

**902 Spaight St.**  
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**October 17, 2011**

**RE: 1112 Spaight St. Demolition Proposal**

Dear Amy Scanlon of the Landmarks Commission,

We are writing to express our vigorous opposition to the demolition of the home which occupies the property at 1112 Spaight St. In short, it is our position that old homes and historic neighborhoods need advocates too.

The house located at 1112 Spaight St. is believed to have been built in 1889 or a few years earlier, making it the second oldest frame house on Orton Park, and the third oldest house on the park. In fact, it is a few years older than the 1892 home which we occupy only two blocks closer to the Capitol.

Let us state up front that we have nothing personally against the young couple that want to tear the 1112 Spaight house down. Having dreams about home ownership is one of those grand American notions that we have also experienced. We do not oppose the idea of this couple residing in our neighborhood, and forming a part of our community. We met and talked with them several weeks back, and find them very courteous. And yet, as nice as this couple is we are not in favor of having an old home destroyed so a new one can be built.

When speaking with this couple, part of the reason that they would like to continue to reside in this neighborhood consists of those “intangibles” that make the neighborhood so charming: straight streets on a grid, lined with charming old homes where people meet and greet in the street on their evening walks with the dog. They seem to appreciate and enjoy the fact that the neighborhood worked together to save the “carriage stoops” where Victorian ladies once exited their horse-driven vehicles. They appear to be aware that the park across the street from the home they wish to acquire was formerly a city cemetery and that historic figures such as B.B. Clarke and his wife strolled under the centenary oaks with their close friends Governor and Mrs. Lafollette. It is, as everyone will agree, a “cool” place to live.

Simply put, though, if every time someone who had a desire to tear down a house and build a new one in its place had achieved their aim over the years, this neighborhood consisting of old Victorian homes, and historic buildings would be all gone. There would be no more charm left to the neighborhood. What makes this neighborhood “cool” would have disappeared and we would be left with nothing more than any other suburban-style neighborhood, which this couple is trying to avoid, just as all the rest of us who live in the neighborhood tried to do.

The very historic nature of these homes encourages us to do right by them so others can enjoy them, as we do, for many decades to come. The young couple which wishes to raise their young family here in the neighborhood are coming to the area with a certain level of confusion, it seems. In your role with the Landmarks Commission, please help this couple to understand that the past makes us richer when we know of it, and appreciate its worth. We do not discard important things just because they get old, and seek new replacements, even if they are proposed to be in a similar style. Authenticity matters. Guide them in your role with the city's organization that is to protect the very historic nature of the city to understand that if they wish to continue to live in this old neighborhood full of some pretty great intangibles, that they should embrace the past, and refurbish it. Show them that it is possible to live in harmony with the rich history of this neighborhood. Invite them to restructure and remodel the old home to make it a vibrant and livable home for the twenty-first century and beyond, without necessitating its destruction first.

The point we are making with this letter is that the history and background of this old house, and all of the others like it in the neighborhood, should be celebrated just as if your grandfather were to tell you of his grandparents. There is history worth protecting here in the neighborhood, and old homes like the one at 1112 Spaight are worth fighting for, even if it means that this young couple then choose to seek out their American dream elsewhere.

Sincerely,

Gregory A. Humphrey  
James R. Wilson