp House's unique context. These views have different priorities as described below.

The green volume within the model of the block illustrates the existing view corridors into the Lamp House from the street.



View 1: North Butler Street

The most important view to maintain is from North Butler Street. This view was created by the architect when he moved and altered the building at 18 N Butler to create room on the site for the Lamp House.



North Butler Street Lamp House Entrance View

Views 2 & 3: East Mifflin Street

There are two different views from East Mifflin Street. View 2, the easternmost view is both a street view into the side yard of the house and also helps frame the view to Lake Mendota from all levels of the Lamp House.

View 3, the westernmost view is one of the less obstructed views from the street into the site. It is important to maintain these two views, although their precise location is less critical, and they could shift slightly.



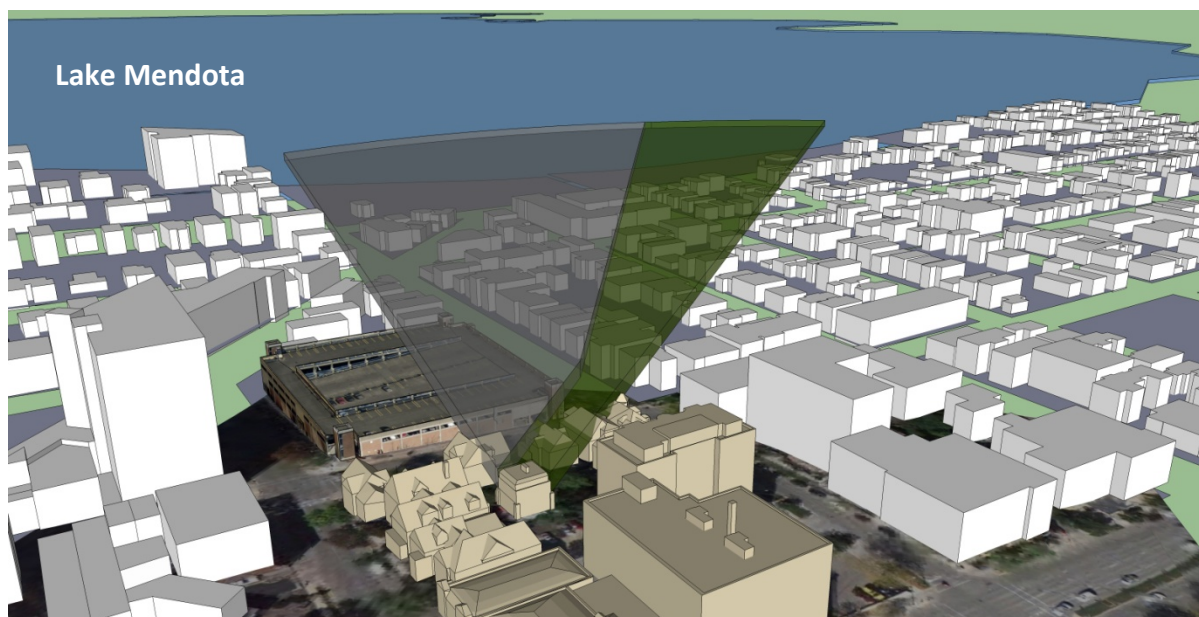
This East Mifflin Street View from the parcel illustrates views in and out of the parcel at ground level.

View 4: North Webster Street

There is currently a very limited view between two houses into the backyard of the Lamp House. This view's importance is less about offering a view of the landmark building, and more about providing breaks between the surrounding buildings to allow for sunlight to reach the interior of the parcel. Openings along this block face should be encouraged to remain in some form, but not be required.

D. Preserve Views from the Lamp House towards Lake Mendota

The views from the Lamp House are an important part of the house's design and history. While views of Lake Monona and the Capitol Building are no longer visible from inside the house, views to Lake Mendota remain, and should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. The illustration below shows the existing views from the house over Capitol North parking garage and the James Madison Park Neighborhood in green.



The diagram below shows the impact on views of Lake Mendota if redevelopment occurs at the maximum building heights currently allowed by zoning. The diagram below shows the viewshed corridor in comparison to the zoning code maximum height requirements. The Capitol North parking garage is shown at eight stories (88 feet) and significantly reduces the lake views from the house, while the James Madison Park neighborhood, shown at four stories (44 feet), shows little or no effect on these lake views.



The illustration below shows that the effect of development on lake views could be greatly reduced if the eight story maximum height is limited to the Webster Street facing half of the block directly north of the Lamp House.



Potential Maximum Height Map to Preserve Views

The illustration below on the left shows the recommended maximum building heights in the Downtown Plan as adopted in 2012. The illustration below on the right recommends changes to the maximum building heights in this small area to preserve views of Lake Mendota from the Lamp House.



Existing Height Maximums



Proposed Height Maximums

**The asterisk indicates that any new development on the 3-story portion of the parking garage block should not exceed the height (in feet) of the existing structure. It also indicates that any new development of the 3-story portion of the Lamp House block should not exceed the height (in feet) of the peak of the existing structures.*

E. Redevelopment on East Washington Avenue and North Webster Street Block Faces

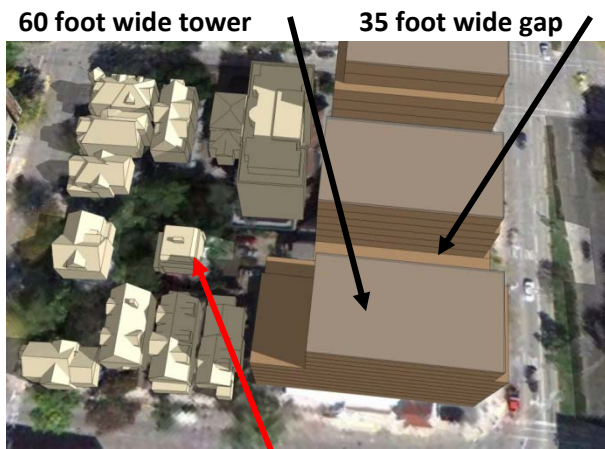
The committee recommends that redevelopment on the East Washington Avenue and North Webster Street frontages could be acceptable within the parameters described below.

East Washington Ave Block Face

- No change in land use recommendations from Downtown Plan (Downtown Core).
- No change in height from Downtown Plan/Zoning Code (8 stories with potential for 2 additional stories).
- Any building height above 4 stories should require a shadow study to ensure meaningful sunlight reaches the Lamp House rooftop at the equinoxes. Design characteristics to achieve an adequate amount of sunlight may include, but are not limited to, setbacks, stepbacks and gaps between building masses.



The following illustrations show techniques that can be used to allow for intensive redevelopment that limit the impact of shadows on the Lamp House: gaps above four stories, thinner towers perpendicular to East Washington Avenue, and buildings that step down along Webster Street.

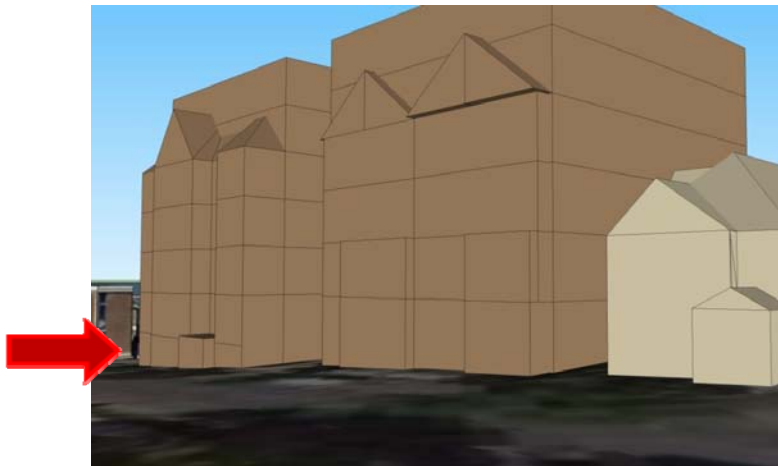
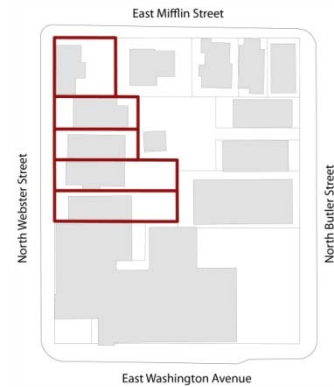


Sunlight reaches Lamp House rooftop



North Webster Street Block Face

- No change in land use recommendations from Downtown Plan (predominantly residential).
- No change in height from Downtown Plan / Zoning Code (6 stories).
- Redevelopment is acceptable, but should require a shadow study to ensure meaningful sunlight reaches the Lamp House rooftop. Design characteristics to achieve an adequate amount of light may include, but are not limited to, setbacks, stepbacks and gaps between large building masses.
- Street views into the interior of the block along Webster and Mifflin Streets should remain in some form, although not necessarily in their precise existing location.
- The front and rear walls of the existing buildings are generally acceptable as front and rear setbacks for new development.
- Redevelopment should enhance the character of the “outdoor room” in which the Lamp House sits through measures such as: maintaining the rear yard setback established by the rear façades of the existing structures, using high quality architectural materials, and façade articulation on the façades that face the Lamp House, stepping down the mass of taller buildings toward the back, providing gaps between buildings, concealing mechanical equipment and utilities, and landscaping.
- Redevelopment proposals for this block face should be designed to reflect the historic scale and character of the street. Design approaches to achieve this could include, but are not limited to, façade articulation, high quality materials, front porches, balconies, individual multiple street entrances, pitched roofs, and other design techniques used to minimize the scale and massing of new buildings.



This image shows a blend of two design alternatives including a 4 story building with pitched roofs superimposed with a 6 story building. Almost a full story can be gained on this site through the natural topography.



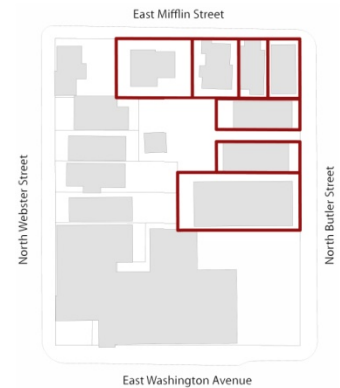
This illustration shows two buildings with a gap along Webster Street and a setback along the corner of Mifflin Street to allow views into the interior of the block.

F. Redevelopment alternative to preservation on Mifflin and Butler Street Block Faces

As described, the primary recommendation is for preservation of the northeastern quadrant of the block. However, to the extent that the preservation option is not endorsed by the Common Council, the following redevelopment recommendations seek to further the remaining priorities of the committee.

East Mifflin Street and North Butler Street Block Faces

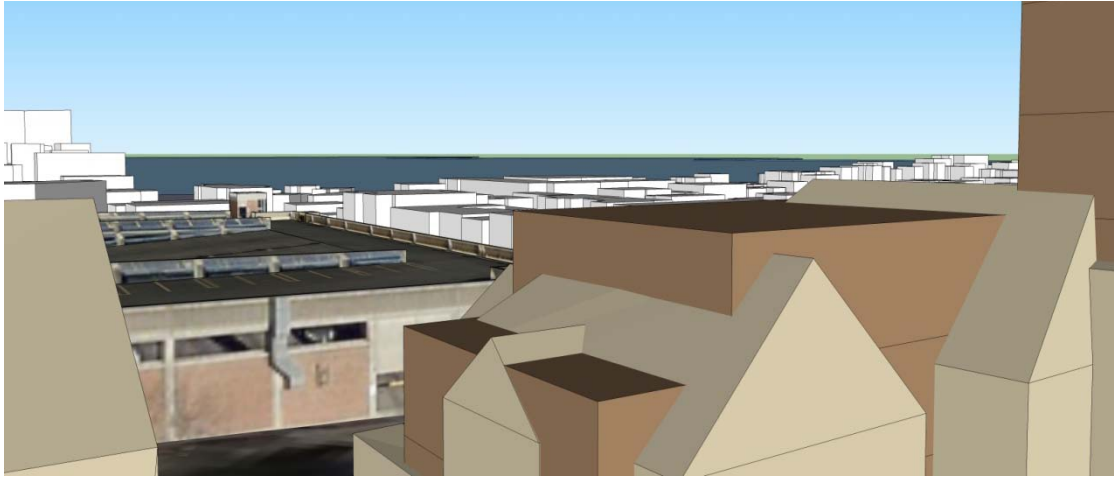
- No change in land use recommendations from Downtown Plan (predominantly residential).
- Change in height recommendation: Peak roof heights should not exceed existing heights of buildings near the corner of Mifflin and Butler to preserve existing lake views.
- The front and rear walls of the existing buildings are generally acceptable as front and rear setbacks for redevelopment.
- Some views into the interior of the block along Mifflin Street should remain, although not necessarily in their precise existing location.
- The Butler Street entrance view of the Lamp House should be preserved.
- Redevelopment should enhance the character of the “outdoor room” in which the Lamp House sits through measures such as: maintaining the rear yard setback established by the rear facades of the existing structures, using high quality architectural materials, and façade articulation on the facades that face the Lamp House, stepping down the mass of taller buildings toward the back, providing gaps between buildings, concealing mechanical equipment and utilities, and landscaping.
- Redevelopment proposals for this block face should be designed to reflect the historic scale and character of the street. Design approaches to achieve this could include, but are not limited to, façade articulation, high quality materials, front porches, balconies, individual multiple street entrances, pitched roof forms, and other design techniques used to minimize the scale and massing of new buildings.



This illustration conveys the existing building forms (shown in lighter color) in combination with redevelopment potential (shown in darker color) that preserves the view towards the lake from the second floor of the Lamp House.



This illustration conveys the existing building forms (shown in lighter color) in combination with redevelopment potential (shown in darker color) that preserves the view towards the lake from the third floor of the Lamp House.



Conclusion

The following illustrations graphically summarize the Committee’s conclusions for potential bulk and massing of redevelopment. They do not illustrate façade articulation, architectural features or other design techniques that will help new development reflect the historic character of the block. The graphic below shows the Committee’s recommendation that includes preserving the Lamp House and the exiting building in the quadrant of the block nearest the intersection of Mifflin and Butler Streets. It also shows the maximum amount of conceptual development recommended for the remainder of the block under the parameters articulated earlier in this document.



The graphic below shows the Committee's alternative recommendation should the preservation recommendation above not be endorsed. It includes preserving the Lamp House and the two structures flanking the Lamp House's driveway, but otherwise showing the maximum amount of conceptual development for the block under the parameters articulated earlier in this document.



It is anticipated that this report and the recommendations contained within it will be reviewed by the appropriate City commissions with recommendations for implementation to be considered by the Plan Commission and Common Council. The Common Council's final recommendations should be incorporated into the Downtown Plan as appropriate.