

10 January 2005

Detroit Historic District Commission
Planning and Development Department
65 Cadillac Sq. - Suite 1300
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Sirs and Madams:

Cityscape Detroit strongly urges the Historic District Commission to deny the Demolition Permit for the Madison-Lenox Hotel. The Madison-Lenox buildings are contributing and character-defining features of the Madison Harmonie Local Historic District, created by Detroit City Council in 1988. The loss of these structures would have an extremely detrimental affect upon the integrity of this historic district.

For several reasons, Cityscape Detroit formally requests that this permit be denied:

- 1) The Ilitch organization has not actively demonstrated that the Madison-Lenox is economically infeasible to redevelop. Without the financial hardship question addressed, the permit must be denied;
- 2) The Ilitch organization has not publicly marketed the Statler Hotel in good faith for a one-year period. According to Detroit's own ordinance, the marketing requirement must be satisfied prior to the issuance of a Demolition Permit;
- 3) The building's demolition will have a significant deleterious affect upon the urban character of Harmonie Park, which is one of Detroit's most urban spaces; and
- 4) Urban Redevelopment 101 clearly stipulates that you do not demolish a structure until a replacement building is proposed. A parking lot is proposed for the site.

Two years ago almost to the day, the Ilitch organization requested authority to demolish this building, yet in the following two years, they have not fulfilled the reasonable and lawful requirements of Detroit's local historic district ordinance. They have had plenty of time to fulfill the year-long marketing requirement, but have not done so. They have turned away interested developers. Cityscape Detroit is aware that developers have been pointed towards the Ilitch's to redevelop the complex, but they have been rebuffed. This clearly demonstrates the building retains economic value and thus, the owners cannot argue that the building gives them a financial hardship. Without satisfying either major requirement of the ordinance, they should not be permitted to demolish this structure.

Instead, they will come before you and testify that the building must be demolished now because the Super Bowl is coming to town. They have done nothing for almost a decade, yet they are going to demand you to act quickly. When have these owners acted in good faith with this body since taking ownership in the late 1990s? To top it off, one of the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation's entities is going to pay for demolishing this habitable building.

Not only are the demolition expenses of a major wealthy Detroit business going to be subsidized, but the significant amount of State and Federal historic tax credits created by a redeveloped Madison-Lenox property will be lost.

Due to the high level of demolition in the Madison-Harmonie district, if this demolition is allowed to proceed, the district may no longer continue to fulfill state requirements for an intact local historic district. This action may require the district to be delisted by the State of Michigan. The State and Federal Tax Credits for the remaining structures in the historic district would no longer be available, and this would cast in jeopardy the potential redevelopment of several

structures in the historic district due to the loss of historic preservation tax credit equity.

Cityscape Detroit not only advocates for historic preservation, but it also encourages for quality urban design and architecture. The structure's loss would greatly impact the urban character of Harmonie Park by removing a significant character-defining complex that encloses the space in the district.

New buildings on the site would not have the detailing that the existing structure has. A perfect example of the urban quality of old versus new can be seen at the south end of the historic district where the new hotel was recently completed. The hotel does not have the fenestration and texture that Harmonie Park's older buildings have. Though the petitioner states that it is only for a temporary parking lot, besides the stadiums, how many parking lots have been built upon in downtown Detroit in the last twenty years?

Cityscape Detroit urges the Historic District Commission to deny this request, force action to be taken on the Demolition by Neglect order, and advocate for the petitioner to negotiate in good faith with potential developers/partners. Please uphold the ordinances of the City of Detroit in denying this petition.

Sincerely yours,

On behalf of the officers and membership of Cityscape Detroit