

24 N Prospect Ave
Madison, WI 53726
September 8, 2009

Dear Members of the Landmarks Commission,

I had hoped/planned to come to the Landmarks Commission meeting on September 14 and to speak to you in person; however, the meeting date coincided with my long-planned trip to the west coast. In this letter I offer my concerns/suggestions about the addition/renovation of the property at 2021 Van Hise Avenue. I live across the side street at 24 N Prospect Avenue.

I propose that the current design be modified to save a > 100 year old oak tree growing in the terrace in the front of the property. From the design presented on the city web site it is not obvious that the proposed design would mean the loss of this stately oak.

I believe 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. Some of our oak trees are over 100 years old. One such tree is slated for removal by the design proposed for 2021 Van Hise Ave. This tree grows in the terrace, i.e. the area between the sidewalk and the street, on Van Hise. This oak, therefore, is an asset not only of the neighborhood, but also of the entire city, and not simply of the occupants of 2021 Van Hise.

When Mr. Godding first spoke with me about the preliminary design, he did not mention the fate of this tree until I specifically asked. I am very knowledgeable about the many trees on this property because I helped the elderly, former owner protect and preserve the trees about which he cared deeply. This spring I tied burlap skirts around all the trees and, with the help of another neighbor, monitored and removed gypsy moth caterpillars every day for approximately six weeks to promote the health of the trees.

Mr. Godding told me during our first conversation that the oak tree in question had dead branches and was dying. I visually inspected the tree after this conversation. To me the oak does not appear to be dead. To my knowledge, trees will slough dead branches as they mature and grow; the presence of dead branches does not necessarily mean that the tree is dead. Neither Mr. Godding nor I, however, is a trained arborist.

During my second conversation with Mr. Godding, I asked whether the design could be modified to save the tree, for example by constructing the drive on an oblique angle. Mr. Godding said that he had been told that a large area must be preserved around a tree for it to survive. Once again, I looked at the tree in question and found that the tree is surrounded on three sides by sidewalk, the current concrete drive, and street, all within

three feet of the tree. The tree has thrived that way for at least the 30 years that I have resided on Prospect Ave.

I commend the new owners for their plans to preserve green space and many younger trees within their property. Mr. Godding indicated that two small oaks within the lot on which the addition will be built will be transplanted, although he could not tell me the new site location. I applaud this consideration; however, to my knowledge, oaks will not survive transplantation unless the tap root can be removed intact, or with little damage. The tap root for the burr oak could easily be > 50 feet deep, making such an endeavor quite difficult.

I would ask that the design be modified to use a slanted drive, a circular drive, or have the garage either be detached and placed further east or be reduced to a one car garage so that the stately patriarch oak in the terrace be preserved. Such trees are neither quickly nor easily replaced. I have enclosed a photo of me standing at the base of the tree.

I will return to Madison on Saturday, September 26, 2009, if you have any questions for me.

Sincerely,

Joyce C. Knutson
24 N Prospect Ave
53726

