

Ad Hoc Landmarks Ordinance Review Committee
Legistar 57050, Example Tour Materials
September 18, 2019

The proposed Third Lake Ridge walking tour lists 9 sites to visit, all which have received Landmarks Commission preapproval or retroactive approval. The supporting materials are Staff Reports. The staff reports do not place these sites into context, do not provide a neighborhood context, and do not recognize the diverse context of the commercial area.

Context for the specific sites mentioned (detailed below is the context for 702-706 Williamson).

1. Knowledge of neighborhood concerns, Landmarks Commission concerns, and how Landmarks/staff may have changed an applicant's proposal.
2. How the proposed ordinance would have changed these sites (if at all).

Neighborhood Context

1. TLR extends 10 blocks and varies by block. Guidance as to the whole district could be useful (e.g., additional tours site and/or a synopsis of documents, such as the 1987 walking tour and the application for the Jenifer-Spaight Historic District).
2. Even the 700 block tour could provide additional context.
 - Coexistence of small homes and mansions, small homes often lacking decoration (e.g., 748 Jenifer has unadorned porch posts).
3. A list of how the proposed ordinance would change the existing residential character. For example:
 - Note the chimneys. Compare 848 Jenifer (where the landmark application form stated that the chimneys "demonstrate another principal decorative feature of high style Queen Anne houses" to 836-840 Jenifer (where the chimney is plain, is set far back, and is visible only from limited angles). Should all chimneys be required to be kept?
 - Note the second story porches over the front porch – there are many in the 800-900 blocks of Jenifer/Spaight. The proposed ordinance would prohibit new front porches, including new second story porches, except if the original porch could be documented. Does adding a new porch detract from the district's character?

Commercial context

1. 1380 Williamson was a home, now converted into a bar.
 - The original door was closed and a door created to replace the center window, the porch steps were moved from the far eastern end to the western end and doubled in width, and there are metal railings on the steps.
 - Is this type of repurposing permitted under the proposed ordinance?
 - The proposed ordinance: only permits replacement when the porch is too deteriorated to repair; requires porch posts to have decorative molding (though the original posts appear to have had none); requires that handrails match the balustrade; and, prohibits metal railings.
 - Or would these changes come under the guideline of other "porch designs may be permitted if they are compatible with the character of the structure and the district"?
 - Should metal railings be prohibited? Various metal railings, e.g., wrought iron, are historic materials.

2. 923 Williamson is another repurposed home. The front yard deck would be prohibited under the proposed ordinance, as would the surrounding metal fence/railing. Or would such fencing be permitted under the guideline that protective fencing can be installed for security?
3. 906 Williamson was once a historic home, demolished to build a mixed-use building.
 - The venting for the underground garage is on a patio on S. Paterson. Air conditioning compressors would be required under the proposed ordinance to be placed on "an elevation not visible from the street." Yet there is nothing in the proposed ordinance regulating placement of this type of mechanical venting.
 - Also look at this building from across the street, approximately at Umami. The building towers over the historic resource at 912 Williamson. Is this visually compatible? What views should be taken into account when determining visual capability – just the front, or all angles?
4. Walk halfway up the 400 block of S. Paterson and look at the back of 901 Williamson, a structure outside the period of significance.
 - All of this mechanical venting was added after 2007, without Landmark Commission approval. Should such mechanics require approval? Per the Zoning Administrator, in 2016 the Preservation Planner told him that the best that could be done from a Landmarks perspective was to require painting (which was done). The proposed ordinance does not allow these mechanicals to be visible from the street, except if "technically infeasible."
 - Much of this venting was needed because the proprietors wanted to smoke meat. Does someone wanting to make a unique use of a property mean that visible mechanicals are okay? These mechanicals could likely have been vented though the building to the roof, likely at a greater expense. Does greater expense mean that it is okay to have all the venting at the back of the building?
5. Look at how close some new construction is to historic resources: 706 and 722 Williamson, 906 and 912 Williamson; 801 and 805 Williamson. Should there be concern for potential damage from new construction, or potential for damage due to dewatering? Similarly, should there be concern for damage due to road reconstruction (e.g., vibrations)?

Context of 702-706 Williamson

When looking at this building, it could be useful to keep in mind two buildings that fit better into the local context.

Baldwin Corners, which appears to be 3 buildings (with a substantially set back third floor), with substantial recessions. These elements seem to be visually compatible with the mass of surrounding buildings:



Photo, Google Maps, 2018.

Hotel Indigo, which is outside of the Third Lake Ridge Historic District. The addition to the Kleuter Grocery (a National Register landmark) was approved by the Wisconsin Historical Society in 2018.

- Though this would be an addition under the proposed ordinance, not a new structure, the proposed compatibility standards are similar. Additions would need to be “compatible with the character of the [historic resource]” while new structures would need to be “be visually compatible with other historic resources within two hundred (200) feet.”



Photo, <http://fox47.com/news/local/were-not-that-cookie-cutter-type-hotel-hotel-indigo-opens-on-madisons-near-eastside>

Is the size compatible with historic resources?

The new structure was approved using the standard of whether the proposal was visually compatible in terms of (1) gross volume and (2) height.

The proposed ordinance would require compatibility of “visual size.” In determining compatibility of visual size “... the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as massing, building height in feet and stories, the gross area of the front elevation (i.e., all walls facing the street), street presence, and the dominant proportion of width to height in the façade.

Statistics

Primary Floor Area

The Edge (701-706 Williamson):	65,800
Olds Building (722 Williamson):	58,984
Machinery Row (601 Williamson)*:	56,578
Harvester (301 S Blount):	31,050

* Machinery Row is not within the visually related area, but it is the only other large historic resource on Williamson.

Height

The Edge (Williamson):	75¼ feet to parapet. 82 2/3 to top of stair roof (elevator overrun is higher than the stair roof), or 36% taller than the Olds Building and 83% taller than the Harvester
Olds Building:	55 feet (approximately)
Harvester:	41 feet (approximately, per info provided by developer)

Gross volume (as provided by developer)

The Edge:	789,000 cubic feet
Olds Building:	806,000 cubic feet
Harvester:	420,000 cubic feet

Length/width:

The Edge (along Williamson):	123 feet
Olds Building (Williamson):	137 feet
The Edge (along Blount):	94 feet
Harvester (Blount):	101 feet

Stories:

The Edge:	6 stories (7 stories including the roof, but the proposed ordinance is not clear on whether usable roof space, particularly with railings and large rooftop structures, count as a story)
Olds Building:	4 stories
Harvester:	3 stories

Dominant proportion of width to height in the façade:

The Edge (along Williamson):	height is 60% of the width
Olds Building:	height is 40% of the width
The Edge (along Blount):	height is 79% of the width
Harvester:	height is 38% of the width

Gross area of front elevation:

The Edge (along Williamson):	9,256 square feet (or 23% more area than the Olds Building)
Olds Building (Williamson):	7,535 square feet
The Edge (along Blount):	7,050 square feet (not including additional gross area due

Harvester (Blount): the northern end being lower due to the hillside)
6,600 square feet

BUILD II:

Maximum height for 701-706 Williamson: 54 feet or 5 stories
Structured parking bonus: only available for nonresidential projects

Issues/questions:

1. Does the proposed ordinance provide any more guidance than the existing ordinance? It does tell the Landmarks Commission what to think about, but no clear standards are created.
2. Is there a limit to visual compatibility? Should a building 36% taller than its tallest neighbor be deemed visually compatible? Should a building 20 feet taller than its tallest 55-foot high neighbor be deemed visually compatible?
 - The 3/11/14 staff report suggested the design of the proposed building be modified to be more visually compatible. It would seem that "visually compatible" has a wide range.
 - Two Commission members clearly stated that a 5-story building would be more compatible. Staff explained the concern was visually compatible, not mathematic compatibility.
 - In a discussion of how to increase compatibility, staff responded that: the sides of the building could step down to the neighboring buildings and that the 6th story of the Blount Street elevation could be stepped back to help transition to the neighboring buildings. At one meeting, a Commissioner commented that the Blount Street side feels large and less compatible.
3. What does street presence mean? The Olds Building was, historically, the dominant remaining building on Williamson other than Machinery Row. Does the height of 702-706 diminish the prominence of the Olds Building?
4. Should all buildings in a visually related area be considered? The 702-706 plans were primarily compared to just the Olds Building.
5. What role should finances play? Should the amount of money that an owner wants to make on a sale determine the parameters of a new building? At the 3/17/14 Landmarks meeting, the applicant was asked about the justification to go above five stories, and the applicant said the justification was largely financial. At the 5/5/14 Landmarks meeting, the applicant was again asked about the articulation of the height. Applicant said economics required 6 stories, that the 6th story is stepped back.
 - The letter of intent stated the approximate value of the land was \$900,000.
 - The property sold for \$1,900,000 in 10/2016 (land, building to be demolished, approved plans).
 - Assessed value at time of sale was \$1,293,000 (\$396,000 for land, \$897,000 for the improvement that was demolished).
 - Sale price was 47% over assessed value.

- Sale price was 3.8 times the value of the land (which, since the existing building was demolished, was all that was really purchased).
6. How much of a stepback of upper stories is needed to count as a stepback?
 - The 6th floor stepback is about 5 feet along Williamson, though the corner element is not stepped back, and the Blount stepback is almost nonexistent.
 - Under Build II, stepbacks are allowed in the 800 and 900 blocks for fourth stories: "such that it cannot be seen at sidewalk level from the opposite side of the street. In any case, the setback for a fourth floor ... will be at least ... 30 feet for mixed use, flat roofed structures."
 7. Should BUILD II be incorporated into the proposed ordinance? Landmarks recommended to the Plan Commission that it consider BUILD II (staff told the Landmarks Commission that the Commission is only charged with interpreting the words of the ordinance and that the Plan Commission would review the project against the BUILD II plan).

"A motion was made by Slattery, seconded by Fowler, to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the new construction at 702 Williamson Street with the recommendations in the staff report and the discussions of the Commission as conditions of approval. *The Commission discussed the importance of the review of the BUILD II plan including the 54 foot prescribed height and the MNA opposition in the approval process by bodies other than the Landmarks Commission. The motion passed on a 5:1 voice vote. Rummel voted no. Levitan does not vote.*" (emphasis added)

Appearance (rhythm, articulation, modulation)

The original new structure was approved using the standard that the "rhythm of solids and voids in the street facade(s) of any new structure shall be compatible with the buildings within its visually related area." The new structure was reapproved (because changes were made) using the requirement of visual compatibility in terms of the proportion and rhythm of solids to voids in the street facade(s).

The proposed ordinance provides:

Architectural Expression. When determining visual compatibility for architectural expression, the Landmarks Commission shall consider factors such as the building's modulation, articulation, building planes, proportion of building elements, and rhythm of solids to voids created by openings in the façade.

Issues/questions:

1. Except for the glass tower, and the glass colonnade, the proportion of solids and voids seems comparable to the Olds Building. Can some building elements be not have the historic proportion and still have a building be deemed compatible?
2. The Olds Building has substantial ground floor windows, interspersed by substantial pilasters. 702-706 is one unrelieved piece of glass – the doors are almost indistinguishable from the windows, other than a bit more substantial frame.

3. The rhythm of Olds is consistent, 702-706 is various pieces.
4. Would the use of BUILD II standards have made this a better project? BUILD II elements that are not met in 702-706:
 - The elements are not visually compatible with the mass of surrounding buildings, or at least not as well as Baldwin Corners and Hotel Indigo.
 - The façade does not incorporate traditional design elements. Colonnades are not traditional. The windows, broken into 2/3 and 1/3 segments, are not traditional. A mix of materials on the front façade (glass, metal, brick), broken into segments, is not traditional. A brick element that seems to float above the ground is not traditional.
 - First floor storefronts are not broken into bays of a similar width to those on existing pre-1945 commercial buildings.
 - There are low kick panels, arguably transom windows (actually, arguably a double transom window). There are not side pilasters, and there is a thin parapet/cornice.
 - A sign band was not included in the design to maintain consistency in the building design.
 - Upper floor window openings are not vertically oriented and regularly spaced.
 - Primary entranceways are not easily identifiable and are not a focal point of the building.
5. At the 5/5/14 Landmarks meeting the applicant was asked how the design team had designed the building to be compatible with other buildings in the visually related area. Applicant replied (1) windows are set in from the face of the masonry [the usual way, not particularly historic], (2) the upper story is stepped back [only 5 feet, and this is a benefit to the developer, not a historic district feature], (3) a base-middle-top was created [this concept is a creature of UDC and the Zoning Code, not the Third Lake Ridge history], and, (4) the proposed brick materials [for maybe about 1/3 of the Willy frontage].

In a discussion in 2014 of how to increase compatibility, staff responded: (1) make the very minimal top element larger: (2) the sides of the building could step down to the neighboring buildings; (3) the 6th story of the Blount Street elevation could be stepped back to help transition to the neighboring buildings.

In a discussion in 2015, Staff said the following would make the building more compatible: providing a building "top" at the upper story on Blount Street; stepping the building mass down toward the adjacent buildings; and, providing more horizontal elements to offset the vertical design vocabulary. Also, the proposed building could take more design cues from the adjacent buildings. Also, the brick areas that hover over the glass storefront should be visually linked to the ground to better relate to the material treatments of the other buildings in the VRA.

Appearance (materials)

The original new structure was approved using the standard that the "materials used in the street facade(s) of any new structure shall be compatible with those used in the buildings and environment within its visually related area." The new structure was reapproved using the requirement of visual compatibility in terms of the materials used in the street facade(s).

The proposed ordinance provides:

Materials used for new structures shall be similar in design, scale and architectural appearance to other materials on historic buildings, but differentiated enough so that it is not confused as a historic building.

The following building materials are prohibited: pebble dash, wide clapboards over six (6) inches in exposure, composite clapboards and vertical panels with faux wood grain texture, diagonal boards, vertical boards, rough sawn wood, rough split shingles, shakes, and metal and vinyl siding.

[For windows and doors] *The following materials are prohibited: vinyl; aluminum; glass block, reflective glass; dark glass; plexiglass; doors with a fake wood grain, mill finish or clear anodized aluminum, and other metallic finishes; and faux (decorative/non-functional) hardware.*

[For mechanical systems] *Grilles, vents, equipment, and meters shall be finished or painted to match adjacent building materials.*

BUILD II requirements

- Exterior materials should consist primarily of traditional materials such as wood and masonry.
- Facade treatments on street corners should effectively 'wrap' the corner by continuing the design motif along the side street elevation.

Issues/questions:

1. Should metal panels be allowed?
2. Should discrete groupings of material be permitted, even if the individual materials are historically compatible?
3. What should be the treatment of rooftop structures? See, for example, the State Office Building at 1 W. Wilson where the rooftop structure materials match the building materials.

Appearance (features)

The existing ordinance does not specifically address features (e.g., colonnades, balconies, structures on the roof, etc.).

The proposed ordinance provisions:

- *Static vents, electric vents, wind turbines, and attic fans visible from the street are prohibited.*
- *Projecting, partially projecting/inset, and inset balconies are prohibited on elevations visible from the street, unless there is precedent on the historic resources in the district.*
- *Composite, vinyl, and decorative metal balusters and railings are prohibited, unless not visible from the street.*

- *The following materials are prohibited: vinyl; aluminum; glass block, reflective glass; dark glass; plexiglass; doors with a fake wood grain, mill finish or clear anodized aluminum, and other metallic finishes; and faux (decorative/non-functional) hardware.*
- *Tubular, arched, domed, or pyramidal shaped skylights are prohibited on elevations visible from the street.*
- *Rooftop decks or terraces and green roofs or other roof landscaping, railings, or furnishings shall be installed so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the street.*
- *Mechanical equipment shall be screened if it is visible from the street.*

BUILD II provides as criteria:

- Facades on mixed-use buildings should incorporate traditional design elements in new structures to help reflect historic patterns and relationships to existing structures in the district. Contemporary interpretations of traditional building elements will be considered.
- First floor storefronts shall be broken into bays of a similar width to those on existing pre-1945 commercial buildings. The general historic pattern of large storefront windows, low kick panels, transom windows, side pilasters and a cornice shall be used on new construction.
- For corner buildings, angled corner entrances are encouraged.
- Parapet caps or cornices should be incorporated to terminate the top of façade.
- Façade rhythm and entrances. Primary entranceways should be easily identifiable as a focal point of the building. Recessed entrances are encouraged.
- Special corner features for such structures at the corner of the block which exceed height limits for the district along Williamson Street may be approved.
- Upper floor window openings should be vertically oriented and regularly spaced.
- First floor window patterns should reflect the typical proportions in the district. Glass should be transparent; reflective or non-transparent glass is prohibited. (Decorative spandrel glass or other nontransparent glass for screening purposes may be approved upon special request).
- High quality materials and special focus on design details is encouraged for kick panels. It is recommended that this area utilize higher quality materials and design. The first floor window sill height shall be 18" to 36" above grade.
- For buildings with multiple commercial tenants, a sign band should be included in the design to maintain consistency in the building design. Sign band or awning placement. Sign bands are required for multiple tenant structures and suggested for any mixed-use building. Externally illuminated signs are preferred, internally illuminated signs with only the individual letters illuminated are permitted with light levels appropriately subdued. Awnings are encouraged to be traditional angle shaped with valance. Colors for signage and awnings should complement the building and each other.

Issues/questions:

1. Should the rooftop railing be set back?
2. Should full glass doors (e.g., tempered glass) with aluminum frames permitted?
3. Should windows divided into 2/3 and 1/3 be permitted? Should they be permitted when the pattern varies (usually with the 1/3 at the bottom of the window, but 1/3 at the top about a third of the time)?

4. Would this building be more visually compatible without the balconies?
5. Colonnades are not historic. (There are some corner entrances supporting by a column/pilaster. See for example, 1253 Williamson and 1054 Williamson for two types.) Should colonnades be permitted?
6. Should the elevator overrun (on this building with an attached lobby/storage area), or the stair structure, count as mechanical equipment that requires screening?
7. Are large rooftop projections appropriate on historic buildings? (In particular, look at the roof from S. Blount at the bike path. These structures can also be seen coming down John Nolan and E. Wilson.)
8. What traditional design elements were incorporated to help reflect historic patterns and relationships to existing structures in the district?
9. Does having glass doors set into glass siding with only a wider aluminum frame to set off the difference count as separate storefronts?
10. Are the primary entranceways easily identifiable as a focal point of the building? Should they be?
11. There are not side pilasters. Should there be?
12. Do first floor window patterns reflect the typical proportions in the district? Should they?

Respectfully Submitted,
Linda Lehnertz