

Monday March 16th

Madison Landmarks Commission

To the Members of the Commission:

The following is a sense of the Preservation and Development Committee (P&D) of the Marquette Neighborhood Association (MNA) in regards to the proposal for demolition and development of 906 Williamson St. P&D and the MNA Board have yet to vote in support or lack of support for this proposal. P&D has only recently had time to digest the changes that Knothe Bruce and Associates (KBA) has made to the proposal. These changes have been received positively but have yet to outweigh concerns of the committee and the neighborhood.

Primarily, most concern is weighing the demolition of another house in our Third Lake Ridge Historic District. While it has been noted that there is nothing of exceedingly unique architecture in this building, the same can be said for many of the one and two story dwellings along Williamson St. Demolition of any building in our historic district that was built before 1945 exceeds the parameters of the BUILDII neighborhood plan. Most of the committee is willing to let go of this housing inventory if the project replacing it is a high quality design. The proposal changes presented at the March P&D meeting come closer but don't yet reach that threshold.

Issues raised at neighborhood meetings, P&D, and the associated subcommittee have focused on several points. The first issue is the massing lacking adequate breaks in the plane of its façade along Paterson St. and the rhythm of the façade along Williamson St. The recent changes begin to address this but could do more to make physical breaks rather than a change in materials. In particular, there is serious concern for the health of the canopy trees along Paterson due to how close the foundation would be laid and would require significant loss of roots. There has also been requests to round or somehow soften the corner of the building. Willy and Paterson is a prominent intersection and softening the corner would allow for safer interaction of both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. We are also underwhelmed at the design and materials used on the North side of the building opposite from Williamson St and would like to see a samples of the various exterior sidings for the project.

The community is very concerned about affordable housing. KBA has indicated that they have reached out to a program called 'Movin' Out.' This program helps low-income renters by making accessibility modifications to rental units. P&D would like to have this portion of the proposal more clearly defined in scope and size. P&D would also like to see the commercial space broken into smaller units. We are very concerned that the business model most able to afford greater than 2,000 sq ft would rely on late night alcohol to make ends meet. Other retail commercial businesses along Willy St are having to downgrade their spaces to roughly 1,000 ft. This would encourage a vibrant walkable neighborhood and increase the likelihood that such spaces are filled by local businesses rather than chain outlets.

P&D would like to thank KBA for the changes they have made thus far and look forward to seeing further changes to the proposal before it gains our support. While P&D is planning on moving up its April meeting to reconsider the changes before the next Landmarks Commission meeting, the MNA Board will not have time to weigh in before Landmarks makes a decision on approving demolition next month. A delay in the next meeting before the Landmarks Commission would allow for that to happen.

Sincerely,

Jesse Pycha-Holst

P&D Chair

MNA Board