



February 03, 2019

Historic Preservation Commission
via email: hpc@milwaukee.gov; lelmer@milwaukee.gov

THE KILEY GROVE AT THE MARCUS CENTER

The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago.

This proverb, in various forms, is repeated in indigenous cultures around the world. The Japanese carpenters who rebuild the shrines at Ise extend that to 60 year period. The temple monks in the mountains and hills of China think in hundreds of years. Yet, for most situations, twenty years is the period of time where trees begin to mature in a way that they fulfill their spatial and ecological functions in urban landscapes.

Make no mistake. Removal of the Kiley Grove is not only a desecration of a masterwork, but it is setting the clock back on a mature landscape that will burden the site with an adolescent space for decades. The architect, Jim Shields, and the project leadership understand that there is a durable investment in the Marcus Center's Harry Weese building. Therefore, the work on the building is to adapt, rejuvenate, and tinker with an existing work.

Why do the architects not give the same respect to the landscape?

The Kiley Grove has strong conceptual and spatial integrity as does the Harry Weese building. The building deserves respectful new interventions and those proposed are intelligent and well-considered - for instance, the transparent glazing (the equivalent of which is to crown thin, crown lift, and prune the horsechestnuts to increase light and lateral visibility).

The grove deserves the same.

The decision to remove the grove reveals that the architect lacks similar creativity, intelligence, sophistication, and nuance that is granted the building. Only those unencumbered by talent would not be up to the worthy challenge to revitalize a masterwork and opt, instead, to design a generic and banal space following the wholesale removal of a masterful landscape.

Respectfully,

Ron Henderson FASLA
Professor, Director of Landscape Architecture + Urbanism Program
Senior Fellow of Garden and Landscape Studies, Dumbarton Oaks

Elmer, Linda

From: Ron Henderson <rhender1@iit.edu>
Sent: Monday, April 01, 2019 11:17 AM
To: Historic Preservation Commission; Elmer, Linda; Hatala, Carlen; Askin, Tim; Bauman, Robert; mpa@milwaukeepreservation.org
Subject: Don't replace the Marcus Center Kiley Grove with a "Wal-Mart Park"

Dear colleagues,

I use the term "Wal-Mart Parks" to refer to the kind of project that is proposed to replace the durable and elegant Kiley Grove. "Wal-Mart Parks", like the proposal by the architect, Jim Shields, are mass-produced, low investment, and cheap suburb-derived spaces with short shelf-lives. The rigorous design and spatial richness of the Kiley Grove has endured through decades of vicissitudes in Milwaukee's downtown and remains a mature, resilient, and popular setting for private quietude and lively civic events. The local public support for keeping and restoring the grove is augmented by an array of national voices that attest to the widely held admiration of Milwaukee's most important landscape of the mid-twentieth century.

It has been determined that the Marcus Center is a strong exemplar of "the development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage" of Milwaukee; embodies "distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen"; is the "work of an artist, architect, craftsperson or master builder"; and is a recognizable visual landmark. As is known, designation requires only one of these four criteria. That the Kiley Grove significantly contributes in four categories is unassailable criteria for preservation. Does the grove need restoration? Yes, of course, as trees are living things.

The Kiley grove of hawthorns at the Art Institute of Chicago's South Garden have seen periodic replacements on individual basis by careful curation of heritage and preservation. The chestnuts in the Kiley Grove can be similarly curated under attentive leadership. The landscape architect, Jen Current, reminds us that "there are protocols in place for Milwaukee County to deal with dying/deceased plants in planned landscapes. A preservation plan and treatment approach should be created. "

Long live the chestnuts of Milwaukee!

Respectfully,
Ron Henderson

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Ron Henderson FASLA
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Founding Principal, L+A Landscape Architecture www.lplusa.net Senior Fellow, Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Studies Creative Artist Fellow, Japan-US Friendship Commission Artist-in-Residence, National Park Service

From: [Bauman, Robert](#)
To: [Lee, Chris](#)
Subject: FW: About the grove adjacent to Marcus Center
Date: Friday, April 05, 2019 9:59:34 AM

PAC

From: Arijit H Sen [mailto:sena@uwm.edu]
Sent: Saturday, March 30, 2019 9:24 PM
To: Bauman, Robert
Cc: Arijit H Sen
Subject: About the grove adjacent to Marcus Center

Dear Alderman Bauman,

This email is about the Dan Kiley grove adjacent to the Marcus Center and the furor over its redesign. I live in Milwaukee and hence I felt it necessary to write to you directly to address this issue. As a practitioner, researcher, scholar, and teacher of architecture and urban studies since 1987, I feel that my opinion around urban design may be of some use to you.

While much conversation has been generated around the designer's legacy and the falsely diversionary argument around the health of trees (trees can be replaced!), I have been bothered by two less discussed issues that I feel are of equal importance.

1. The quality of the new design. The new garden is, simply put, a substandard design. Urbanity is all about density. (<https://gehlpeople.com/approach/>) The area around Marcus Center suffers from the mal-effects of 20th Century urban renewal when buildings were torn down to create wide streets, mega blocks, and flatlands. The roads are wide and the urban scale in this area resembles that of suburban and rural settlements. This openness is an anomaly for a city unless it is a park such as Lake Park or Washington Park. The old grove is not a building and hence it doesn't contribute to a continuous "urban wall" that we may observe two blocks south of this area. Nevertheless the grove does mediate the massive architecture of the Marcus Center and the open flat landscape of Kilbourne Avenue. I am essentially asking you to imagine a cross-section across the Intercontinental hotel, Kilbourne Avenue, the grove and the Marcus Center. You may then visualize the open flatness of this space and see the way the current grove produces an intermediate scale that relates the street to the building in a sophisticated way. The new design seems unaware of this singular principle of urbanity — scale — and it enhances the "missing tooth" character of this block. The architectural view of the new design is disingenuous too, because it shows a birds-eye view. It does not show a perspective from the eye level of a pedestrian. From the view point of the pedestrian this new flat lawn would be open and windy like a prairie. Imagine walking along this path with untempered strong frigid gusts coming across the river on a cold fall evening — is that an urban experience?
2. Another issue that bothers me, perhaps more than the aesthetics of the design, is about the lack of public participation and public discussion around this design. Public-private partnership doesn't mean that the public gives up all claims, ownership, and design of common grounds. From experience, I know that it is tedious to have a public participatory process for design. Yet it is necessary to sustain our democratic civic values. So yes, we can consider a changed design — but that consideration should come from the grassroots, should involve the public, should integrate the needs, point of views, aesthetics, and values of those who own this land — the citizens of Milwaukee.

I hope you will be able to consider the two issues listed above, as this project comes to the city administration for approval. I hope we don't let go of our civic values simply for expediency, patronage, and power.

Regards,
Arijit Sen, Associate Professor of Architecture and Urban Studies; University of Wisconsin
Milwaukee

April 1, 2019

Historic Preservation Commission:

As an architecture professor I wanted to share with you how important I think the Dan Kiley Landscape at the Marcus Center is to our School, Milwaukee and the region. In November 2017 the School, in partnership with the Wisconsin Association of Landscape Architects hosted an exhibition and symposium about Dan Kiley. The events were in part a celebration of his work but also to call attention to the need for informed and effective stewardship of his work and, by extension, Modernist landscape design.

Speakers for the event included Kiley's longtime partner Peter Ker Walker from Vermont. Panelists discussed the Role of the Designer in Public Space and included Ernie Wong, Principal, Site Design in Chicago; Rennie Tang, Assistant Professor, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, Department of Landscape Architecture; Sam Dennis, Associate Professor, UW-Madison Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture; and Rosheen Styczinski- Principal, New Eden Landscape.

The event was well attended by students, faculty, and the public and had sponsorship from Margarett Harvey, Wi ASLA, UW – Madison Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, and [Milwaukee Downtown, BID 21](#).

It made sense for us to host this event as Milwaukee boasts 2 Dan Kiley landscapes. The Kiley Chestnut Grove is important as an urban reprieve. Its trees provide a room within the city. Milwaukee deserves exceptional spaces like this. The new design by HGA does not provide the same kind of quality space in the city.

In November 2018, we hosted a national conference in Milwaukee (ACSA) for over 200 architecture academics. Having the Dan Kiley landscape was an important factor in hosting the conference as it puts Milwaukee on the map for cultivating important midcentury modern environments - urban landscapes being some of the most important of these.

At both events, national and international guests spoke of the importance of the Kiley landscape and it served as one of the top sites visited in Milwaukee by these groups of people. The Grove cultivates economic development because it is an important part of the midcentury legacy of the city. Therefore, it is important to maintain. When you eliminate these urban landscapes, you eliminate the quality of the city. The HGA proposal is neither part of that legacy nor does it offer a recognizable important landscape.

Our city and its stewards should be shepherding the Kiley Grove at the Marcus Center into the 21st century. We should preserve this landscape and cultivate it as a gem to regional and national audiences. It should be a hallmark of any visit to Milwaukee.

Sincerely,
Mo

Mo Zell, RA
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