

May 14, 2012

Dear Landmarks Commission:

My name is Joyce Knutson. I live at 24 N Prospect Ave, across the street from the building site at 25 N Prospect Ave.

I have come to speak in favor of the revised design proposed by Erica Simmons and John Balz.

Foremost, Erica and John have worked diligently with the neighbors. As this commission knows, the immediate neighbors had several concerns about the previous design. Erica and John not only listened to the neighbors, they acted, as much as possible, to address the concerns. Although they had invested time, money and emotional energy into the first design, they scrapped the design and started over. To me, this flexibility and consideration exemplified their respect for their new neighbors and a strong desire to become part of our neighborhood.

As to the design itself, there are aspects that I like, and ones that I like less. I like the one story design. Although the larger footprint of the new design means the loss of more trees than the original, I will be able to view the remaining trees over the top of the structure. I also appreciate Erica and John's expressed desire to replace some of the lost trees. I like the idea of 'elevating' the green space one story, by proposing an innovative roof covering. I do not know how it will work in practice. The reclaimed brick walls and windows facing Prospect Ave mean that the structure embraces Prospect Ave much more than the previous design.

That being said, my first communication with the Landmarks Commission with this land was during the consideration of the renovation of 2021 Van Hise Ave by the Osbornes. Then I expressed my view that an historic district is more than a collection of unique, diverse architecture. A neighborhood also encompasses the quality of the entire living environment, which to me, includes its green spaces and streetscapes, including its trees. In University Heights, we are privileged to enjoy and share many mature and incomparable trees. A few of our oak trees in the western portion of the neighborhood are formidable trees that survived the occupation of Camp Randall by Union troops during the Civil War. Although none of these trees is threatened by the design being considered, it seems to me that the current ordinance governing University Heights is much more restrictive to alteration of an existing structure than to new building. Such wording encourages the loss of green space, and, therefore, loss of an integral part of the character of the neighborhood.

I understand that the ordinance governing University Heights has not been revised in decades. The need for a review and possible revision has become clear from the discussions around the alteration of 2021 Van Hise Ave and the building at 25 N Prospect Ave. There are a number of examples, including questions about what constitutes 'too big' with differences in the ordinances governing University Heights and Mansion Hill ordinances being noted; what is

considered one story in a building and its height; what are acceptable building materials. Had Erica and John not been so considerate or flexible, I fear that the wording of a potentially out-of-date ordinance could have created polarizing and alienating disagreements among neighbors.

In summary, while I support the current design for 25 N Prospect Ave and urge approval by the Commission, I also strongly encourage a review of the current ordinance governing University Heights with the potential for revision.