

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE “EAST END” PROPOSAL

Neighbors of First Settlement District of Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc., have done the following preliminary analysis of the proposed “East End” infill and redevelopment project with respect to the standards in Madison’s Preservation Ordinance (MGO CH. 41). This preliminary document focuses on two aspects of the Preservation Ordinance:

- 41.18(4) Land Divisions and Combinations.
- 41.26(4)(a) Structure Height, Scale, Proportion, and Rhythm.

We’re continuing work on the analysis of additional relevant ordinances from MGO CH. 41.

SITE OF THE “EAST END”

Figure 1 below shows the south-eastern part of Block 115. The proposed lot for the project is outlined in red. That lot is mostly within the First Settlement Historic District (FSD) whose boundary is indicated by the heavy dashed line in the figure. Lots within the historic district are shaded in gray and are roughly to the left of that boundary line.

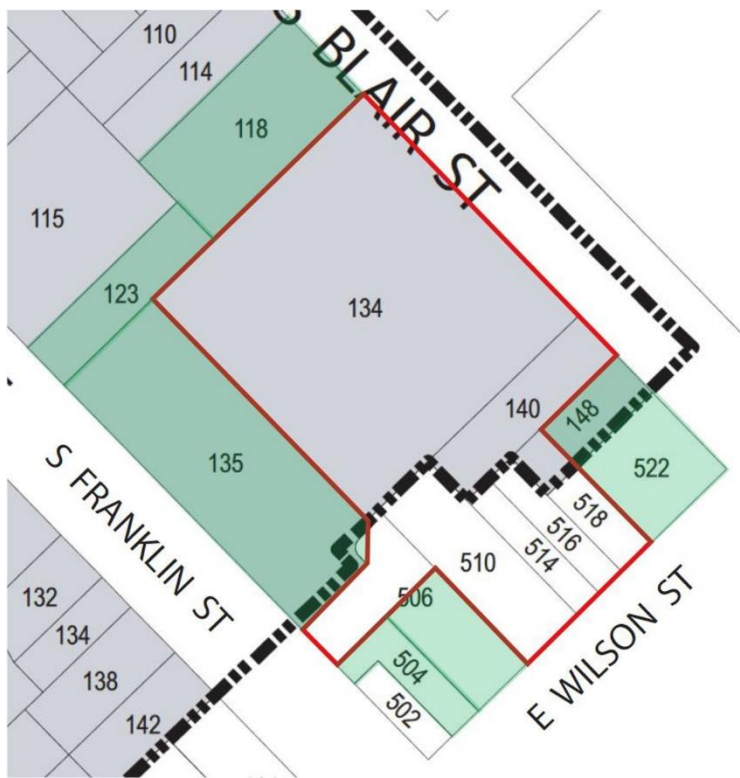


FIGURE 1. PROPOSED LOT AND ADJACENT LOTS

The development team is requesting to combine eight lots, in whole or in part, to form a large lot for their project. The proposed total lot size is approximately 57,081 square feet of which 42,439 square feet of the lot is within the FSD.

41.18(4) LAND DIVISIONS AND COMBINATIONS

“The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for land divisions, combinations, and subdivision plats of landmark sites and properties in historic districts, unless it finds that the proposed lot sizes adversely impact the historic character or significance of a landmark, are incompatible with adjacent lot sizes, or fail to maintain the general lot size pattern of the historic district.”

Neighbors have created a spreadsheet of lot sizes for this analysis, and we’ve included it for reference (see attachment 1). Our analysis of the adjacent lots (shaded in green in Figure 1) shows that the

proposed lot will be about **10 times larger** in size than the average size of the adjacent lots. Figure 2 helps further visualize this comparison. It shows the distribution of adjacent lot sizes starting at lots in the range of 0 – 1000

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square feet and increasing by 1000 square feet each step. The colored bars indicate the number of lots within a particular size range. The adjacent lots are indicated in green and the proposed lot is in red.

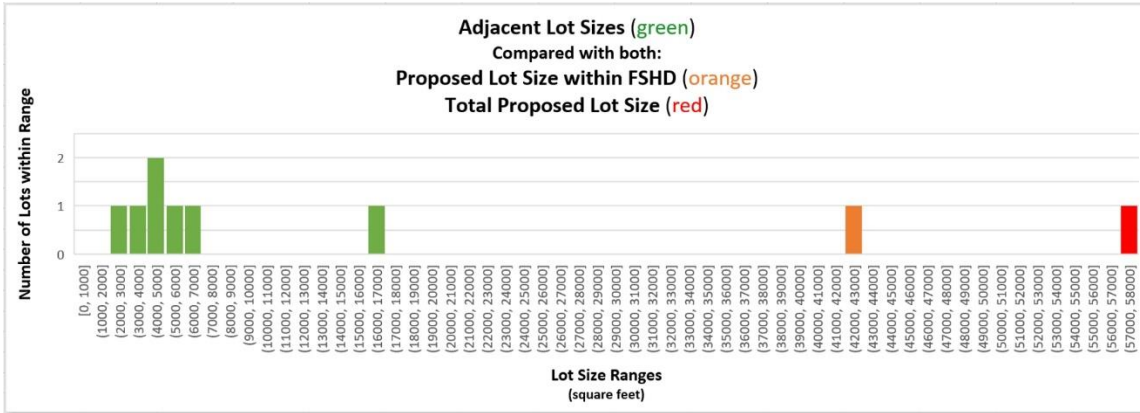


FIGURE 2. PROPOSED LOT SIZE COMPARED TO ADJACENT LOTS

We did a similar analysis for the lots within the FSHD. Our analysis shows that the proposed lot will again be about **10 times larger** than the average size of all lots within our historic. If one only considers lots with pre-1930 construction, to capture the general pattern of lots with historic structures, then that factor grows to nearly **13 times larger**. Again, we’ll use a distribution of lot sizes while now showing all lots within the FSHD in figure 3 below. This distribution is over the same size ranges that grow by 1000 square feet each step as in Figure 2 above. **This underscores that the development team is asking for the creation of a lot that is about 1,000% larger than the average size lot within the FSHD.**

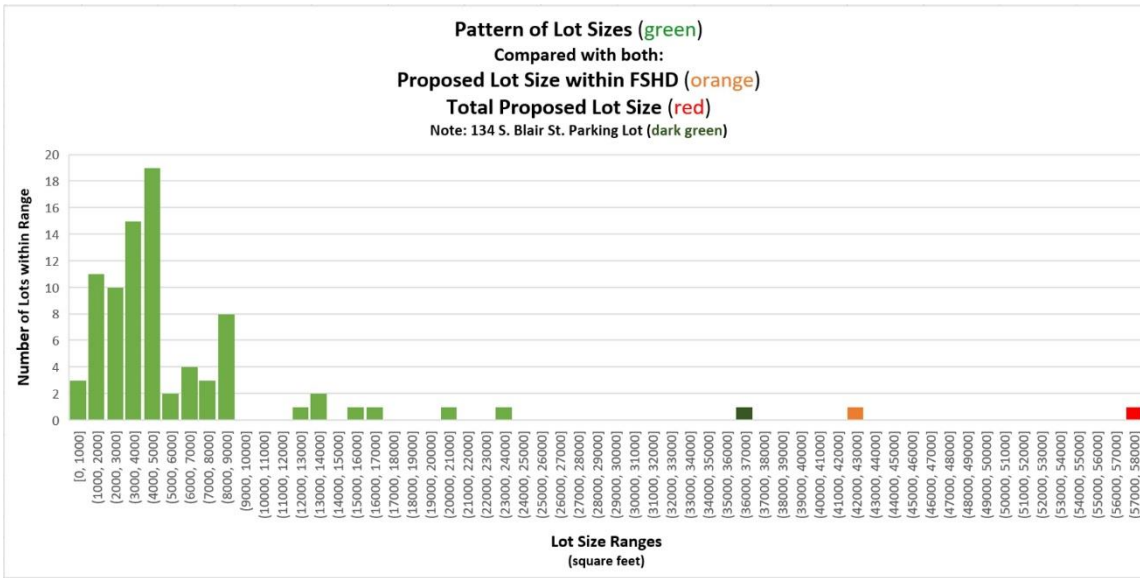


FIGURE 3. PROPOSED LOT SIZE COMPARED TO PATTERN OF LOTS

If one only considers the portion of the proposed lot that is within the FSHD (indicated in orange in the figures above) then the factors become 7.7 times larger than the average of all lots and 9.6 times larger than those lots with pre-1930 construction within the FSHD.

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Note the dark green (almost black) bar corresponds to the parking lot at 134 S. Blair St., whose underlying lots may need to be resolved and combined as part of the required Certified Survey Map. However, we’ve treated it as a single lot in our analysis since it is listed under a single tax id.

LAND DIVISIONS AND COMBINATIONS: COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

41.18(4) protects the integrity of *all* of Madison’s Historic Districts by ensuring lots that are redrawn are appropriately sized so that any resulting development maintains the character of the historic district. It also serves to protect historic districts from redevelopment pressures. It discourages land speculation, which can result in deferred maintenance of our historic resources, by eliminating the hope of cashing out on future redevelopment made more profitable through land divisions and land combinations. Thus, it is a key part of our Preservation Ordinance. **We do not see how any interpretation of this ordinance can conclude it was intended to allow aggregation of lots for large developments, or to take an already large lot at 134 S. Blair St. and make it even larger.**

In Figure 3, the smallest lots at the beginning and the larger lots in the middle of the distribution are primarily modern lots that were either divided or aggregated from lots that originally conformed to the pattern of lot sizes within our historic district. Unfortunately, these were created prior to the designation of our historic district and are the kinds of non-conforming lot patterns that MGO 41.18(4) was intended to prevent.

The data definitively shows what one can easily judge by looking at the map of our historic district (see attachment 2). **Our analysis shows that the proposed lot size is clearly incompatible with the adjacent lot sizes. Our analysis also shows that the proposed lot size clearly fails to maintain the general lot size pattern of the First Settlement Historic District. Thus, we conclude that the proposed lot does not meet the standard specified in 41.18(4) for land divisions and combinations. To conclude otherwise would be to simply ignore this standard; it would set a dangerous precedent for *all* of Madison’s Historic Districts.**

41. 26(4)(A) STRUCTURE HEIGHT, SCALE, PROPORTION, AND RHYTHM

“New principal structures shall be similar in height to the structures directly adjacent to each side. If the structures directly adjacent to each side are different in height, the new structure shall be of a height compatible with the structures within two hundred (200) feet of the proposed structure. New principal structures shall be compatible with the scale, proportion, and rhythm of masses and spaces of structures within two hundred (200) feet of the proposed structure.”

Regarding Height: When determining the height compatibility of a new principle structure, it is important to consider the heights of all structures within 200 feet, *not just the higher ones*. This ensures that a new structure doesn’t overwhelm the neighboring smaller structures that typically are historic. Our analysis focused on the S. Blair St. elevation of the proposed structure since it will be is the most visible façade within our historic district. We added two yellow lines to the elevation illustration below.

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FIGURE 4. HEIGHT LINES OF ADJACENT STRUCTURES

The top yellow line corresponds to the height of the historic Hotel Ruby Marie at 522 E. Wilson St. (highlighted in yellow on the left) as well as the historic Chicago & North Western Depot across Blair St. (not visible above). The lower yellow line corresponds to the height of the eaves of the 1884 home at 120 S. Blair St (highlighted in yellow on the right).

Another factor when determining height compatibility is the shape of the underlying terrain. The slope of the hill that underlies the FSHD creates a tiered effect of structures as they step down the hill, which adds to our historic district’s character. Height comparisons with structures that are higher up on that slope can leave the impression that much shorter buildings are nearly as high as the proposed structure. Comparisons of height that don’t consider each structure’s height above grade can result in a development pattern that forms a table-top effect, which hides the underlying shape of the terrain.

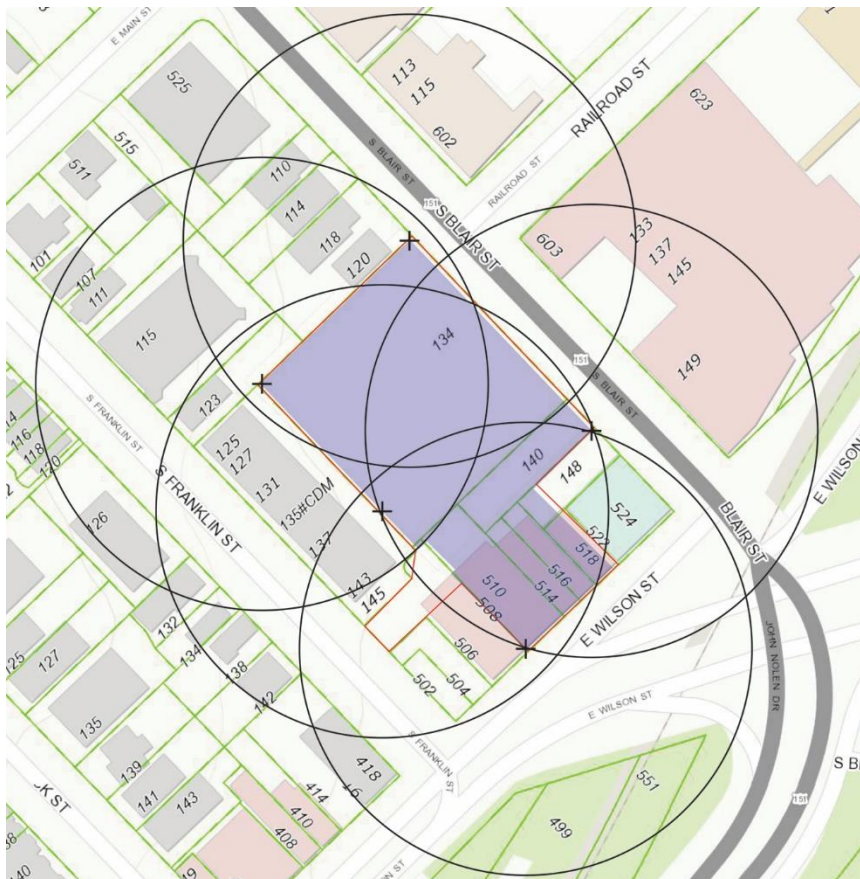


FIGURE 5. SCALE OF STRUCTURE FOOTPRINTS

Regarding Scale, Proportion, and Rhythm of Masses and Spaces: When determining the compatibility of a new principle structure’s scale and massing, it is important to consider all other structures within 200 feet, *not just the largest one*. We considered different means for this comparison, including building volumes, and decided that using building footprints was sufficient to get a sense of the relative scale and proportion of the proposed project. Figure 5 shows the proposed structure’s footprint in blue with circles of 200 feet in radius at various points around the structure. Within those circles are footprints of the surrounding buildings (shown in grey for residential uses, and red and green for commercial uses).

When determining the compatibility of a new principle structure’s proportion and rhythm, one must consider more than changes of surface materials used in the

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façade. Variations in a structure’s actual height, including setbacks and stepbacks, as well as the spaces between separate structures should also be considered. For this analysis, we’ve again focus on the S. Blair St. elevation since it is within the FSHD. Figure 6. below uses shades of gray to illustrate the approximate depth of structures and their major components from the sidewalk. White indicates a structure is at the sidewalk along S. Blair St. The farther from that sidewalk the darker the gray becomes.

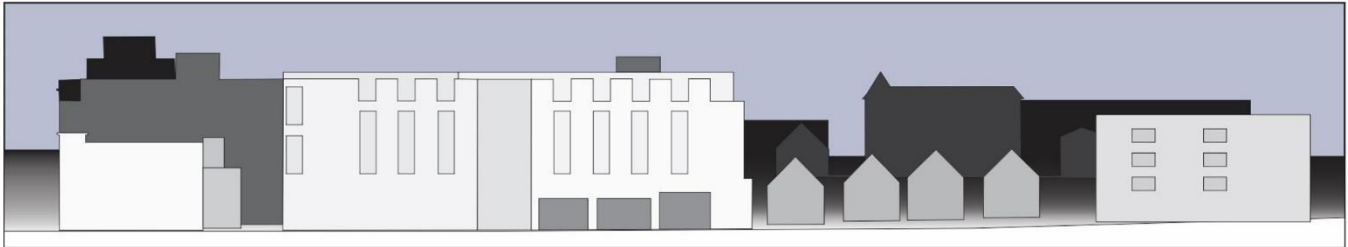


FIGURE 6. DEPTH ANALYSIS OF BLAIR ST. BLOCK FACE

On the left, the 3-story historic Hotel Ruby Marie is in white because it’s at the sidewalk. On the right is the modern 4-story Settlement Place Apartments, which is 9 feet from the sidewalk and so it’s shaded a light gray. In the middle-right are the fronts of the 2½-story period homes, which are farthest from the sidewalk at about 20 feet, so they’re the darkest gray of the structures fronting S. Blair St. The right side of the facade of the proposed structure is essentially at the sidewalk and so it is white. It has deeper bays going back about 40 feet for vehicle access. The left side of the proposed structure’s facade is about 3 feet from the sidewalk. These two faces are separated by a section that is about 10 feet from the sidewalk. The smaller rectangles on the modern apartment and proposed buildings indicate the depth is due to balconies. The black and darker gray shapes are structures facing S. Franklin St. except for the darker gray shape on the left, which is the component of the proposed structure facing E. Wilson St.

HEIGHT, SCALE, PROPORTION, AND RHYTHM: COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

41.26(4)(a) protects the integrity the First Settlement Historic District by ensuring that new principle structures are compatible with the scale and pattern of the surrounding built environment. This compatibility should not only be with the tallest and largest of buildings. It is reasonable to expect that more weight for compatibility should be given to the historic structures within our historic district over modern structures that are inside and outside of the district. Additionally, any determination of compatibility should take into serious consideration the resulting block faces.

The proposed structure would be, by far, the largest structure in our historic district, and likely the largest within any of Madison’s Historic Districts. Its scale and massing must be justified by referring to MG&E’s large modern plant outside of the FSHD. The vast majority of the buildings within the specified 200 feet of the proposed structure are 2 - 3 stories in height. It might be argued that the proposed structure is within the maximum 6-story height limits for this site, so it is important to note the following:

“The Maximum Building Heights Map illustrates the maximum height of the tallest building within each colored area, and does not illustrate more subtle height limits that may result from the protection of specific view corridors, building street setbacks, upper story building stepbacks, desired variety in building heights, or landmark or historic district designations.” (2012 Downtown Plan, p. 34).

Though the façade has some variation in depth, this variation is very shallow and mostly out of necessity to create modern balcony spaces. The proposed structure’s design does vary its colors, materials and textures to give the

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perception of variations in height and depth on the façade. However, this “Disneyland” illusion lacks the actual variation that creates the pattern and rhythm of masses and spaces of structures that would be reasonable to expect of new principle structures so that they are compatible with our historic district.

Our analysis clearly shows that the height and scale of the proposed building dominates the neighboring historic buildings. Our analysis also shows that the pattern and rhythm of the proposed structure does not correspond to the pattern of the surrounding structures. Thus, we conclude that the proposed structure does not meet the standard specified in 41.26(4)(a) for height, scale, proportion, and rhythm for new principle structures within our historic district.