

Parks, Timothy

From: Paul McMahon [heartlandphoto@tds.net]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 3:14 PM
To: Parks, Timothy
Subject: Subdivision of the Property at 205 N. Prospect Avenue.

Dear Mr. Parks,

I have had an opportunity to study the documents presented to the Plan Commission by staff, though I only just recently became aware of them.

I want to state very clearly my utmost respect for the Barash family and their carefully proposed plan. I recognize they are long-time members of the University Heights neighborhood and it is their property. I have also read the comments filed with the Commission from several neighbors and further underscore my respect for their views and wishes. This division for proposes of further development spawns an unfortunate dilemma and rekindles a harsh memory.

My spouse and I were in the middle of this wrenching discussion before in the University Heights neighborhood. Many years ago the successors of Arthur Peabody, Wisconsin State Architect, subdivided his beautiful property on Chadbourne Avenue, severing the side garden and green space to the west so it might be considered for further in-fill at some economically advantageous time. In 1993 that speculative subdivision precipitated a terrible and fractious year for us. Upon the "buildable lot" between the McMahon and Anderson (present owner of the Peabody home) homes a new home was proposed that city zoning and landmarks staff deemed acceptable, addressing each and every sentence and phrase embedded in city policy and code. The plan was universally rejected by all surrounding neighbors, not just a few, because it ran starkly counter to history of the property, voided the rhythm and character of the street, and ignored the history of University Heights.

To making a long and painful story short, and after the lot was literally skinned of all trees, the McMahons and Andersons were able to buy the lot from the proposed builder (James Troha) and preserve it as a conservancy. Just recently, to ensure that it remains green after we are both gone as occupants of our homes, we legally divided the lot and attached the smaller pieces to our respective properties. The green space will live on, we hope, forever.

Regretfully I conclude that to divide the historic property at 205 N. Prospect Avenue for development is to indeed ensure that it will be built upon sadly, the best of intentions aside. It is with equal regret that I feel compelled to submit this letter.

May the Barash family and neighbors be successful at reaching a compromise.

Sincerely,

Paul McMahon
2122 Chadbourne Ave.
Madison WI 53726

Parks, Timothy

From: Fred Swanson [fswanson@madison.k12.wi.us]
Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 3:46 PM
To: tparks@cityofmadison.com
Subject: 205 N. Prospect Ave.

As stated in a phone call dated this day, both my wife and myself are opposed to the plan that the Barash family has put forth. This is a historical neighborhood with little to no large existing lots that still resemble what they were intended to look/feel/be like by the architect. We would prefer the lot go into conservancy and never be developed. Green space is an issue in our area, and wedging yet another residence into an already crowded section of town would be bad form. I would hold that the historical nature of this home is even better preserved by leaving it alone and not changing the lot around it. In fact, resale may even be higher with the existing lot as is. Thank you for your time.

Fred R. Swanson
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Planning Division
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Cc: Tim Parks (tparks@cityofmadison.com)
Cc: Harvey and Trudy Barash, 205 N Prospect Ave. Madison, 53726

Planning Division

We write in regard to the Public Hearing on March 10, 2008 re: id #09438 concerning the property at 205 N Prospect and proposed lot #2. We live at 211 N Prospect the lot that borders the proposed Lot #2 to the north. We will plan on attending the public hearing and speaking but would like to provide some of our thoughts in writing.

We oppose the proposed subdivision of the property at 205 N Prospect for several reasons. First, is the integrity and feel of the University Heights neighborhood was originated over 100 years ago. The neighborhood has no city parks and no common green space of any substance other than that of the Randall School and the attached Olive Jones Park (the playground of the school which is 80% or more pavement). I am sure that as this neighborhood was planned and developed with a vision of having a few larger lots to absorb some of the biggest homes in the neighborhood and accommodate the unusual (hilly) land contours and the curving streets like N Prospect Ave. This vision is what attracted our family to purchase a home that was in ruins and invest significant dollars into its restoration and rejuvenation which lives the plan for this neighborhood.

Second is that due to the elevation of 205 Prospect property we at 211 and the neighbors at 1717 Kendall (downhill) deal with significant water runoff and basement leakage, garage flooding and soil erosion as the property currently sits. The placement of more pavements, roof runoff and other issues with more building could significantly worsen the issue. We have used all of the lot we have south of our home and with the Barash's cooperation have graded our lot into their property. At a minimum drainage plan and culvert between our home and any new building (if it were approved) would need to be established. It would be very helpful that any building envelope would take into consideration extra space on the north lot line of Lot #2 to accommodate a drainage culvert prior to our home. As our home is close to this lot line additional space to deal with these issues would be required.

The thought that 100+ years later a building and lot code designed for contemporary urban neighborhoods would be applied to a registered historic home and landmark neighborhood to peel off a Lot which has been dedicated to a single family home is something that we cannot support. This would significantly affect the overall value and intention of this urban historic neighborhood and specifically this unusual 5 sided block of land. We think that caution and deliberate care should be applied in making this decision as opposed to a check the box compliance with current zoning and standards.

The block on which this lot sits is one of the few 5 sided blocks in the area. I do not think that there is a level lot or square corner in the block. The 6044 square foot and two car garage home that currently occupies 205 N Prospect is one of the most grand in scale and appearance in the neighborhood and deserves a lot like it has. It should be understood that all though other lots on this block are measurably smaller the average size of house on this block is less than ½ the size of the 6000+ ft house at 205. The proportions of each house compared to its lot do not significantly differ from that of the 205 Property intact. In fact the Lot 1 with the existing home would be proportionately among the smallest on the block. I do not think anyone who set out to plan this neighborhood over the last 100 years or over the next 100 years should consider dividing this property into a building site.

We all have made sacrifices to be the fortunate few who can experience the urban living and enjoy the 100+ year old history of one of the most famous Madison neighborhoods. I truly respect Harvey and Trudy and wish them well in what ever they do next but cannot support the division of their property into a build able lot.