

From: [Scanlon, Amy](#)
To: [Scanlon, Amy](#)
Subject: FW: Charlie Quagliana
Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:25:00 AM

From: Charlie Quagliana
Sent: Monday, February 17, 2014 10:34 AM
To: ascanlon@cityofmadison.com; White, William F (22246)
Subject: Gilman Street

Amy,

I am stuck in Minneapolis today. I can not get back for the Landmarks Commission meeting.
Please accept this e-mail as my discussion of support for the Gilman Street project.

Ms. Amy Scanlon
Preservation Planner, Planning Division
Landmarks Commission
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53701

Re: Gilman Street Development

Dear Ms. Scanlon,

The Mansion Hill Historic District is one of downtowns major assets. The district is dynamic and this part of the City continues to evolve and change as demographics, land use and city policies change.

The district is not a museum, and while it retains many framework elements from it early history, other features have changed, some substantially.

Historic resources that remain which help to interpret the history of human occupation and use are valued. These include buildings, structures, open space, view corridors and components of early city planning.

Most historic districts need good new construction to promote economic vitality, improve urban density and to generate the activity that spurs investment in the rehabilitation of existing historic fabric. Development within the urban core minimizes urban sprawl and takes advantage of existing municipal services and systems already in place.

Decisions about contextual infill design within an historic district must be made prudently, with careful thought, in consideration of the district as a whole and in relation to city wide objectives.

It's not just about what is next door. It's about the broad pattern or overall character of the neighborhood, what makes it distinctive.

Mansion Hill is not defined by uniformity of building type, style or scale, as is the case with other Madison historic districts, such as University Heights, Marquette Bungalows or Wingra Park.

Mansion Hill is characterized by variety and diversity of building type, style and scale. From single family residential properties to small mansions. From small multifamily properties to large multifamily apartment buildings. The district is a diverse collection of property types and sizes.

So what is the purpose of "designing in context?" Is it not the intent to pretend that the historic district is frozen in time, but rather to express evolution and change while retaining the ability to interpret the historic character where it is intact.

Compatible design should follow the district wide vocabulary or pattern. In this case, I believe this is more important than the context of the immediate area. Compatible design should certainly be respectful of the historic resources within the district and should be in balance with contemporary needs of the greater community.

The design should be sympathetic to the existing neighborhood. New infill and historic resources can exist in harmony. Harmony does not demand a replica. The design should be of its time with materials, orientation, scale and rhythm reflecting the neighborhood vocabulary but integrating contemporary elements, such as universal accessibility and sustainable design.

The design should emulate the district buildings orientation, setback and general placement. Proportions, scale and massing are also important. The rhythm of solid/voids along the streetscape is essential.

I think the design team from Brownhouse/Steve Brown Apartments has done an admirable job of studying the character defining elements of the Mansion Hill Historic District and responding with a successful and realistic contextual design that attempts to balance historic preservation needs and contemporary needs.

The subdivision of the building into three sections responds well to the scale found in the district and the solid/void relationship of the street. The concept to have each of the three sections appear different in design and height is appropriate and in keeping with the variety of other multifamily buildings in the district. The use of masonry for the exteriors fits well with other neighborhood properties and presents a look of quality and craftsmanship. The attempt to reduce the mass and height of the sections with indented corners, recessed balconies and entrances and setbacks is successful. The use of horizontal banding also helps to accomplish a similar reduction in apparent height.

In my opinion the 121-127 Gilman Street proposal is an approvable design.

Sincerely,

Charles Quagliana, AIA, NCARB
Preservation Architect