

To: Madison Urban Design Commission

From: Ledell Zellers

Re: Agenda Item 8 – 145 Iota Court and 619 & 625 Henry Street

Date: December 19, 2012

The Urban Design Commission is charged with assuring that buildings in a planned unit development district “shall be of a visual and operational character which: a. Are compatible with the physical nature of the site or area.” The recommendations in the Downtown Plan (see below) speak to the visual character which is intended to be present in the area targeted by this development. This project proposes to construct an *extremely* large footprint building which does not retain nor does it create an urban streetscape of a scale that is recommended for this area in the Downtown Plan.

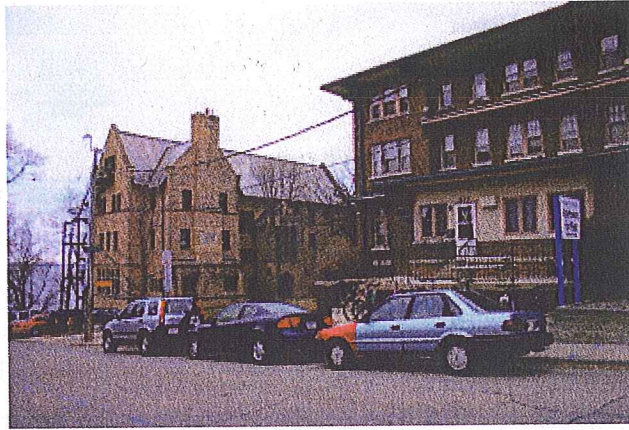
The appropriate mass and scale is found not only in the buildings proposed for demolition but also in the buildings across the street from the buildings proposed for demolition. I show below photos of two of the buildings which share the streetscape with the proposed development.

While the height map in the Downtown Plan for the Langdon Street area indicates 7 stories may be appropriate (not the nine stories proposed by this development), it does have caveats on even the 7 storey height. The Downtown Plan says: “During the planning process, several areas were identified with special characteristics that make it reasonable to allow the potential to consider buildings slightly taller than the recommended base height under certain circumstances. These tend to be transition areas...which include existing older structures whose long-term preservation should be encouraged, but may be threatened by the potential for high-density redevelopment. To recognize and accommodate these situations, the Maximum Building Heights Map in this Downtown Plan defines eight areas where buildings may be allowed up to two additional...stories if they meet specific criteria that reflect the unique context of the site and its surroundings, and help to advance the planning recommendations for that area.”

This proposed development does not “help to advance planning recommendations” for the area nor does it “reflect the unique context of the site and its surroundings”. This proposed project is counter to two of the four planning recommendations for the Langdon area. One recommendation calls for development on sites that are NOT identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District. **The other recommendation encourages calls for redevelopment that is “compatible with the historic context in scale and design”. In no way can this project be seen as “compatible ... in scale and design”.** The Downtown Plan provisions are as follows and should be considered in reviewing the Iota Court proposal.

Recommendation 77: Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of contributing historic buildings.

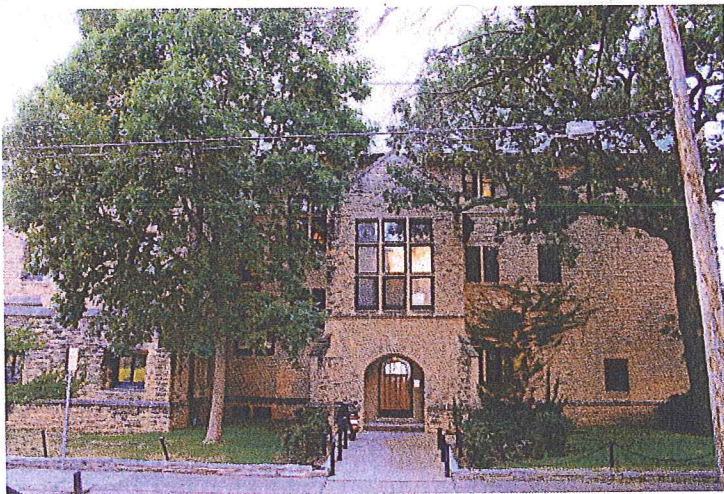
Recommendation 78: Encourage relatively higher density infill and redevelopment that is compatible with the historic context in scale and design on non landmark locations and sites that are not identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District.



625 N. Henry (building on right) – proposed for demolition & 150 Iota Court



146 Iota Court – scale and character of most buildings in area



150 Iota Court – directly across the street from 145 Iota Court