

I'd really like to thank the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation for this award. I really appreciate it.

I really enjoyed working on the Matt's House in Verona. It was a nice size and scale and I got to do a lot of the things I like to do. But honestly, I would have been happy to let someone else take it on. The City of Verona put out a very coordinated and professional RFP process and nobody was willing to renovate the building but me. Verona is my kids hometown and I decided to do the building for them.

The Matt's House has really brought home to me that there really isn't good support for these smaller projects. They aren't the high profile preservation projects that garner the financial support from grants, donors, tax breaks etc. But they are too big for the average small town investor to take on. The truth of the matter is that the stars kind of aligned for me to take on the Matt's House and the Stamm House. I had a crew already working on foreclosures and I had an investor partner.

I'd like to encourage the preservation community to take on a role and encourage investment in these smaller, but still important structures. We need to create opportunities for potential small investors to connect with a community who can help them. When the large, professional investors pass on these properties, the properties are often left to smaller, amateur, well-meaning and intentioned and sometimes uninformed individuals and groups who take these on. They have the most important asset with them when they begin which is passion and the willingness to work hard. But they need help.

Microgrants of a few hours of an architect's or an engineer's time walking through their structures would be invaluable. I can't tell you how many times I've nearly walked away from a deal only to learn from a professional that the problem looks way worse than it actually is.

We also need to accept that these structures, while old, are being lived in and used in the modern world. We can help people decide what really is old and important to keep and what isn't. Help them decide where their priorities should be. We can't guilt-trip people into keeping everything or doing everything to a preservation quality or they are just going to walk away.

I would also like to encourage city administrations to be nice to these people and encourage them. I can't tell you how scared I used to be when I went to get building permits. The fact of the matter is that I was doing the right thing by getting a building permit and seeking guidance. Help people do the right thing.

Finally, we get what we incent. There is tons of TIF available for new construction and there are lots of incentives for homeowners. But there is really nothing out there for small investors. Why not small cap TIF for small properties? Especially on the isthmus, our policies are essentially rewarding large investment firms to accumulate properties for redevelopment. There is no incentive to preserve.

We need to figure out how to save the next level of historic structures. I can tell you with almost certainty that Matt's House would be leveled and quite possibly Stamm House if we wouldn't have bought them. These are two of the oldest structures in the county in two of the most affluent suburbs in the county. If this almost happened in these communities, what does it say about the prospects for structures in poorer areas of the State.

Thanks you for your attention and again, a big thank you to the Madison Trust for Historic Preservations

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