



Luther Memorial Church

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Church asks city to delay construction of luxury student building *Says proposed structure will overshadow solar panels, degrade its historic building*

MADISON, Wis. — Luther Memorial Church last week asked the City of Madison to delay a building permit for the proposed construction of a 15-story luxury student housing building because its size will forever shade the church's 100-solar-panel array, blocking the church's access to the sun's power and its long-term investment in renewable energy.

In a letter to the city, the church is requesting the delay until the issue gets resolved, or denying the permit if it cannot, said Luther Memorial Council President Mary Jean Huston. The letter states that allowing construction of the huge building violates the state law designed to protect investments in solar by prohibiting neighbors from building new structures that "shade" existing solar arrays.

"This isn't just about our historic church, which is on both the state and national Register of Historic Places," said Huston. "It's about everyone's right to have their investments in renewable energy protected.

"To us, it's critical that before any permits are issued, this issue is carefully addressed. This is a test of the importance of solar and renewable energy in this city. We're hopeful the city takes this seriously."

The proposed towering structure will be located on property now occupied by the soon-to-be vacant Porchlight building adjacent to the church. The developer, LZ Ventures, is in the process of applying for a building permit to start construction within weeks.

The massive, high-end apartment building creates other problems, she noted. Engineering studies show that shading the 1923 Claude and Starck designed Gothic Revival building will create moisture problems that will degrade century-old sandstone, she added. "The damage to our church's exterior is real, and it's heartbreaking—to us and to everyone who cares about this city's historic and culturally important landmarks."

"We have been trying to negotiate with the developers, who have done a lot of good work in Madison. We'd still like to work things out with them," Senior Pastor Brad Pohlman said. "But on this we simply must stand our ground to ensure our solar rights—and everyone's solar investments—are respected and protected.

"This may be one of Madison's first tests of a law designed to protect investments in renewable energy so it's important the city gets this right."