

Regarding: **625 East Gorham Street – Restoration Plan. 2nd Ald. District.
(Legistar #23439)**

Date: August 8, 2011
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General Information:

On May 19, 2009, the Common Council approved a request by Michael Matty/Renaissance Property Group, LLC and Stone House Development to rezone 609-625 E. Gorham Street, 604-630 E. Johnson Street and 303-323 N. Blair Street from R5 (General Residence District) to Planned Unit Development zoning to allow the demolition of 11 residences, renovation of 8 other residences and construction of three apartment buildings containing 83 units. The 11 buildings razed for the “City Row” apartment project included all 9 of the residences with E. Johnson Street addressed as well as 2 residences at 309 and 311 N. Blair Street.

As a condition of approval for the demolition permit and Planned Unit Development zoning approval, the Plan Commission recommended and the Common Council approved the following conditions:

- The developer for the renovation of the 8 residential buildings (315, 319 & 323 N. Blair Street and 609, 615, 619, 623 & 625 E. Gorham Street) shall provide a financing plan and assurances that the [renovation] project will be completed in a form acceptable to the Director of the Department of Planning and Community & Economic Development prior to final approval and recording of the Planned Unit Development and the issuance of any demolition or building permits. This plan shall include an approximate timeline for the renovation projects and shall be included in the recorded Planned Unit Development.

- The developer of the renovated houses shall also execute a deed restriction prior to PUD recording in a form approved by the Planning Division Director that requires that any future owner(s) of the 8 parcels will be required to complete the renovation of these buildings per the provisions in the approved and recorded PUD, including the approved timeline. Any future changes to the deed restrictions, including their release following completion of a renovation, shall require approval of an alteration to the approved PUD-SIP. The review of the final renovation plans for the 8 houses on the northern half of the block shall be conducted by the Landmarks Commission or by the State Historic Preservation Office as permits are requested.

When the planned unit development rezoning was introduced at the March 17, 2009 Common Council meeting, former District 2 alderperson Brenda Konkel added a referral of this project to the Landmarks Commission to allow the commission to provide input on the proposed demolition of the 11 buildings and the potential impacts the proposed apartment redevelopment could have on the Fourth Lake Ridge National Historic District.

The Landmarks Commission reviewed the proposed demolition permit and planned unit development on April 20, 2009 and recommended that the Plan Commission not recommend approval of the project to the Common Council. The Landmarks Commission's recommendation states:

“Due to the proximity of the Fourth Lake Ridge National Register Historic District, the loss of eleven 19th-century houses, the size and scale of the proposed housing project, and the existing adopted neighborhood plan, the Landmarks Commission recommends that the houses not be demolished because of the number of houses, and the context of the houses on the block.

However, if the project is approved, the Landmarks Commission recommends that the Plan Commission require the applicant to return to the Landmarks Commission for review of each of the proposed rehabilitated houses or that the applicant applies for Historic Tax Credit Certification with the State Historical Society according to the Secretary of Interior Standards; and the Plan Commission should consider the impact of the proposed green space plan that uses part of the Fourth Lake Ridge National Register Historic District for its required open space.”

The restoration plan for the single-family residence at 625 E. Gorham Street before the Landmarks Commission is the second such plan for the 8 buildings retained as part of the 2009 PUD. The two-story brick Prairie-style building at 609 E. Gorham Street was renovated into a 6-unit apartment building in 2008-2009 under an earlier Plan Commission approval. To date, restoration plans for the other 6 buildings proposed for renovation have not been submitted.”

Staff Comments:

Staff believes that the restoration plan is consistent with the conditions for the aforementioned demolition permit and Planned Unit Development zoning approval and is consistent with the typical care and maintenance prescribed in the Landmarks Ordinance of a historic building. Staff recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the restoration plan with the following condition:

1. The design of a historically appropriate front porch should be reviewed and approved by the Preservation Planner if the work is undertaken in the future.