

The applicant proposes to demolish a house at 906 Williamson and build a 4 story apartment building (with the ground floor for a currently unspecified commercial use). The proposed demolition does not meet MGO demolition standards, nor would approval be consistent with past Commission decisions involving demolition of homes on Williamson Street.

Summary

MGO 33.19(5)(c)3.b.: the building or structure, although not itself a landmark building, contributes to the distinctive architectural or historic character of the District as a whole.

- 906 Williamson (“906”) was built between 1902 and 1908, as reflected in Sanborn maps. It is an example of worker housing.
- No one knows whether “barge boards, decorative shingle patterns, wood banding, wood trim and window surrounds were removed when the current wood shingle siding was installed.” The architect believes this to be “likely”, but his letter does not reflect that any effort was made to make a determination.

MGO 33.19(5)(c)3.c.: demolition of the subject property would be contrary to the purpose and intent of this chapter as set forth in Sec. 33.19 and to the objectives of the historic preservation plan.

- MGO 33.19(1)(a) lists the first purpose of the landmarks ordinance as “[e]ffect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of . . . districts which represent or reflect elements of the City’s cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history.

MGO 33.19(5)(c)3.e.: Whether retention of the building or structure would promote the general welfare of the people of the City and the State by encouraging study of American history, architecture and design or by developing an understanding of American culture and heritage.

- Although the home is not spectacular in terms of its construction, or who lived in the home, it does reflect a long-time family Madison family (with a Madison street named after them) and the family’s history.

MGO 33.19(5)(c)3.f.: Whether the building or structure is in such a deteriorated condition that it is not structurally or economically feasible to preserve or restore it. (BUILD also adds: “Only in extreme cases can demolition of any pre-1945 building in the Williamson Street neighborhood be justified. Demolition should not be permitted if the building contributes to the street’s historic appearance unless the building is beyond all economically feasible repair as determined by the Commission.)

- Although the architect said that repairs needed for “continued contemporary use of the property could likely be financially significant,” the architect also said:
 - “[o]verall the exterior of the building is in fair condition”

- “[o]verall the interior of the building is in fair condition with serviceable materials and finishes. Some level of repair and rehabilitation work is required” and
- “ ... deferred maintenance issues are found both inside and outside”
- The house was rezoned as single family in 2011, at the applicant’s request. Based on values of single family homes within approximately one block of 906, repairs would not be economically unfeasible.

MGO 33.19(5)(c)3.g.: Whether any new structure proposed to be constructed or change in use proposed to be made is compatible with the buildings and environment of the district in which the subject property is located.

and,

MGO 33.19(5)(b)4.c. whether “the proposed construction ... does not conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district as duly adopted by the Common Council. (If the Commission determines that the proposed construction does conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan (and meets other conditions), the Commission may issue a Certificate of Appropriateness.)

- The proposed building is not compatible in terms of volume. The red brick portion fronting Williamson is approximately two times as large as its neighboring building. (This does not even take into account the volume of the entire building.)
- The height of the building violates BUILD. BUILD permits more than 3 stories if there is an approximate 88’ step-back from Williamson. The proposed step-back for the fourth story is 43 feet.

The developers have stated several times that BUILD identifies 906 as a site for redevelopment. This is not entirely accurate. BUILD, page 8, has a map which identifies 906 as an area “where quality should be improved.” The map “is a rough yardstick by which to gauge participant attitudes toward preservation and redevelopment.”

The developers’ Letter of Intent cites MGO 28.04(22) as encouraging the preservation of existing structures, but also cites several contrary purposes, including “enhancing the taxable value of lands and buildings.” The developers are referring to old language. The current Zoning Code provisions on demolition, MGO 28.185, provide the purpose of the ordinance is, in part, to protect neighborhood character and preserve historic buildings. In no manner is increasing the tax base even alluded to by the ordinance.

History of 906

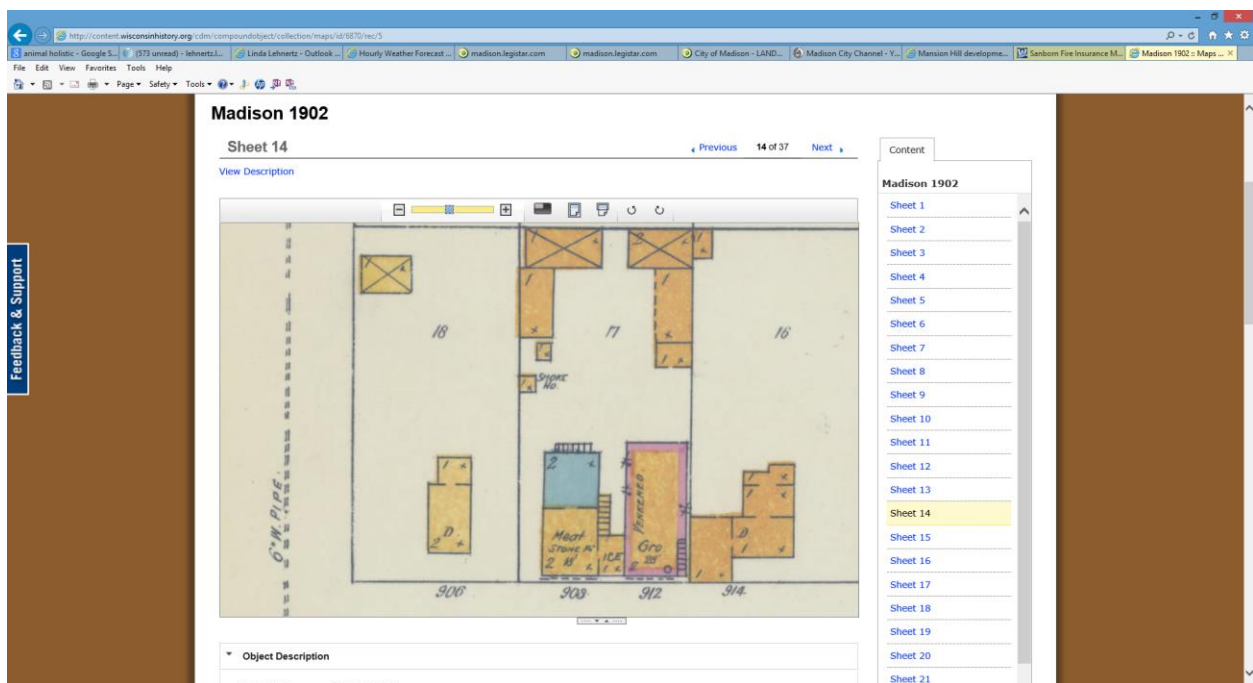
The Cary (alternatively, Carey, as the City directory used alternate spellings), first began living at 906 in 1866 if not before (Richard Cary is listed as a teamster in the 1866 City directory). At least one Carey was still living at 906 in 1921 (if not later, but 1921 is the last online City directory). Occupations of the Carey family included teamster, drayman, moulder, and dressmaker. Beginning as of the 1911 City directory, it appears unrelated persons began boarding at the Carey home, including an “A T Co” employee, an Elk, a phone operator at Union Transfer, a machine operator, and a steno.

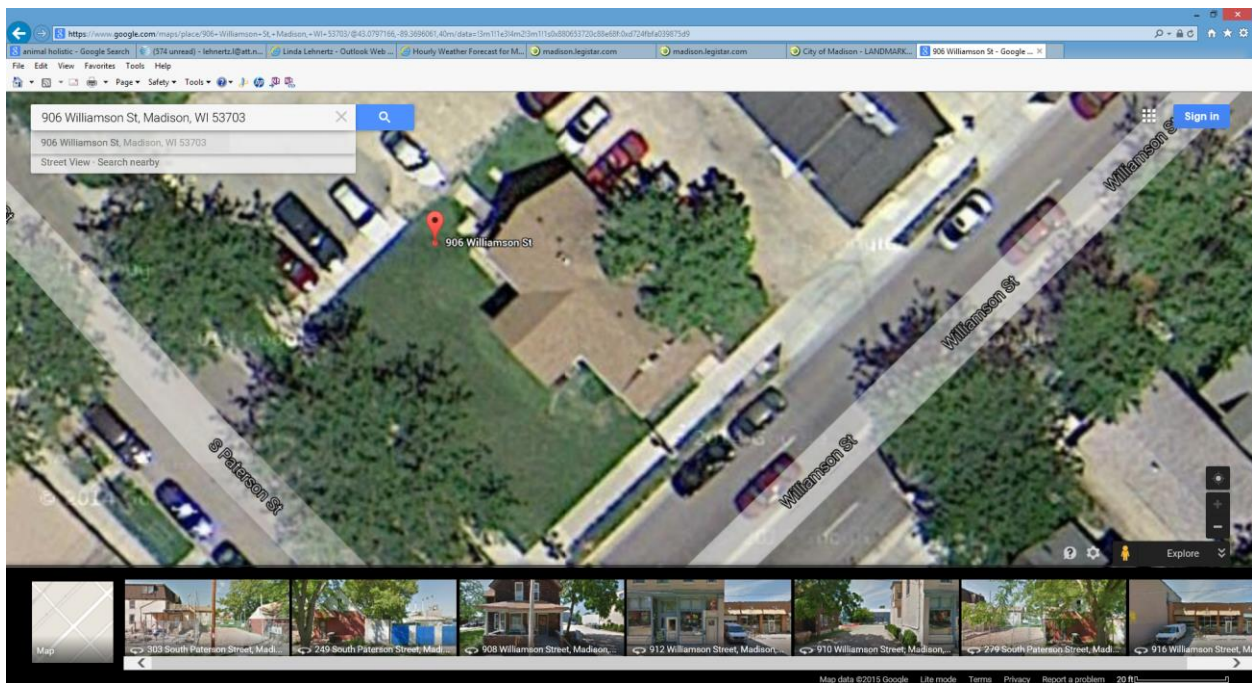
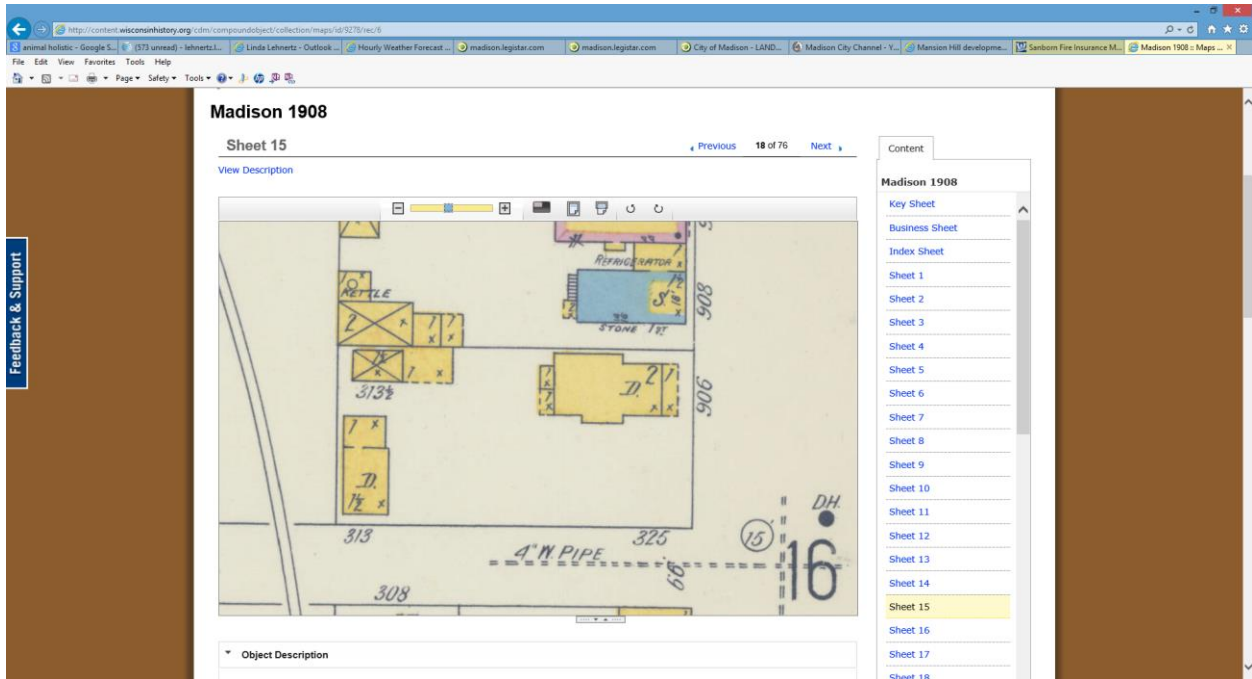
The Careys owned a plat near what is now East High School. That plat was used for World War I Victory Gardens and was the site for the 1921 Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Carey Court is named after the family.

https://emersoneast.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/eena_walkingtour.pdf

Although the family name is apparently not one of the movers and shakers in early Madison, the Careys and their home reflect early settlement, the family relationships and sharing of living quarters, the relative prosperity to build a new home, and the apparent need to take in boarders.

The current house was built between 1902 and 1908 and was sited at the edge of the property. The footprint of the current home matches the footprint of the home as it existed in 1908.





The open area at the corner is reflected in the 1892, 1898, 1902 and 1908 maps.

Williamson Street historically had homes interspersed with businesses. Not all of these improvements covered the full lot. Yet, this is increasingly what is happening with development on Williamson.

Whether it is feasible structurally or economically to preserve or restore 906

The applicant is not claiming economic hardship or difficulty in preserving and/or restoring 906. However, since the architect claims that such costs “could likely be financially significant,” this merits some further exploration.

First, no dollar costs are specified. Based on other single-family homes within approximately one block of 906, it is unlikely that 906 would become a money pit should work be performed on the home. (The existing home is zoned as a single family. In 2011, applicant received approval of a conditional use to use this property as a single family home.)

There are 12 single family, 2-2½ story homes within approximately one block of 906. Values of these homes range from \$159,300 - \$724,900, with ¾ of the properties having a higher assessed value than 906. This shows that it would not be financially unfeasible to perform various repairs.

Current assessed value of 2 – 2 ½ story, single family homes within approximately one block of 906:

\$364,600	288,700
724,900	598,000
358,100	330,200
330,000	280,900
291,000	399,000
159,300	173,400

Second, the developer’s architect mentions several times that at least some of these problems are due to deferred maintenance. The “soffits, cladding shingles and window sills are in fair to poor condition ... [d]eferred maintenance is obvious.”

Current assessed value is \$284,700 (land is \$157,400 and improvement is \$127,300). Applicant purchased the house in 1989 for \$60,000. This reflects an un compounded average annual increase of 14% per year based on the original investment.

Third, the house is not in poor condition. The developer’s architect stated that:

- “Overall the exterior of the building is in fair condition.”
- “Overall the interior of the building is in fair condition with serviceable materials and finishes. Some level of repair and rehabilitation work is required.”

Gross Volume

- The proposed building is at least 6 times as large as its closest neighbor.
- Even the 3-story red brick portion fronting Williamson is more than twice as large as its closest neighbor.



906: The proposed building is approximately 91' feet wide. The red brick section is 66' wide. (The lot has 99.38' Williamson frontage, the side setback along Paterson is 2' and the setback at the alley is 6')

912 Willy: lot is 33' wide, building is approximately 30-32' wide



In new construction the gross volume of a new building shall be compatible with its older neighbors.

Development Handbook, Design Criteria, Commercial Criteria
Third Lake Ridge Historic District Plan, 1978

MGO 33.19(5)(b)4.c. requires the Commission to determine, for properties located in historic districts, whether “the proposed construction ... does not conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan for said district as duly adopted by the Common Council. If the Commission determines that the proposed construction does conform to the objectives and design criteria of the historic preservation plan (and meets other conditions), the Commission may issue a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The historic plan design criteria do not address whether a new structure is “visually compatible” with buildings/environment within its “visually related area.” MGO 33.01(11)(d)1. Rather, it

says the gross volume needs to be compatible: breaking up a building by using different materials and set-backs does not break up the building gross volume (though it may make the building more visually compatible). Further, compatibility is based on the building's relationship with its older neighbors. In this case, 912 Williamson is the closest older neighbor.

(Per Alder Rummel's April 2014 newsletter, "According to the City Attorney, the BUILD plan can be used to inform the underlying primary zoning district, but, if there is a conflict, the provisions of the Third Lake Historic District Plan would take precedence for the purposes of a Landmarks Commission decision under MGO 33.19(5)(b)4.c.")

Even just applying MGO's visually compatible standard, the front element at more than two times the size of 912 Williamson cannot be "visually compatible."

Height

- East Elevation, pages 14 and 24 of applicant's submittal, reflects a building that is approximately 38' high along Williamson with a step-back that is approximately 54' high (from the Williamson elevation). Height can only be estimated since the plans provide a scale, but not actual heights.
- Even if the height is 38-40 at the front, and the set-back is around 54', this violates BUILD: The 4 story arced roof element is in Zone I, which has a maximum of 3 stories.

BUILD Zone I: Flat roofed 3 story structures are permitted.

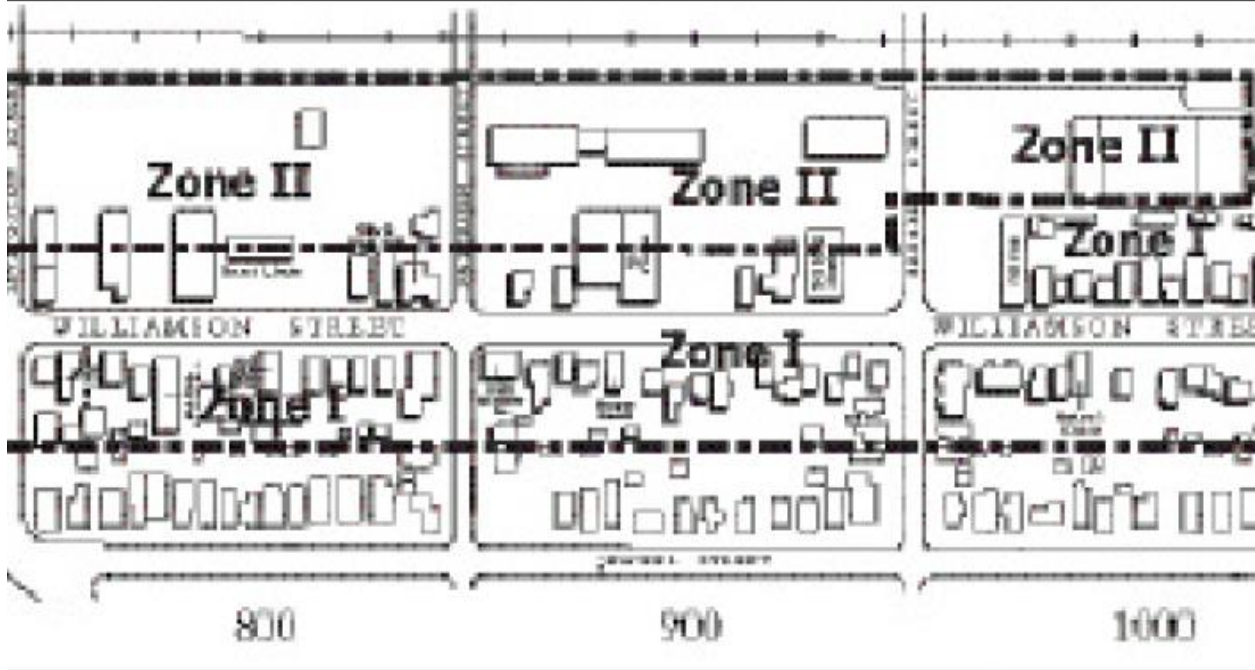
BUILD Zone II: 3 stories, but 4 permitted with either affordable housing, preservation or structured parking bonuses.

The boundary line between Zone I and Zone II is well behind 912 Williamson (the next building). The proposal reflects the arced element being closer to Williamson than even the back of 912 Williamson. Thus, the arced element clearly exceeds BUILD maximum height limits.

The depth of the block is, per applicant's materials, 264'. The BUILD map separates Zone I from Zone II at approximately 1/3 of the block depth, or 88'. The depth of the building from the Williamson lot line to the back of the arced element is approximately 64'. Thus, it appears about half of the rear element (24' of 46') would also need to be reduced to 3 stories to comply with BUILD.



LOCKS OF WILLIAMSON AND WILSON STREET

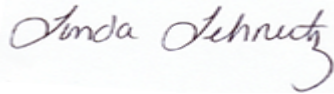


Prior Landmarks Commission action on demolition of Williamson Street homes

Over the past approximate eight years, owners/purchasers of four houses on Williamson have requested demolition approval. One request was placed on file (and sold in about 6 months), and the other three were approved. The three approvals, unlike the 906 request, were based on specific fact situations. The reason for the 906 demolition request appears to be that the developer wants to build something else on that site.

- 9/2014: 1018 Williamson demolition request was placed on file without prejudice to suspend action on the request for demolition for one year to allow for the sale and/or rehabilitation of the property (9/2014)
- 7/2010: 1384 Williamson demolition was approved “to provide additional space for a hardware store that has been a long term anchor in the neighborhood.” (Staff report) Even though the house was being demolished in order to help keep a hardware store in the neighborhood, some Commission members expressed reservations and preferred to look at adaptive reuse of the building.
- 7/2008: 1500 Williamson demolition approved. A fire had significantly damaged one of the two houses on the lot.
- 10/2007: 731 Williamson demolition approved. MNA supported demolition because the house was in exceptionally bad condition and the replacement structure was of similar scale. Kitty Rankin said that the “house appears to have been neglected for decades. No one in their right mind would try to restore it (by the way I have not said that about too many houses over the years and I have seen plenty of poorly maintained houses).”

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Lehnertz". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Linda Lehnertz