

Stouder, Heather

From: White, William F (22246) [WFWhite@michaelbest.com]
Sent: Friday, January 30, 2009 3:18 PM
To: Bruer, Tim; Sanborn, Jed; Konkel, Brenda; Cnare, Lauren; Verveer, Mike; Webber, Robbie; Rummel, Marsha; Monson, Libby; Judge, Eli; Skidmore, Paul; Solomon, Brian; Gruber, Timothy; Rhodes-Conway, Satya; Kerr, Julia; Palm, Larry; Compton, Judy; Clausius, Joe; Schumacher, Michael; Clear, Mark; Pham-Remmele, Thuy
Cc: Mayor; Murphy, Brad; Stouder, Heather; Fruhling, William; jma@alexandercompany.com; dnk@alexandercompany.com; ajw@alexandercompany.com; bobh@cs.wisc.edu; rr dickwagner@gmail.com
Subject: Acacia House Rezoning

Friends- Attached is a letter which was sent out today regarding the Acacia Foundation/Alexander Company rezoning which will come before the Common Council on Tuesday evening. The attachments to the mailed letter would be too large for your average computer (such as mine). I am sending the cover letter anyway to give you a head start on the issues.

I am also including a statement from Dick Wagner, a member of the Urban Design Commission, who was present at the UDC deliberations and was also present when the Downtown Design Districts were created in 2001. His insights during the UDC deliberations were very instructive and he has graciously offered to share them with the Common Council. Bill Fruhling, who staffed the UDC deliberations on January 21 will be unable to attend on Tuesday, so Dick graciously offered to supply some context to the unanimous vote of the UDC.

Thanks in advance for your time and consideration of this exciting project. Bill White

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January 29, 2009

Ald. Timothy V. Bruer
Council President
City of Madison
City County Building, Rm. 417
Madison, WI 53710

Re: Acacia House Rezoning, 210-229 Lakelawn Place, Legistar No. 12473

Dear President Bruer:

This letter is sent on behalf of the Acacia Foundation, Inc. and the Alexander Company, the partners in the redevelopment of the above-referenced parcel. The rezoning of this site from R-6 to PUD-GDP-SIP received a tie vote from the Plan Commission on Monday, January 26, 2009 with Chair Nan Fey indicating this is a matter which should be decided by the Common Council. We would urge approval of the rezoning at the Council meeting of February 3, 2008.

A few deep breaths.

This site proposes redevelopment to the existing Acacia House plus residential development of the gravelled parking lot to the rear of the building. To remind ourselves, the City has, since at least 1969, disfavored backyard parking which is not attendant to a principal use. This parking lot is used by neighbors and is essentially squarely within the cross hairs of what the City has sought to outlaw for the last 40 years. Secondly, the City in 2001, sought to target development in this general area through the creation of Urban Design Districts which will encourage urban, in fill development in a manner which is consistent with surrounding land uses and architectural styles.

This project is located within Urban Design District No. 4. That district has two sets of requirements. One set is mandatory. Those include height restrictions, side yard and set back restrictions and floor area ratios. This project complies with all of those mandatory requirements. The second set of requirements include purely subjective design guidelines which are not regulatory, but which refer to site specific and development specific aesthetic attributes. These include massing, articulation, orientation, building components, openings, usable open space, and similar requirements. This project has 26% usable open space.

MICHAEL BEST

& FRIEDRICH LLP

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The Urban Design Commission, which is the body created by the City of Madison to handle design issues, has considered this project on five separate occasions. Each session was at least one hour in length. To remind us, the Urban Design Commission is composed of registered architects, landscape architects, design professionals and representatives from various transportation and citizen constituencies. The Urban Design Commission, having applied all the guidelines of Urban Design District 4, concluded on January 21, 2009, that the Acacia Redevelopment Project fully complied with the design guidelines of Urban Design District 4. The decision was unanimous.

Notwithstanding the UDC decision, the Plan Commission on January 26th did a de novo review of the design criteria without requesting or receiving a design briefing. For this reason, we believe that the result was a tie vote. In addition, the Development Committee of Capitol Neighborhoods has weighed in extremely negatively on this project. There currently exists a schism between the existing neighborhood associations, i.e., the State/Langdon Neighborhood Association and the Capitol Neighborhoods Association. The State/Langdon Association has, in fact, seceded from Capitol Neighborhoods and the Acacia Foundation/Alexander Company is caught squarely in the middle of this turf battle between Capitol Neighborhoods and the State/Langdon Neighborhood Association. There is nothing we can do about this battle.

We are including with this letter, a series of color photographs which show several things. First, they give a sense of the neighborhood as it exists today. As you can see, there is precious little set back area nor is there much attention paid to the location of dumpsters, etc. This project is 180 degrees opposite of these characteristics and will provide a great benefit to the area.

Second, at the Plan Commission meeting, for the first time, the Capitol Neighborhoods Development Committee indicated there is a pedestrian path which would be impacted by this development. The numeric notations on the cover photo to the attachments, indicate where this path is located and what the visual impacts would be. City Staff has never mentioned this path and it is, in fact, not on any official maps to our knowledge. This project will not only not interfere with the pedestrian access, but will vastly enhance the visual attributes. In fact, the affected property owner asserts that there is no path.

Third and finally, the photographs show the dire need for redevelopment of this area.

This is a fine project which has been worked on for aesthetic considerations by the Urban Design Commission over many months. It is a project which fulfills many City policies and which deserves approval. We would ask that this approval be given at the Common Council meeting on February 3, 2009.

MICHAEL BEST

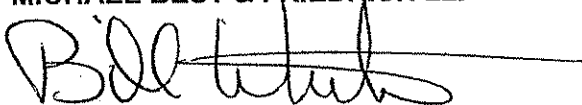
& FRIEDRICH LLP

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If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either me at 695-4946 or Joe Alexander at 843-1131. We thank you in advance for your time and consideration and look forward to seeing you next Tuesday evening.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL BEST & FRIEDRICH LLP



William F. White

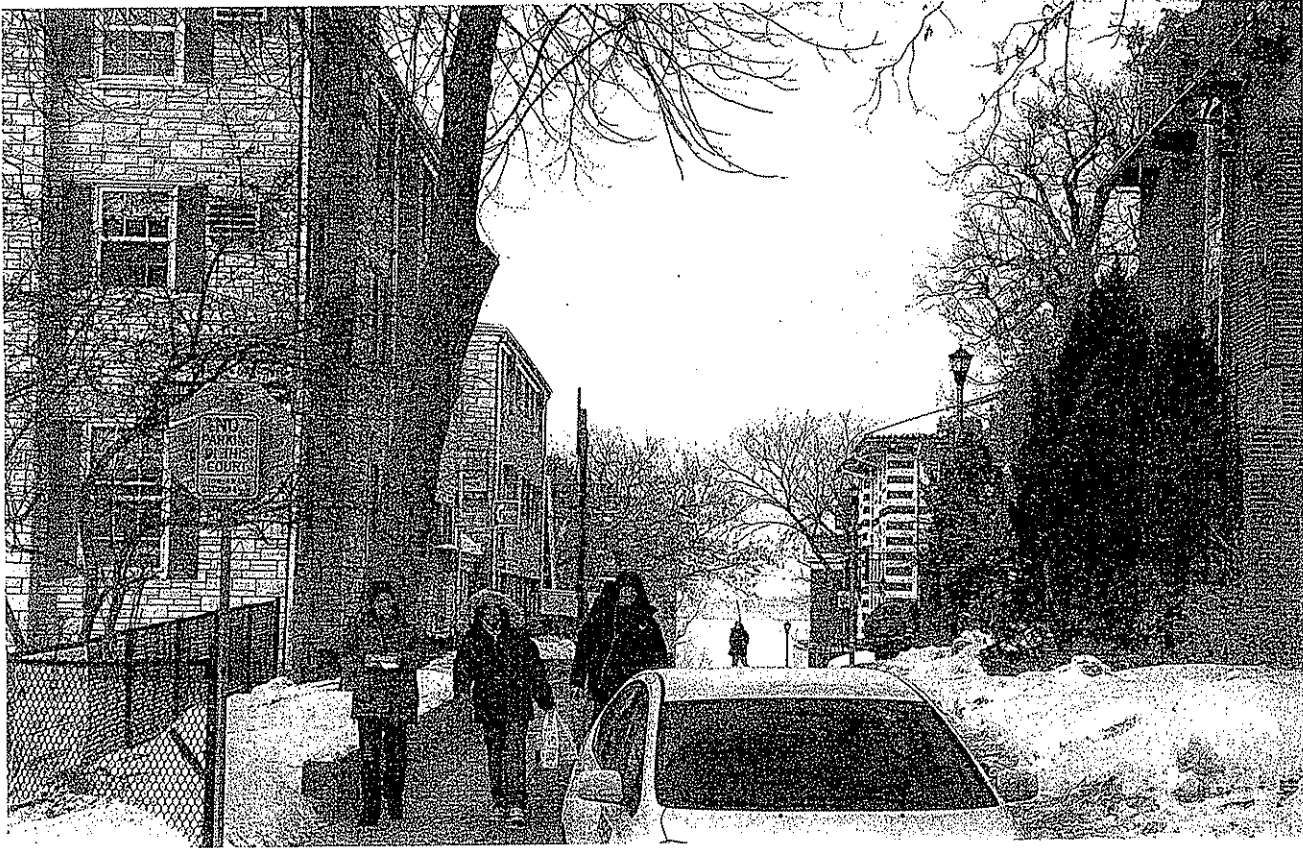
WFW:cmm

Enclosure

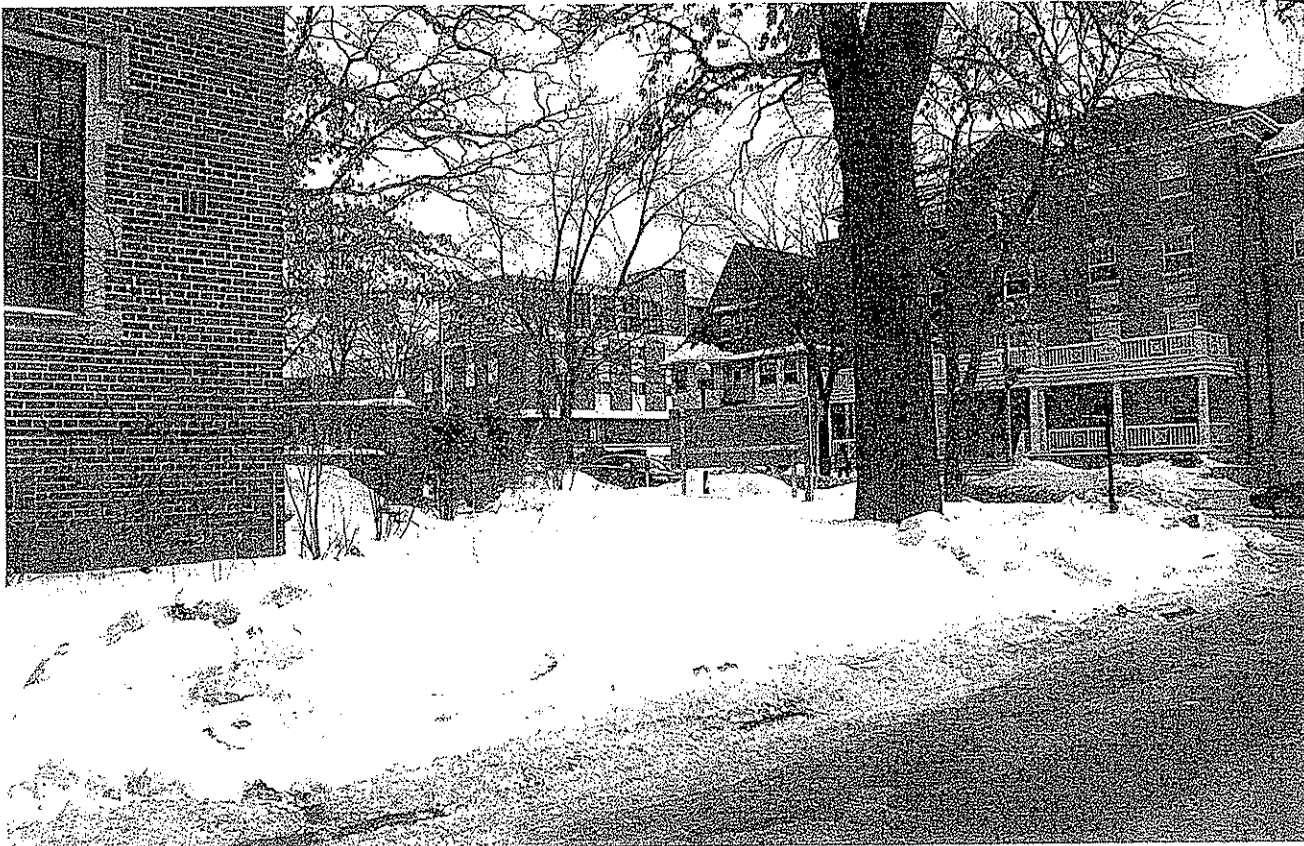
cc: Alders, City of Madison Common Council
Honorable Dave Cieslewicz
Bradley A. Murphy
Heather Stouder
Bill Fruhling
Joseph M. Alexander, Alexander Company
David Kaul, Alexander Company
Adam Winkler, Alexander Company
Jim McFarland, Acacia Foundation
Bob Holloway, President Capitol Neighborhood Association

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1 - W. Lakelawn view from Langdon Street



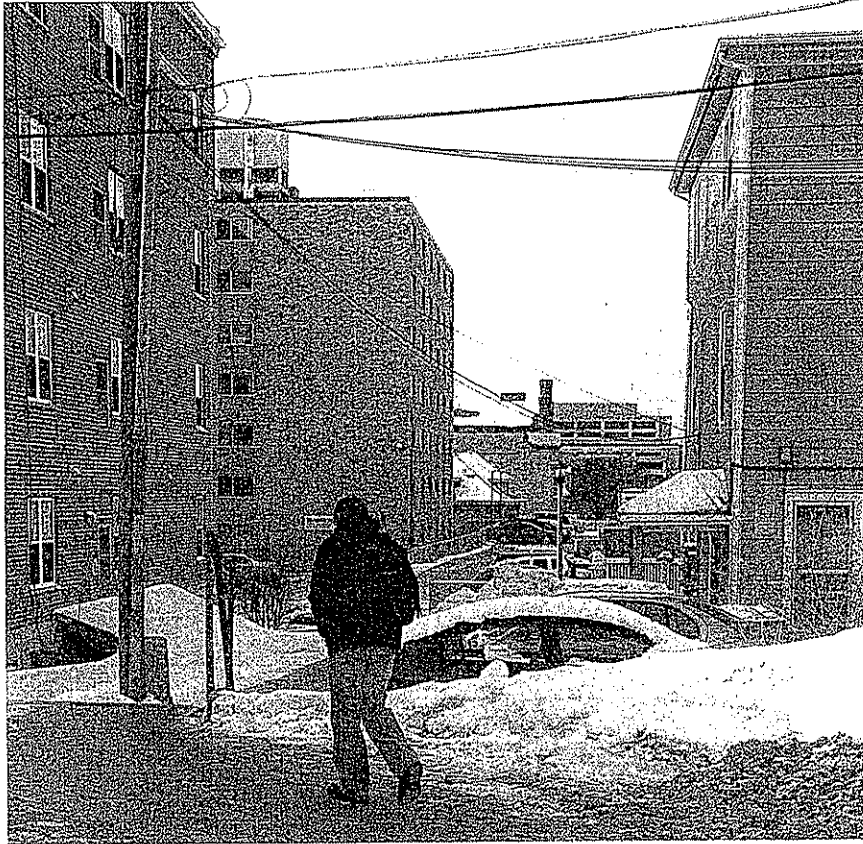
2 - View of Acacia front yard and Langdon from W. Lakelawn



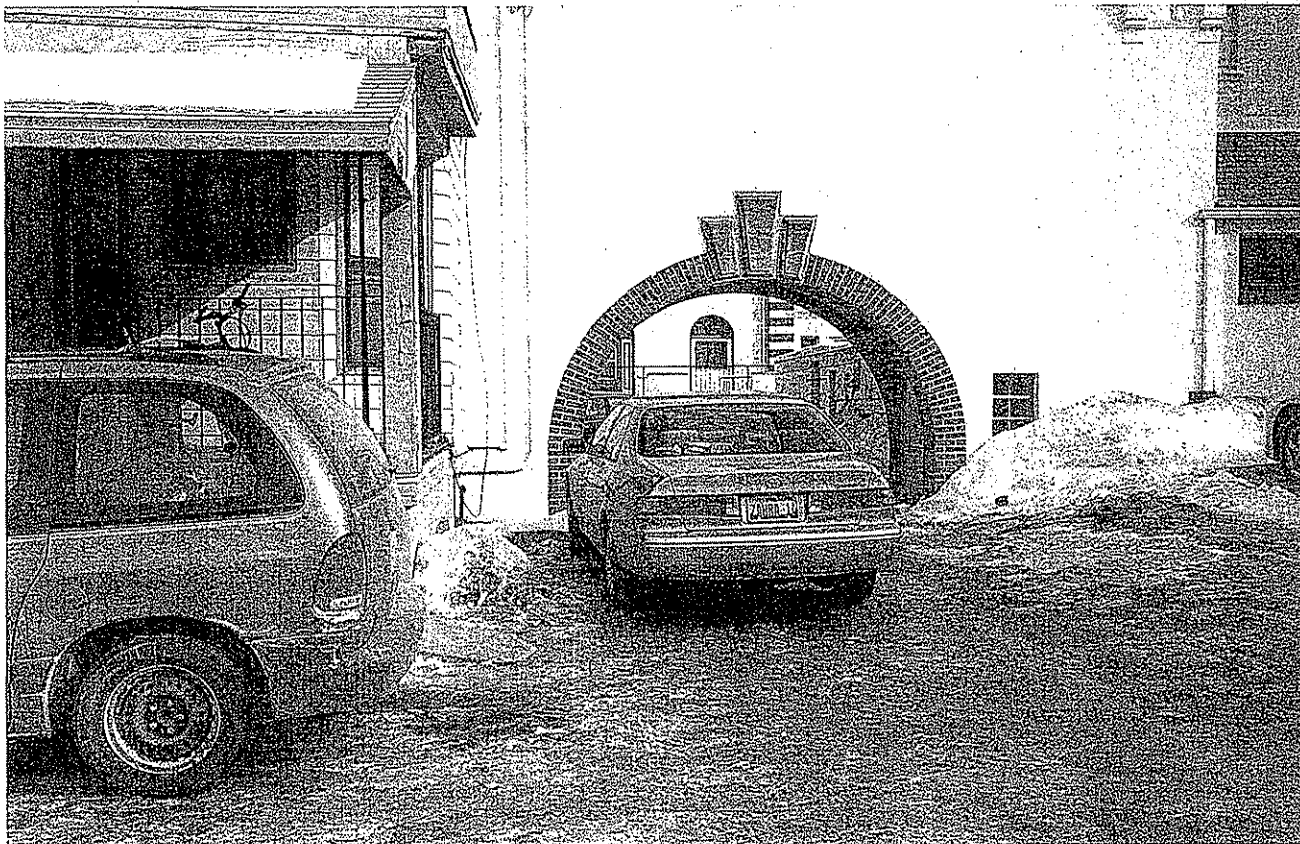
3 - View of mid-block pedestrian alley from W. Lakelawn



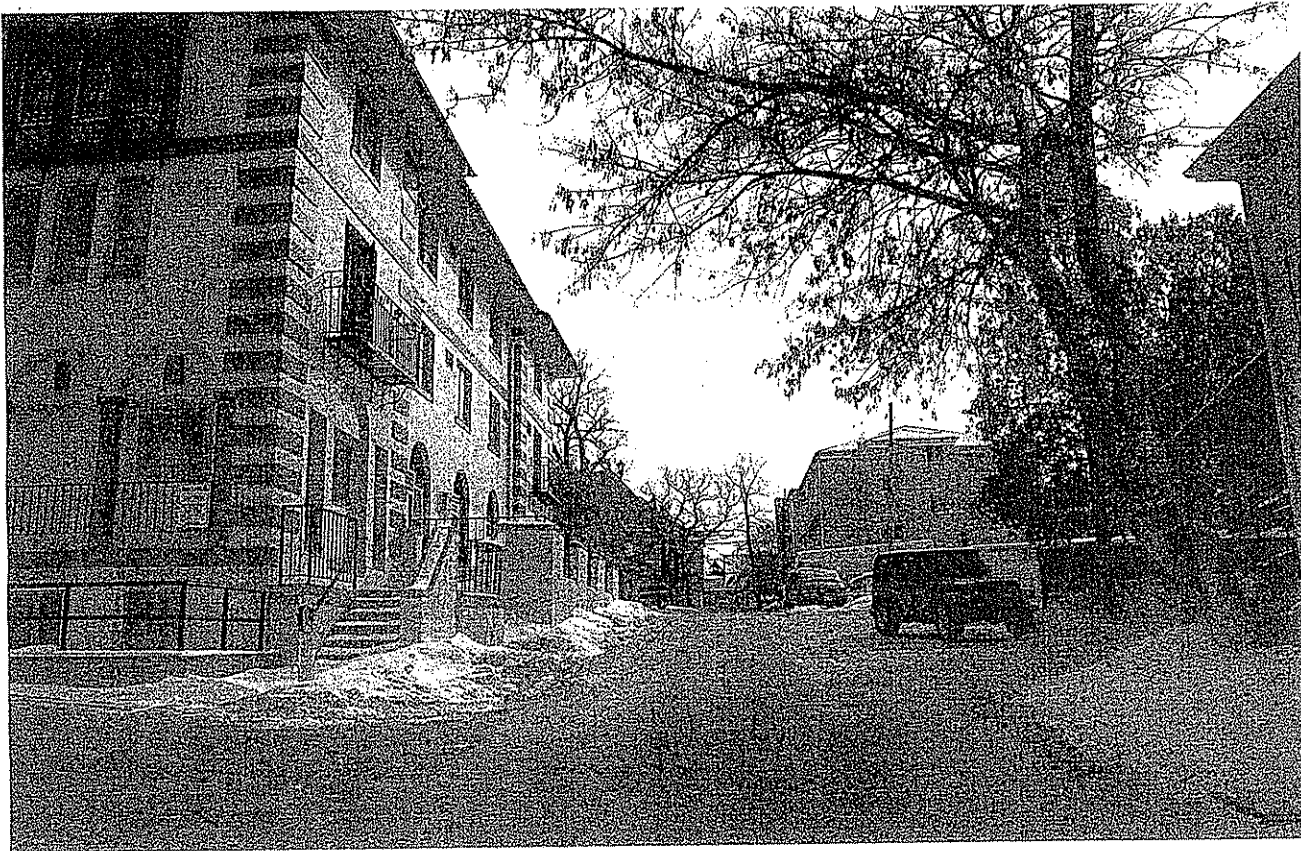
4 - View of typical density and setbacks from Howard Pl. pedestrian alley



5 - Westward view on pedestrian alley



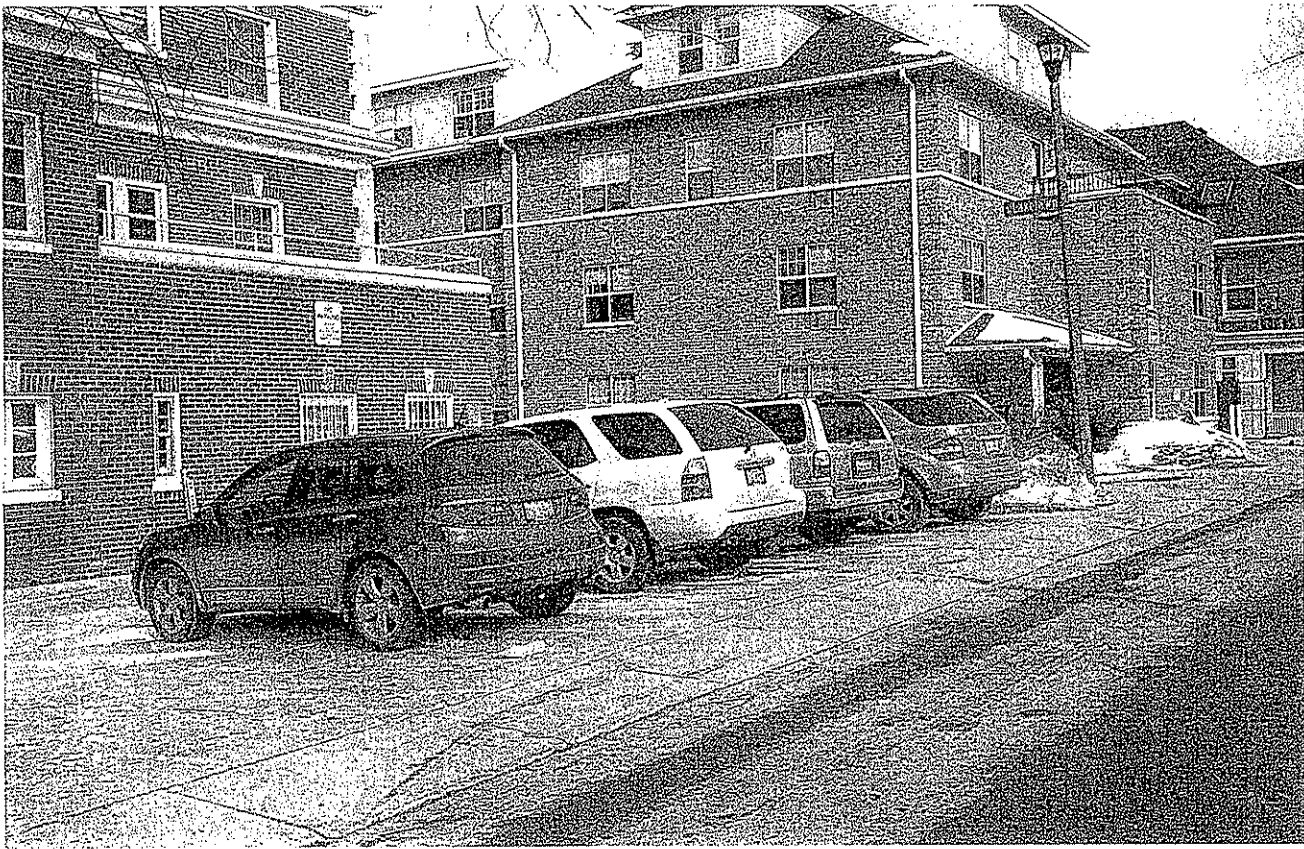
6 - Eastward view on pedestrian alley



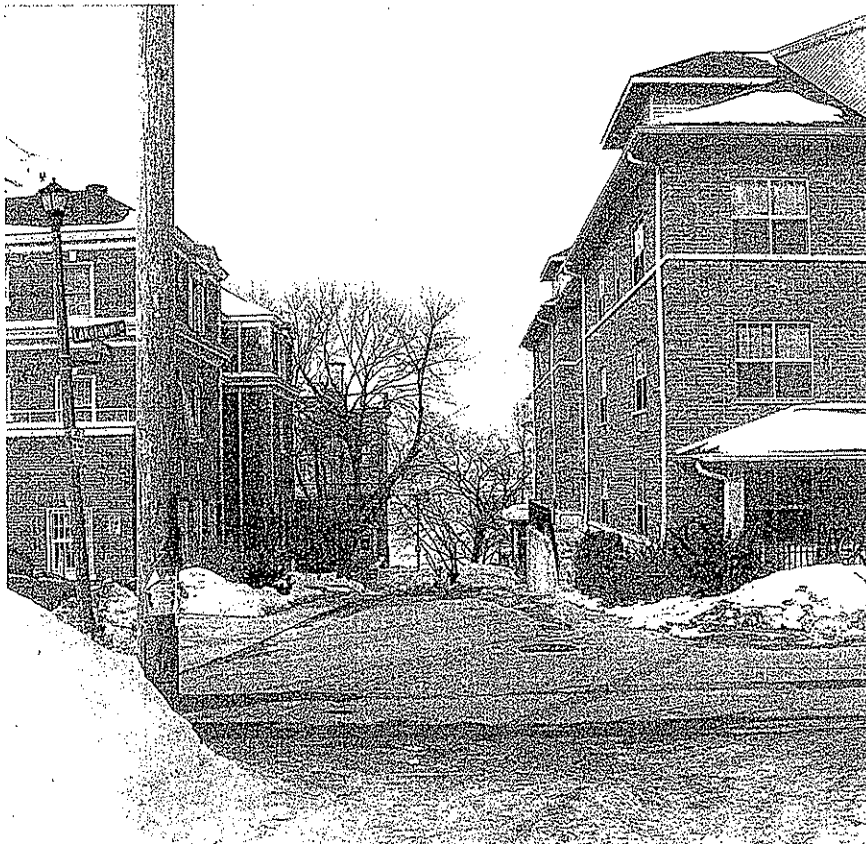
7 - View of W. Lakelawn toward Langdon and 229 site



8 - View of Lakelawn and 229 site (corner) from pedestrian alley termination



9 - Lakelawn Place view of neighboring front yards



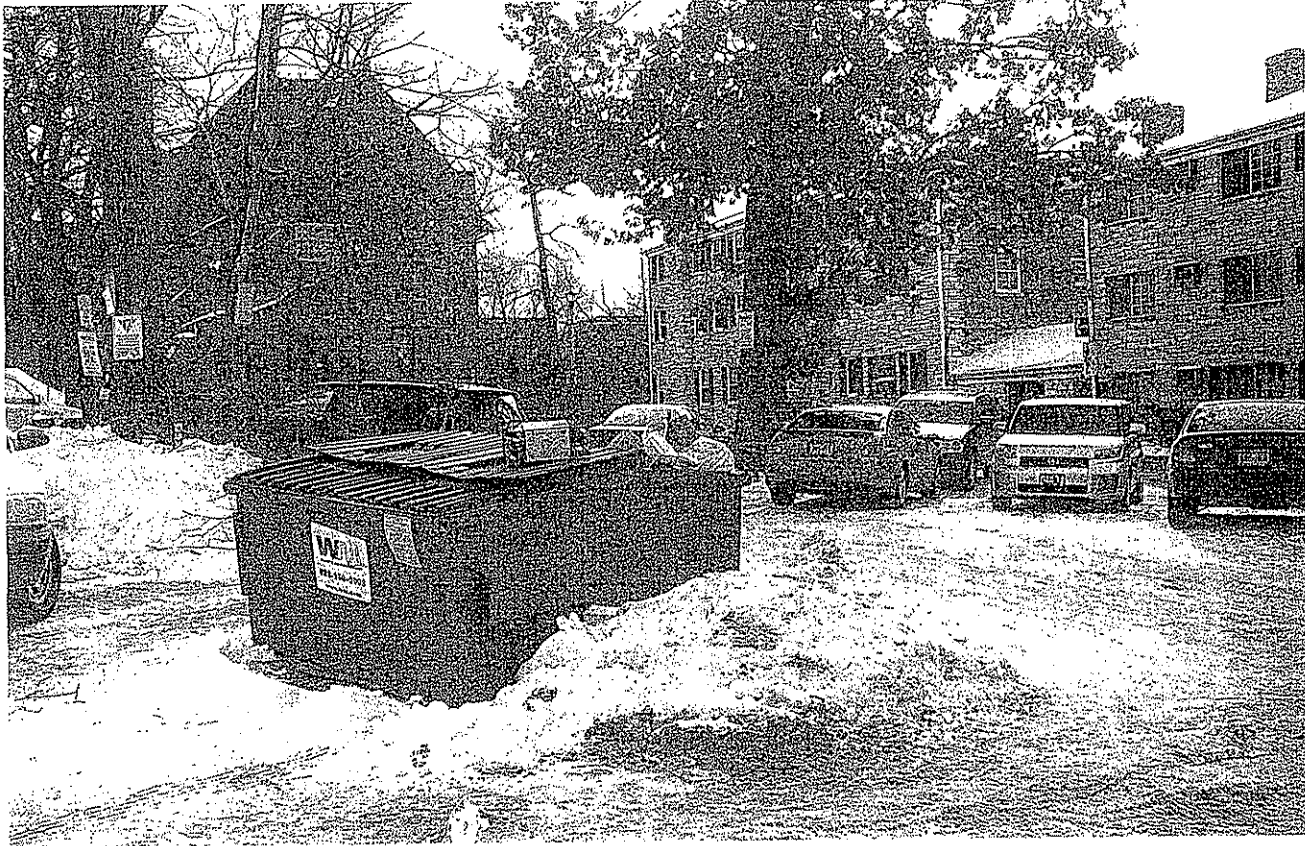
10 - E. Lakelawn typical density and setbacks



11 - Lakelawn Place (looking Westward)



12 - 229 site (current condition) from Lakelawn Place



13 – 229 site (current condition) from Lakelawn Place

Per your request I will try to recap my statements and judgments from the recent Urban Design Commission where the Commission approved the Acacia project. As you know we had rather complete deliberations on the project thru at least four meetings with many iterations in design before we approved the project and rather thoroughly examined many issues.

We were asked near the end to make actual findings regarding the design standards and our motion did make such a statement about the city design guidelines. Personally, I have more background than some of the other commissioners because I had chaired the Plan Commission at the time the Downtown Design Zones were established.

At that particular time the Plan Commission was struggling with several very large and tall projects in the near campus area. The Commission felt some need to have a cohesive vision in making judgments about these and other expected projects that might come forward rather than do ad hoc approvals thus creating standards by precedent rather than by plan. An intensive six month period with much field work in the near campus area followed (it was not winter). The Commission thru noticed gatherings walked the several areas of the near campus and noted the characteristics of the existing built environment as part of the process.

The presumptions behind the zones were several. One was that the height of newer buildings should have context in the existing built environment as most of the existing buildings were presumed to continue rather than be removed thru a clear-cutting demolition and that the highs and lows of the Isthmus topography of the areas should be a factor not to be lost through a level building up to one set height, such as the capital view preservation limit.

Another presumption was that newer city redevelopment in the near campus area was an overall good. This was in line with new urbanism expectations that denser development benefited the community through use of existing roads, sewers, water service, fire stations, etc. Yet another presumption was that newer developments would be at densities that exceeded the older densities both due to our contemporary urban expectations and that the economics of 1920s or 1950s construction were no longer operative. Some such redevelopment had already occurred successfully enough to see that it could happen. Indeed it turned out some of the most unfortunate structures we saw had met older 1970s zoning but had bad design.

As for the Acacia project it appeared to me just the sort of proposal expected for redevelopment. It was going to replace a gravel parking lot. It was massed similar to the older fraternity structures and indeed was much smaller than several other newer infill projects occupying larger parcels in the near area. The proposal was designed for a current urban context in an area where the leafy 19th Century form has been long gone.

Regarding the finding that the guidelines in the design criteria were met was the decision of the urban design commission. These are matters of judgment that the Urban Design Commission repeatedly reviewed before coming to its motion. Below are my own thoughts most of which I expressed at the meeting.

First under exterior design

1. Regarding the massing, the staff report comments were that it was slightly out of scale. The Commission members felt its relation to the existing Acacia House was appropriate and did not expect a contemporary building to necessarily use hipped or gabled roofs.
2. Orientation was a factor in many of the urban design discussions, with most members feeling the entrance closer to Langdon Street was appropriate rather than a central entrance on West Lakelawn Place. However, the façade presentation to Lakelawn Place while not a front entrance required much reworking before the Commission was comfortable with it as a secondary entrance and an appropriate street appearance rather than just the back of the building. The most change in design occurred here.
3. After changes the building achieved a base (of stone), middle and top. All EFS was banished.
4. Architectural interest was improved through added balconies (some decorative and some functional) and the use of brick with some articulation for vertical and horizontal interest. More might have been done but changes did improve under this guideline.
5. Openings, as noted in the staff report, such as windows did respect the adjacent building and had variety. The Urban Design Commission had most difficulty with the originally presented openings on the Lakelawn Place frontage. Revisions greatly improved this façade.
6. Materials changed since the original proposal to the now primarily brick and stone which are consistent with much of fraternity row.
7. Entry treatment was subject to much discussion and both revised entrances give prominence to the Langdon Street main entrance and the Lakelawn Place new doorway. Most urban design members did not argue for a centrally placed door on West Lakelawn which would seldom be seen straight on except in a drawing presentation.
8. The Commission did not feel the site tucked behind the existing building was a terminal view or a highly visible corner and made reference to such in its motion regarding the "non-prominent thoroughfare."

Next under Site Design

1. The semi public spaces are what they are on this constrained site. Though seating and plantings were improved through the design discussions.
2. Suggested changes in the plantings were made by urban design and accepted by the proposal.
3. Lighting details are still to be reviewed. I cannot recall a project where lighting design has prevented it from occurring.

Interior Design is not a subject for the Urban Design Commission, though parking issues as they related to exterior design were reviewed.

Overall the proposal attempts to do an infill project and meets a number of the guidelines for the design district. The Urban Design Commission labored long and hard to improve the project in many ways to its betterment within those criteria for its site. Design is always a particular judgment but the motion adopted reflected the Commission's judgment as so charged.

Stouder, Heather

From: Fruhling, William
Sent: Monday, February 02, 2009 7:59 AM
To: Waidelich, Michael; Stouder, Heather
Subject: FW: Acacia House Rezoning, 210-229 Lakelawn Place, Legistar no. 12473

fyi...

William A. Fruhling, AICP
 Principal Planner
 Neighborhood Planning, Preservation & Design Section

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 215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
 Madison, WI 53701-2985

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 Phone: 608.267.8736 ext. 214

-----Original Message-----

From: bobh@cs.wisc.edu [mailto:bobh@cs.wisc.edu]
 Sent: Sunday, February 01, 2009 3:12 PM
 To: ALL ALDERS; Cieslewicz, Dave; Murphy, Brad; Fruhling, William; cniiall
 Cc: Clerk
 Subject: Acacia House Rezoning, 210-229 Lakelawn Place, Legistar no. 12473

In Mr. William White's letter dated January 29, 2009 regarding the Acacia House Rezoning, he alleges that there is a "turf battle between Capitol Neighborhoods and the State/Langdon Neighborhood Association". This statement is inaccurate and appears to be made in an attempt to discredit statements made by CNI in relation to the proposal for which he is lobbying. In addition, even if it were true, it does not appear to be germane as to whether a building is appropriate for a site. Given Mr. White's statements I think a bit of background is appropriate.

In 2005 the State Langdon Neighborhood Association (SL) petitioned to join Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc. (CNI). Their reason was that, after much effort, the few people who were involved in SL were unable to generate sufficient interest to maintain a viable neighborhood organization over the long-term.

CNI voted at their June 2005 annual meeting to accept SL as a district in CNI. As with other districts, SL has an opportunity for up to four residents to be on the CNI Executive Council. The number of representatives from SL has varied from one to four. Early in 2008 SL decided to work toward reestablishing a separate neighborhood association.

CNI agreed to work with SL in their effort to reestablish an independent neighborhood organization. Their goal was to do so by spring 2008. However, as was the situation when they joined CNI, they have not, to date, been able to establish an independent organization. Contrary to Mr. White's assertion, to date the State/Langdon district has not ceded from Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc., and the State/Langdon area is still recognized by the city as part of CNI.

CNI established a robust process for review of development proposals. This was done with the assistance of a city grant and with input from a range of interested parties, including representatives of city committees and developers. Typically development proposal review is done by CNI representatives through a district steering committee. However, when a district does not have the capacity to establish such a steering committee, CNI has made a commitment to support those districts by analyzing and responding to development proposals with as much input as can be obtained from district residents. The CNI committee that does this is the Development Review Committee,

chaired by Pete Ostlind. This committee has members with considerable

From: State-Langdon Neighborhood Association

To: Members of the Common Council:

The members of the State-Langdon Association are in full support of the rehabilitation of the Acacia Fraternity and of the proposed 229 W. Lakelawn Pl.

The Alexander Company is well known in Madison for their historic preservation. This is a huge reason why Acacia sought out the Alexander Company to aid them in the rehabbing of their fraternity building. The plans of rehabilitation are elegant and provide us with a view of what the building looked like when it was first built.

We think the newest proposal at 229 W. Lakelawn will blend into the Langdon Street area. The brick and earth tones that encompass the exterior of the building won't allow it to stick out, and it will bring more refinement to this specific area where a drab, non-paved parking lot now stands.

The Alexander Company has done nothing but continue to keep us in the loop on both projects and ask for feedback on numerous plans. After we saw the final rendering of the newest proposed apartment building; they hit it on the head. They couldn't have done a better job of responding to what we as a neighborhood association saw as a more than acceptable building for this area. It is in an area where there are buildings from many different and distinct decades, but this building doesn't scream 1980's modern or even 2000's. As we stated before the colors are earth tones and it is what we see as a very clean and crisp design.

Finally, students more and more each year want to live and move closer and closer to the State Street/Downtown Area. This apartment building promotes this and that is why we ask the Madison Common Council Members to vote in support of both the rehabilitation of Acacia and the construction of 229 W. Lakelawn Pl.

Thank You,

State-Langdon Neighborhood Association