

M E M O

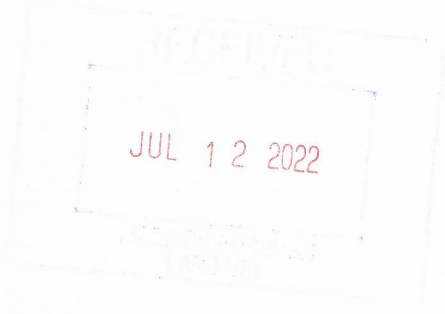
TO: TCC

FROM: Madison HPC

DATE: July 11, 2022

RE: 5 Central Avenue

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The proposed redevelopment plans for 5 Central Avenue begin with the assumption that several contributing buildings in the Madison Civic and Historic District will be demolished.

As part of the application, the proposal to demolish and rebuild on the site must come to the Historic Preservation Commission under our ordinance, Chapter 112 of the Borough Code. The HPC has three tasks when presented with these circumstances:

- 1) To review and approve or deny the demolition of the buildings within a historic district.
- 2) To review and comment on the exterior aesthetics of new buildings within the district, referring those comments to the Planning Board for serious consideration in the overall review of the project.
- 3) The HPC may apply conditions that must be met before the buildings are demolished. These would almost certainly include full documentation with plans and photographs of the existing buildings and a full report on their history, and may include other recommendations as well.

In reviewing the application, the HPC would like a structural assessment of the three buildings to be demolished. Can the applicant hire an impartial structural engineer familiar with historic buildings or can the town, in support of their own historic district, hire someone with similar qualifications? The HPC needs to hear logical reasons as to why the buildings need to be demolished and could not be re-used in some fashion. Their small scale on a small lot is not inappropriate, and if rehabilitated, could contribute to the vitality of the block and support the architectural character of our downtown historic district. They also provide a tangible link to the Italian immigrants who did so much to build up Madison in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The lack of maintenance by the immediate past owners is not a compelling reason why contributing buildings in our historic district should be demolished.

The height of the new buildings to 4 stories (which is beyond that named in our zoning ordinance) is under the purview of the Planning Board, but the HPC's review of aesthetics does allow an opinion on whether this will be detrimental to the character of the downtown. As part of the documentation for review by the HPC and Planning Board, the HPC would like to see shadow studies indicating how dark the street would be morning, noon, and afternoon, with a solid wall of 4-story buildings on the east side. The south end of Central Avenue is already shadowed in the afternoon by a tall historic building on the west side; in the block to

the north at Elmer, the two tall apartment buildings facing Central make that portion of the street a dark spot that does not invite exploration on foot. Will this in fact create a street that encourages people to walk down it and explore any businesses there or will it be always in shade and shadow? The proposed apartments only have windows on the west elevation – will they receive natural light?