

From: [John Martens](#)
To: [Scanlon, Amy](#)
Subject: FW: 1112 Spaight
Date: Monday, October 17, 2011 12:36:06 PM

Amy,

I am forwarding an email I sent to you on Sep. 19. I looked over the letters previously submitted, but I did not see this among them. Please add it to the list of letters concerning 1112 Spaight St.

I will try to appear today before the commission, however if I am not able please accept this as representative of my thoughts on this matter.

Thanks,

John Martens

From: John Martens [mailto:johndmartens@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Monday, September 19, 2011 1:01 PM
To: 'ascanlon@cityofmadison.com'
Subject: 1112 Spaight

Amy and Board Members,

As a long-standing member of the Planning and Development Board for the Marquette Neighborhood Association, I have been involved in and have carefully considered the application for demolition and replacement of the building at 1112 Spaight Street. I've also visited the site and have been contacted on several occasions by the applicants. I am writing this now because my work situation today may prevent me from attending the meeting later this afternoon.

I believe what most clearly represents my position on this matter is contained in the following e-mail which I sent to the applicants in response to the second e-mail they had sent me stating what they felt were reasons for demolition and replacement.

Please consider this issue carefully, as not only do I feel it does not even come close to complying with Landmarks standards, but given the increasing desirability of this neighborhood, there is a great amount of interest by others who would like to do similar projects, so if this one were to be approved, it would be the beginning of a slippery slope that could quickly erode the real nature and value of this still intact neighborhood.

Thank you,
John Martens

Conner and Abigail,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my comments concerning 1112 Spaight St. It certainly sounds like you have been doing your homework in trying to persuade the neighborhood to approve of your demolition, and I highly respect your efforts. However, I am more than ever unconvinced. I can only speak, not from personal contact with you as it appears most of the others have, but rather from my own experience and belief in the integrity of the historical character of our neighborhood.

I understand that having letters of support may seem significant to you, but I must let you know that through the 11 years I spent on Madison's Zoning Board of Appeals it became clear to me that letters of support are usually easy to get from your friends and neighbors, seldom deal with the legal issues at hand, and in fact tend to obfuscate the real issues. Similarly irrelevant in your case are your personal family situation and your desire for convenience in being a landlord. Surely you understand that the importance of maintaining the integrity of one of the most intact parts of the Marquette Neighborhood goes far beyond the simple desires of a few connected individuals.

I personally have had a great deal of experience with hands-on restoration and I believe that the house in question could be easily saved that way. That kind of grass-roots effort is what held the fabric of our neighborhood together through the years when there was not so much development pressure on it as there is now, and in fact made it what it is today. As long as this was an "undesirable" neighborhood, the demolitions were held in check and the character was maintained. Now that people are flocking into our neighborhood, we risk killing the goose that laid that golden egg. As you agree, the house could be saved by sweat equity, but you say you are not in a position to do it that way. Wouldn't that just mean that you should leave it for someone else who is up to the task?

As far as the proposed replacement is concerned, I must also let you know that I feel there is nothing worse for our neighborhood than the kind of fake history that I feel is represented by the design in the PDFs that you attached. As an architect, I too have struggled with new design in historical neighborhoods, and I have worked with the National Park Service on landmarked properties and strongly agree with their philosophy and mandate that any exterior work on a landmark property should either be an exact restoration of what was originally there, or else it should be distinctly different.

I once had lunch with Donovan Rypkema, a well-known, highly respected authority and strong proponent of historical restoration. I asked him what he thought about new construction in historical neighborhoods, and his answer was, "All buildings should reflect the age in which they are built." To me that is the value of historical buildings: they are genuine reflections and representatives from a certain time of the state of our culture. They are an integral part of who we are, and if the best thing we can do is simply imitate, well, to me that is a sad commentary to send forth to our descendants.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, think of the precedent: if you were to somehow demolish and build this as proposed, how would you feel if the other genuine sources of the character of the neighborhood were to be slowly replaced by imitators with vinyl or cement board siding, expanded PVC trim, low-e windows with almost accurately proportioned muntins, decay-proof deck boards

made from 5% recycled Tupperware, and all the modern conveniences, gussied up in a style that combines the best elements of all the different historical styles on Orton Park. Would you really like that? Is that really where we want our neighborhood to go?

Regards,

John Martens