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Sent: Monday, February 25, 2008 5:15 PM
To: Murphy, Brad; Kerr, Julia
Cc: McGee, Fred; Knowles, Mae; Meyer, Miles
Subject: New Demolition Ordinance

Hi Brad & Julia –

I have just reviewed the proposed demolition ordinance and had a few concerns I want to share with you.

As you are well aware, Meriter's plans for the future will include the demolition of some of our older buildings (East, Center, & McConnell Hall). I am concerned that under the new ordinance the age of the buildings (all over 50 years) as well as their potential historic significance will make it difficult & more costly to implement our plans. The capital improvements that we need to make are for the renewal & replacement of our current facilities – there is no new revenue stream to pay for the improvements.

My other concerns have to do with the revitalization of the student housing in the Greenbush & Vilas neighborhoods. If the redevelopment of new housing in the place of decrepit student housing is to occur, particularly by families & individual home owners, the demolition ordinance will be yet another complication to the process & a huge disincentive (just imagine a regular Joe with no planning background dealing with the notification requirements). In addition, the ordinance calls for the replacement development/uses to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood & follow the recommendations of the neighborhood plan & comprehensive plan. What if the existing surrounding uses (especially densities) are not compatible with those recommended in the neighborhood plan? For instance, the redevelopment of key blocks in the Greenbush neighborhood, particularly those closer to Regent Street, lend themselves to denser development such terrace homes and flats but those not at all compatible with current densities.

I worry about the lack of a definition of "reasonable prices" under 22(a) – what is reasonable for one person is beyond another's limit. Shouldn't this be tied to hard numbers (i.e., assessed value, percentage of assessed value)? Finally, I agree with the Wisconsin Historical Society with regards to using 50 years of age as a cut off. Seems to me that if the goal is to protect neighborhood character, then the age should be tied somehow to when the neighborhood was developed.

Those are my two cents. I wonder if there is a way the master plan for the Park Campus and the potential Greenbush Vilas Student Housing Revitalization Strategy can ameliorate some of these issues & avoid a lengthy & costly process.

Melissa

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