

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** February 5, 2014

TITLE: Accepting the Report of the Lamp House
 Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee. (32645) **REFERRED:**

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

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ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Melissa Huggins, Cliff Goodhart, John Harrington, Richard Slayton and Lauren Cnare.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of February 5, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED ACCEPTING** the report of the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Plan Committee. Appearing in support of the project were Michael K. Bridgeman, Nan Fey, Denise DeMarb, John (Jack) Holzheuter and Ledell Zellers. Appearing in support but not wishing to speak were Franny Ingebritson, Marilyn J. Martin and Bill Gats. Appearing and speaking in opposition to the report was Bruce Bosben.

Rebecca Cnare of the Planning Division gave a brief overview of the Ad Hoc Committee and their goals and objectives, noting that this block is pretty intact and very close to the Capitol. The Committee took into account views of the historic Lamp House, views out to the two lakes, solar access, balancing the historic preservation on the site and economic development. In terms of urban design, the Committee looked at high quality materials, darker tones to contrast with the lighter tones of the Lamp House, articulated façades that face the Lamp House, stepping down masses potentially towards the interior of the block, concealing mechanical equipment and utilities and thinking about landscaping to enhance that. It should be designed to reflect the historic scale and character of Webster Street, which would include front porches and balconies, individual multiple entrances, looking at roof forms and other design techniques to minimize some of that scale and massing (City Row was cited as a good example on East Johnson Street). In terms of thinking about the solar access, the gaps between buildings can maintain that meaningful solar access into the top of the Lamp House.

Nan Fey spoke as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. The rather limited scope of the Committee’s mission is as follows: “The ordinance creating the Lamp House Block Ad Hoc Committee clearly states a simple and very limited charge. Advise the Plan Commission and the Madison Common Council on an appropriate vision and special area plan for this important heritage block.” The group of seven people worked very hard and very well together and came to a consensus on the recommendations contained within the report. Overall they balanced the economic development values with the historic preservation values.

Ald. Ledell Zellers, District 2 spoke, recognizing Nan Fey as chairing this committee. She is very supportive of the results of this committee. A balance of development with the preservation and retaining a setting for this very important cultural resource is so important for the City.

Jack Holzheuter urged the Commission to adopt the report from the Lamp House Ad Hoc Committee. He is particularly encouraged by the recommendations that the City examine the eligibility for an historic district and require shadow and sunlight studies for further development on the block with regard to the Lamp House. Letting the sun continue to shine on this Frank Lloyd Wright property is essential. He is troubled that the owner believes there is no documentation to support Wright's and Lamp's intentions for the roof of the house to provide views to Lakes Monona and Mendota. Lamp was quoted as wanting to see the lakes from the roof. The Lamp House and its surroundings deserve protection.

Bruce Bosben spoke as the owner of the Lamp House. It thoroughly concerns him to have his properties listed in a potential historic district. He questions how does it protect this house by allowing dense development 8-feet out the back door? How does it protect the house by curtailing development when other houses are the most distant from this house. He is puzzled about the recommendations of this committee. He referred to the reference of 32 buildings designed by Wright, stating concern with the focus on this report being largely on preserving the view from the roof of the house to the lakes, why is that view so significant? He doesn't believe there is any precedent that the view from any landmark house in Madison would be something that is needed. He asked the Commission to approve his report on the Lamp House Committee's report. He believes this report (Committee's) has a plethora of unsupported hyperbolic things that seem to be accepted as fact without any scrutiny. While he thinks Jack Holzheuter is the most knowledgeable person about this house, he sees his enthusiasm as contagious. It's very easy for people who don't have an ownership stake in the house and the surrounding houses to decry that the view should be preserved forever. It's a very aggressive rush to preserve something at his expense without much real concern or consideration for the resources of himself and the community. The Commission asked Mr. Bosben the following questions:

- Are there concrete changes to recommendations you would make to that proposed preservation area that we could consider or talk about?
 - There were two things that stood out to me in the report that I thought were ironic. First at the charrette that was conducted, it's referred to on Page 8, the two top vote getters were housing redevelopment and the economic value of development including surrounding areas. Those were the two things that people seemed to be the most concerned with, and yet this report does nothing to address those, it does everything to try to curtail those. Saying they will consent to development in these remaining areas, that's already consented to through the Master Plan. The significance of sunlight on the house, there is no sunlight coming from the north. It's puzzling to me.
- Have you considered how you would like to see development on your properties to enhance the Lamp House?
 - The second proposal we made where we engaged Tony Putnam, who was an apprentice of Wright's, he designed a building that incorporated angles and heights that allowed for what we felt was an interaction between the buildings. Our plan was to have the Lamp House be a house museum and guest house for people who lived in the new residential building. I have accumulated a collection of numerous dozens of books devoted to Wright which would be installed in the house. We thought it would be a very attractive development and would in no way undermine the house, potentially allowing it to have funding and a use that could go for another 100 years.

Is your primary objection to the district the ongoing preservation of those old buildings, or is it also the preservation of their height and scale? In other words if you could redevelop them but you were

restricted to the same mass of buildings on your properties, would that be objectionable? All the time there are buildings going up in historic districts.

- It may not prohibit it but it thoroughly curtails it. I've sat at historic commission meetings and have listened to dismissals of someone who wants to makeover their house.

But the question I had is: are you objecting to the height?

- Yes, I believe that the only way that these houses can be redeveloped is if density can be added. The reason I say that is they are income producing, in order to ultimately demolish a house there has to be an economic reason to do it. If you can only build a 3-story house in place of a 3-story house, I don't see economics that would enable that. This is a very low-rise use for its location. The fairly substantial part of the block that is the yard of the Lamp House, is already perpetually protected. I question the need to extend that protection to these additional houses. I also note what I think is the inconsistency of the idea that this report suggested building so close to the house and yet proposes to prohibit development on lots that are farthest from the house.
- If this were to become a historic district there would be tax credits for those efforts. Had you run the math that way?
 - I haven't. The first thing is that I don't know if anybody knows or cares about what I do, but we own about 125 old houses in Madison and have restored, and when I say restored I'm talking about a functional restoration (upgrading plumbing, electrical, removing carpet, restoring floors, putting in modern kitchens), trying to restore the antique elegance while applying modern functionality to these old buildings. The question of where has our money gone over the last 28 years, about 5 years ago I was able to calculate that we spent about \$7.5 Million restoring houses that were over 100 years old. That's entirely been done with our money, I've never applied nor received any tax credits or rebates. We haven't shown a taxable profit, tax credits are not valuable to me.

Ald. Denise DeMarb spoke in support of accepting the report. She felt the tone of Mr. Bosben's comments discredits the hard work the committee put forth for this report. The view to the lake was emphasized so many times by so many people; it's obviously very important, as is sunlight. She thought this was an equitable process, people were treated fairly, Nan Fey treated people very professional and fairly as the Chair.

Michael Bridgeman spoke in support of the report. He attended all of the Ad Hoc Committee meetings and participated as best he could. He encouraged the Urban Design Commission's support of the report as a solid document. There are two things to think about from a design point of view: The house itself, which will be handled by the Landmarks Commission. He will be part of any effort to create a historic district. The other design question is the design of the immediate surroundings. The report does an excellent job of pointing out key issues and solutions to how they can be met. Light and solar access, air, views to the house and views from the house are all key issues. He has long had concerns that this house would end up being encased in a wall of buildings that would be much taller than the house itself, destroying the context. The report, with its talk of light, air, step-downs and gaps offers the possibility that that may not happen.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- How well attended by the public were your meetings?
 - Quite well. We regularly had at least a dozen people.
- Do you envision doing this again for other parts of our City?
 - I could, if there is something of this significance that merits a look that we haven't taken before. I think it's possible we've missed something in our Comprehensive Plan.

- I'm still a little confused about the historic district and its limiting power, how it might restrict development and also whether this report is limiting height along East Mifflin Street. This report is recommending height limitations on Washington and Webster.
 - The buildings there now are either 2 or 3 stories, with differences in topography. It's about it not exceeding the height that is there now, and that includes the City-owned parking garage. The double-asterisk area is 4-stories; it's saying if somebody wanted to come in and alter the height, or ask for a conditional use to exceed the height, it should be considered. The Committee was fully aware that studies could be done that would say this isn't eligible as a historic district. That would have to come through the Council. They did come up with an alternate that talks about how development could happen along East Mifflin and Butler that would still respect the goals that the committee wanted, but you could likely get more density without exceeding height.
- Is there any precedent, anywhere in the country of limiting like this, or having viewsheds limit development?

- We have them in our City.

For an individual home?

- We have viewsheds down Hamilton, because of lake views. The committee talked a lot about this. Not every house is a Frank Lloyd Wright house built to maximize views to the lake as part of a childhood friend, it was a pretty special circumstance and that's how the committee looked at this.

- I see that the Landmarks Commission has eliminated one map and substituted another. Knowing the realities of politics and how things go in this town, I'm really uncomfortable with some of this. I completely get the preservation but...
 - A couple commissioners were worried that this area was being written off, that this says a green light for redevelopment here, when maybe the historic district should be larger.

If in fact Amy does have a lot of documentation that we're going to include here, I really feel like that all needs to be in here. There needs to be significant appendices attached here. I'm very happy that Nan did a great job, I'm very happy that everyone had a great time at this commission, but that's not captured here, and if this is truly a public process then it needs to be in the document.

- We did reference it but one of the goals was to keep the report as simple as possible.

I get that and that's why appendices are so important. This is a big deal. If you do create a historic district that includes 7 properties, and somebody decides they want to take four of those properties and you get into the question of whether or not you're in this district. There's a lot of implications with this report that you need to be abreast. It's going to become bigger and snowball because that's what we do here in Madison.

- The Committee, when they looked at the information they had, they were very careful at their scope, which isn't saying this is a historic district, it's we think this is something that should be studied and looked at because they knew their authority was not to create a historic district. They were very careful to parse the language in the report that talks about these are opportunities that should be studied.

You and I know that those words, "proposed opportunities" have huge weight when it comes to go next step.

- They want this to happen but they realize it has to be studied by someone else. Their goal is to make a small historic district here, that's what they want. But they don't have the authority to make that final recommendation.

That's as if they have made the recommendation, in my mind, when you have that kind of language in the plan. If they are truly not going there, then I think all of these maps need to come out, and you need to talk about this within the design context. The work you've done around how things should be developed, the viewshed thing (I'm really uncomfortable with that), I understand how important that is to the story of this house but it's very uncomfortable. I feel like if this is really about preserving this

room, and if it's about preserving how development happens, then you should restrict the recommendations to that, and leave all of this discussion about historic preservation of the other properties, take these maps out and simply allow this to stand on its own. And in there you include there needs to be a study of this block, to see if there's an opportunity for a historic district.

- They are recommending that there be a historic district, absolutely, but that would have to go through a process. They think this should be preserved but they know they don't have the authority to do that.
- At this point we have a report before us of what the committee did and what the committee recommended. If we want to say something contrary to those recommendations, we have that choice, but we cannot rewrite the record of what they did and what they recommended. The Landmarks made a correction and presumably if that's adopted by the Common Council that will be a change from this draft document to the final. I think Landmarks judgment was very correct, having been involved in the creation of at least three historic districts in town, I know that you have to do not just the research that was done here, but a thorough research that provides the rationale, not just for individual buildings but for a district itself. I don't know whether this would qualify or not because the research hasn't been done. But the Lamp House Committee did say this is a possible tool that the City might consider, but the consideration of that is a different process based on more activity and research than what is available to them. That is entirely an appropriate conclusion from the Lamp House Committee.
- I also think it depends on what they were charged to do.
- (Zellers) The Landmarks Commission made a recommendation based upon their desire to have something larger looked at there, but that doesn't change this report.
- I would like some kind of language that says the Urban Design Commission notes that massing diagrams in the report are not approved as meeting design criteria, but are suggestive in meeting the outside range for future applications. I don't want these to be presumed as what the Commission would approve.
- I think we should be showing this at 8-stories, show it with bonus stories and without.
- I think the whole block can take part in the development benefit and also the preservation, if this were cut back so it's not so close to the house. I like the view through the driveway, but if this could be reconsidered for development you'd still maintain that wedge out of that. I'd like to have that be something that's reconsidered.
- I agree 100%. What's important is the room, and these buildings are not perceived from that through the landscape of the room, unless you're up on the roof.
- I disagree slightly. To me architecture means nothing without the context and site. I think he did site this for the views. I would say this report is saying those buildings should be higher than 3-stories. To me this report is talking about building heights, all this other stuff is what they found, you can take or leave, but it's really recommending maintaining these buildings heights and these views, and I think that's appropriate. If we value Wright those views are important.
- I have a problem mandating views from a private piece of property.
- It's not just any property.
- As we come to conclusions, if there's something you feel strongly about we might want to start collecting a list of our recommendations and ideas.
- In terms of the development of the fabric of the City, this is a block at an intersection of smaller scale, historic, single-family homes and the Capitol. That block is that cross-road and it's not contiguous one way or the other, and it has a Frank Lloyd Wright house in the middle of it. I think that as a cultural resource it speaks to the appropriateness of its context and needs to retain some of that fabric with the neighborhood type context on that half of the block. In terms of historic resources, I think it is another group that would deem the historic value of these properties, and if the view from the Lamp House is found to have cultural and historical value, that in itself would define what that district is. But in terms

of the massing of the block, in terms of adjacency, the 3-story range height feels appropriate to me. In terms of property value and development value, creating the historic district provides the opportunity for tax credits. Another avenue I would encourage the City to research is the boundary of what is a current TIF District trying to encourage owner-occupied homes in the Mansion Hill and James Madison Park District. This TID boundary ends at the adjacent block north of the Lamp House block. So this block is just at a crossroads of all things. Both in terms of culture, architecture, urban planning, financial discussion, there's a handful of things out there that should be considered.

- It seems to me what we're dealing with, especially as a City, is the height of these areas. The 4-story neighborhood in James Madison Park area is basically part of the current City's vision that that's going to remain a low-rise area. We can make a mistake in those things. If you look at where the boundary in that case in terms of the Lamp House, it probably was a mistake, and so this is trying, I think, to correct that mistake for this particular part of the block and say this shouldn't be part of a high-rise of downtown. Would you do that if the Lamp House wasn't there? Probably not. But it is there so that's what makes this decision different than other blocks up around the square that are 6-8 stories in height.
- I think the piece that's missing is the whole notion of this outdoor room in the Lamp House with its big yard; are there any landscape design recommendations that you think might be incorporated in here specially?
- (Slayton) Frank Lloyd Wright was sensitive to his surroundings. I'd like to research what those surroundings were when it was built. There was a treatment to the landscape. What were the major landscape features that enclosed the house?
 - There was a pergola created with some fencing. Jack's book talks about what the outdoor garden roof looked like, the outdoor pergola was probably one of the most important designs. What's left isn't much but there are still some remnants of that fence.
- So the idea is to get into the space to appreciate it, not to look over.
- You could see through it, as I recall it was an open pergola kind of structure. It defined the space, it didn't block the space.
- (Holzheuter) It was an outdoor perimeter, it was closed to the public street side, more or less closed to the Mifflin Street side, it was open to the Washington and Webster Street sides. That was to give the appearance of an enclosure, you could see the house from Butler and Mifflin, you could not see it from Washington and Webster because of existing structures. Then you have the house itself, you've got the pilasters, the house and the pergola, you've got a wedding cake. The view from the top is both horizontal and also vertical.

ACTION:

On a motion by Cnare, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED ACCEPTING** the report. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0). The motion provided for the following:

1. Inclusion of all of the Landmarks Commission recommendations, including:
 - a. The preservation map on Page 14 shall be removed and replaced by the map on Page 9.
 - b. On Page 14, remove the first two sentences in the second paragraph under Preservation relating to the removed map.
 - c. In the resolution, in the first whereas clause, add the language, "a designated City of Madison Landmark" after the words "Lamp House."
 - d. In the second to last clause, add "as a supplement to the City's Downtown Plan" to the end of the clause.
2. Add the Historic Resources report as prepared by the Preservation Planner attached as a physical amendment to the report.
3. Explore expanding the adjacent TID to cover this block.

4. The Urban Design Commission notes that massing diagrams in the report are not approved as meeting design criteria but are suggestions of a future outside range for applications.
5. Change diagrams to show any potential bonus stories as transparent.
6. Present diagrams to the Plan Commission that show future development both with and without the bonus stories.