

## Advocacy News

May 2022

**114 N. Blount St. Ida Carmichael House** (featured in the [April 2022](#) issue of the Advocacy News) The Carmichael family is associated with the *Wisconsin Weekly Blade*, Madison's first Black newspaper.

At its meeting on April 19, the Madison Trust Board unanimously voted to adopt the recommendation by the Advocacy Committee to oppose demolition of this building due to its status as a contributing building to a National Register Historic District and due to its cultural significance. The demolition application is scheduled to be on the Plan Commission's May 9<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda. While the Plan Commission has already received a recommendation from the Landmarks Commission relating to the historic significance of the structure, the Plan Commission will also consider other factors. More information regarding the factors to be considered by the Commission are explained in Sec. 28.185(9)(c), Madison General Ordinances. This and other provisions in the section of the ordinances addressing demolitions are accessible [here](#).



114 N. Blount St. by Kurt Stege

You may wonder whether the demolition of this building would jeopardize the continued existence of the very small (0.4-acre) North Dayton Street National Historic District in which it now stands. Jim Draeger, former State Historical Preservation Officer for Wisconsin suggested it might not, despite the importance of the house:

(Continued)

The rules and regs for the National Register state that a property can be removed from the Register if it has "lost the qualities for which it is listed." With a historic district, this becomes more difficult since the measure is not the loss of the building, but rather, what that building contributes to the overall historic significance of the district. During my tenure, I was very reluctant to delist a district for the loss of a building, since to do so denies benefits and protection to other buildings in the district.

The Madison Trust will be submitting a letter to the members of the Plan Commission opposing the demolition of this building and will also make a formal appearance during the public hearing portion of the Commission meeting. More information about the house is available in the April newsletter.

**You can help** emphasize the importance of the Ida Carmichael House within this small cluster of buildings associated with Madison's first Black community by

1. Submitting a written comment opposing the demolition by emailing [pccomments@cityofmadison.com](mailto:pccomments@cityofmadison.com), preferably **by Thursday, May 5**. Your message should reference the Plan Commission meeting on May 9, the 114 North Blount Street address, and file [70727](#).

AND/OR

2. Appearing (virtually) and offering up to 3 minutes of testimony at the public hearing during the Plan Commission meeting that **begins at 5:30 p.m. on May 9**. Registration in advance is required and is explained [here](#).



Proposal for the **400 Block of State Street** (featured in the [March 2022](#) issue of the Advocacy News)

On March 15, the Trust Board unanimously adopted the Advocacy Committee's recommendation to oppose the demolition of these three buildings next to the Peace Park on State Street due to their historic significance, and to oppose the then current design of the new replacement building as out of scale and out of character with State Street.

The schedule for the City's formal review of this project, which is a development proposal by the owner of the existing buildings, is unclear. Since the vote of the Trust's Board, the neighborhood steering committee has met twice, and the architect has presented significant modifications to his proposed design on both occasions. However,

(Continued)



Three buildings on the 400 block of State Street

a final design package has not been circulated. The most recent images of the proposed design are found in a series of perspectives received in mid-April that can be [accessed here](#). The steering committee’s report will not be completed, and the City’s formal review will not commence until the final design is provided. However, the best information currently available is that consideration of the final design by the Urban Design Commission (UDC) could be as early as its May 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, followed by consideration by

the Plan Commission (PC) as early as its May 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Both dates precede the next issue of the Advocacy News. The Trust will appear before both commissions, **but individual letters and appearances would have a major impact.**

There is no straightforward way for the public to follow the progress of a development proposal, but once a meeting agenda is developed that includes a project, it will be accessible via the [City’s Meeting Calendar](#) under the corresponding meeting date. The subsequent meetings to May 11 for the UDC are on June 1 and 15, while later PC meetings after May 23 are on June 13 and 27. Feel free to email me ([kurt.stege@gmail.com](mailto:kurt.stege@gmail.com)) if you have questions or are having difficulty navigating the relevant webpages.

The **Urban Design Commission** is interested in the exterior appearance, materials, and design quality of proposed projects, but lacks authority to review a demolition application. It relies on

1. [Design standards](#)
2. [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#)
3. [Downtown Plan](#)

The **Plan Commission** has final authority on conditional use and demolition requests. It applies

1. [Demolition standards](#) - Focus on Sec. 28.185(9), “Standards of Approval.”
2. [Conditional use standards](#) - Section 28.183(6) sets forth the “Approval Standards.”

(Continued)

• • •

**Service Building and Old Heating Plant** (featured in the [October 2021](#) issue of the Advocacy News and updated in [November 2021](#))

These two massive<sup>1</sup> UW buildings, constructed in the early 1900s, are slated to be demolished to make way for a new 325,000 square foot, 7-story home for the School of Computer, Data, and Information Sciences (CDIS). Previous articles in this space have focused on the importance of salvaging and reusing as much of the buildings as possible. The Old Heating Plant (the building on the right in the photo to the right) was designated in 2009 as eligible for inclusion on the National Register. Consequently, the University was required to submit a mitigation plan to the State Historic Preservation Office in order to “remove” the edifice. That approval was obtained in early March, and the plan [can be accessed here](#).



Photo by Kurt Stege

The mitigation plan calls for using specified (but quite limited) decorative aspects of both structures that would be salvaged in order to “continue to tell the story” of the heating plant. The other four categories of mitigation relate to documenting the building before its destruction, updating information regarding other buildings on campus, and assembling information about notable campus architects.

In addition to the specifics of the mitigation plan, the design team for the new CDIS structure has identified various other specific items in the old plant for possible reuse in the new building.

However, the destination of the remaining mass of these two giants is largely determined by demolition economics. The brick will be crushed, not salvaged. The fate of the Service Building’s tile roof, for example, will be subject to a “reuse and recycling plan” developed by the demolition contractor and subject to UW’s review and approval.

It is reasonable to expect that fiscal constraints will be a very important element in the University’s decision-making process. Yet if institutions of higher education are to serve as positive examples for our society, their leadership needs to extend to emphasize

(Continued)

---

<sup>1</sup> Rough measurements for the 4-story Service Building yield a footprint of 61’ x 138’ plus a 2-story 27’ x 40’ extension on the front. For the taller Heating Plant, the footprint is approximately 86’ x 132’ with an 18’ x 62’ front extension.

environmental considerations and sustainability commitments. The jury is still out on the question of whether the deconstruction of the Service Building and the Old Heating Plant will be inspirational or merely a sad departure.

The Advocacy Committee is not recommending specific actions by the reader and recognizes that these two buildings will not exist much longer in their current form.

Please call or email me with your questions, concerns, and ideas. Thank you for your continued support. [kurt.stege@gmail.com](mailto:kurt.stege@gmail.com) (608) 772-7614