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February 1, 2013

Mr. Tim Parks
Department of Planning & Development
215 Martin Luther King Jr., Blvd. Rm. LL100
Madison, WI 53703

RE: North Henry-Iota Court Proposal

Dear Mr. Parks:

Enclosed are materials that residents and interested parties of the Langdon Street Neighborhood have prepared for distribution to Plan Commission members and that will be used at their presentation at the Plan Commission meeting on February 4th. We ask that you forward this letter and the attached materials to the Plan Commission members so that they can review them prior to the meeting. These documents are:

- A sheet comparing elevations of the proposed Theta Chi Fraternity House at 210 Langdon with scale elevations of the proposed project showing the long access of the Theta Chi house which would be tucked in between the adjoining buildings and the proposed Henry/Iota proposal whose long element would run along Iota Court. The other view shows the front of the proposed Theta Chi Fraternity House and the front of the proposed project on North Henry Street.
- An aerial view of the subject neighborhood with the small white area depicting the proposed Theta Chi Fraternity House and the large white area depicting the proposed footprint of the proposed Iota Court/ Henry proposal.
- A collage of photographs of the site looking eastward on North Henry Street, as it now exists, and the same scene with a scale depiction of the proposed project inserted in that view.
- A comparison of the proposed project as presented to the Council on June 14th with the current proposal. The previous project is on the right, and the current proposal on the left. The upper depictions are from North Henry Street. The lower depictions are from Iota Court.

- Communication to Langdon neighbors introducing the issue of the proposed project and describing why this project is out of compliance with the Downtown Plan with respect to the Langdon neighborhood because it requires destruction of buildings designated as “contributing structures” by the National Park service in the Langdon Street National Register Historic District. The plan encourages in-fill redevelopment, but “only on sites that are “non-landmark locations” and sites that are not identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District.” The Downtown Plan goes on to call for infill that “is compatible with the historic context in scale and design.” (*emphasis added*)

In short, this proposal would break the back of the eight month old Downtown Plan for the Langdon neighborhood and would cast doubt as to the seriousness of the Downtown Plan generally. The Downtown Plan is supported by Capitol Neighborhoods and Downtown Madison Inc.'s 2013 Civic Agenda draft which begins its category number 4; moving projects forward with:

The Downtown Plan makes a number of recommendations pertaining the Langdon Street neighborhood, the most important of which are...

- 1.) Recommendation 77: Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of contributing historic buildings. (All three buildings have been designated as contributing to the National Historic Register).
- 2.) Recommendation 78: Encourage relatively higher-density infill and redevelopment that is compatible with the historic context in scale and design on non-landmark locations and sites that are not identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District.

There are many more opportunities for denser development in the Downtown Plan. The clear message is, if you want dense development, there are lots of opportunities. People are doing it. Leave sites that are off limits alone.

Sincerely,

Mohs, MacDonald, Widder, Paradise & Van Note

Frederic E. Mohs

FEM: eeh
Enclosure

**Proposed Seven Story Housing Development Adjacent to a
Designated Landmark (Chi Psi Lodge) and in the
Langdon Street National Historic Registered District.**

Dear Langdon Neighborhood Neighbor:

This document is compilation of facts and conclusions reached by long-term residents of the Langdon Neighborhood and the current leadership of co-ops, fraternities and sororities. For some neighbors this is more about an ongoing controversy that has been simmering for more than two years, and then for others this will be the first time they have heard about the subjects that are raised here. No matter who we are, older neighborhood residents, leaders of fraternities, sororities, and co-ops, or those who have been on the sidelines, this subject is important to us all.

Compared to the new high rise canyons along University Avenue and State Street, Johnson Street and Dayton, Langdon Street, with its older properties and smaller scale, is not for everyone but most of us feel strongly that it is special and that it offers not only unique housing opportunities but a special social atmosphere that is as diverse as the people living here. We are the only ones who can speak up for ourselves in an attempt to get things right and to preserve the neighborhood that we love.

The project in question involves the destruction 619 and 625 North Henry Street and 145 Iota Court (commonly known as the Bachelor Apartments). The proposed project will tower over its neighbors at seven stories, dwarfing its neighbors both in height and volume. We believe that if this project is built as planned, that it will substantially damage the Langdon Street Neighborhood that we, and many generations before us, have loved and appreciated.

Several years ago a large building was proposed on East Lake Lawn which, through the concentrated efforts of the Ambrosia Co-op and the A E Phi Sorority, was reduced to a more appropriate size. During that development one of the A E Phis testified:

"I don't know why I care about this so much. I am going to graduate and I won't even be here during construction. I guess I care because someday I hope to be married and when I am married, I hope to have children. When I have children I want to be able to bring them back to this place that I love so much and I don't want it ruined."

I think she spoke for many of us whether we remain close by, or if our college days remain only a memory and we never return. Langdon Street is special. It is not only special to the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, but it is unique and special nationally and internationally.

Downtown Plan

Seven months ago, the City of Madison enacted a Downtown Plan after two years of diligent research and input from anybody who cared to weigh in. The effect was a comprehensive document that contains specific recommendations for specific downtown Madison neighborhoods. The recommendation for the Langdon Neighborhood is attached. It specifically provides:

- The Langdon neighborhood should build on its history as a traditional student neighborhood, including a concentration of fraternities and sororities.
- Encourage preservation and rehabilitation of contributing historic buildings.
- Encourage relatively higher-density infill and redevelopment that is compatible with the historic context in scale and design on non-landmark locations and sites that are not identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District.
- Mansion Hill's historic character is a major asset and establishing a "complete historic district experience" of restored buildings, distinctive streetscape amenities, and a limited amount of new residential development that preserves and reflects these historic attributes should be pursued. The large historic homes provide a diversity of housing opportunities for executives, families, and students.
- Rehabilitate existing housing while encouraging selective residential infill.

Langdon Street is in a national historic district and contains properties that have been evaluated by the National Park Service and designated as contributing structures. As you can see from the third bullet point "higher-density infill and redevelopment" is encouraged but only on sites that are "non-landmark locations and sites that are not identified as contributing to the National Register Historic District." This is important. The Downtown Plan recognizes the charm, character and historic nature of the neighborhood and is careful to require preservation of Madison Landmarks and contributing structures in the National Register Historic District. But look what else that third bullet point calls for. It calls for "...higher-density infill and redevelopment that is compatible with the historic context in scale and design..." So what is this fight about? It is a fight about the destruction of three National Register contributing buildings and construction of a 6-story building with a setback 7th floor on the long axis along Iota Court that is totally incompatible with the "historic context in scale and design" called for in the Downtown Plan.

Not only does the proposed project turn its back on all of the hopes and recommendations contained in the Downtown Plan, making it hard to argue that the Downtown Plan is serious when it comes real development. Worse yet, this project will become a precedent. The development world is watching and if this project were to go ahead as planned, how can it not signal that there is big money to be made by assembling properties in the Langdon District, neglecting them, and then asking the City

for a rescue by allowing construction of a large new project that would overwhelm its existing neighbors.

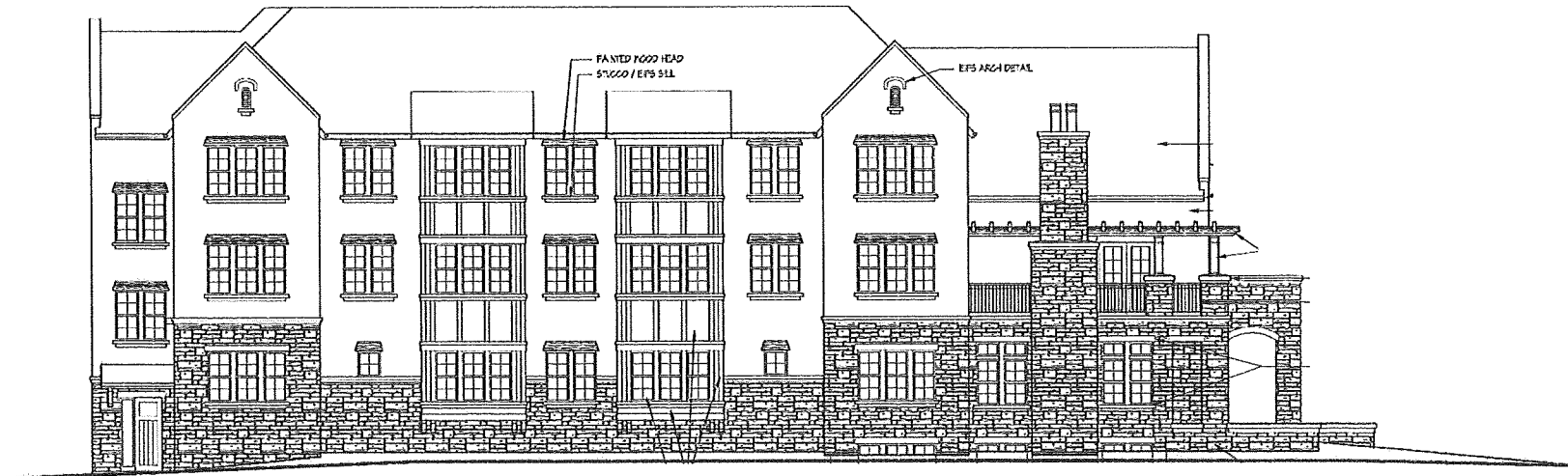
If this project were to be built as planned, it would dramatically change the current values of land versus improvements. Currently, most people perceive that the value of an existing, say fraternity site on a lot, is worth more than just the lot itself. Were this project to be built, improvements on current sites could actually be considered negatives because they would require the cost of demolition if they were to become part of a new project. Once developers see the current inventory of buildings as merely development sites in waiting, the neighborhood is doomed to years of buying, selling, trading, holding, and deterioration that we have been through before in other neighborhoods that are slated for dense development. This is not only true here in Madison. This is an international phenomena that is repeated continually. Our position is that we do not want Langdon Street to go that route. We want to stick with the Downtown Plan.

Let's look once again at what we have here. We have a thriving Greek system that is valued by the University of Wisconsin, along with co-ops offering an alternative and valued lifestyle, as well as a variety of apartment styles. One of the developer's lobbyist pointed out that: "The students deserve better housing and this project will provide it. It will have stainless steel appliances and granite countertops". We would like to point out that people who really want "stainless steel appliances and granite countertops" can get them anywhere but it cannot possibly justify the negative effects on the Langdon Street neighborhood that would be the result of this proposal.

Those of us who believe strongly in the Langdon Street, as perceived by the Downtown Plan, need to commit ourselves to making our case strongly before the Plan Commission on February 4th and, if necessary, before the City Council on February 5th. These will be long meetings but we need as many neighborhood residents as possible to come down and sign up on the green sheets provided for registration. At least show up and sign in as being against the project, but if possible, stay and offer some thoughtful remarks supporting our position. You never know if what you have to say will strike a chord and turn the tide. Following is the location and time of both meetings:

Plan Commission Meeting
February 4, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.
City-County Building, Room 201
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703

City Council Meeting
February 5, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.
City-County Building, Room 201
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703



Theta Chi West Elevation



Theta Chi Langdon St Elevation



625 North or Iota Court Elevation



625 West or Henry St Elevation

12-13
 625 N Henry in Context
 Elevations @ 1" = 20'



Existing View
Imagery



View as Proposed
Image

625 N Henry in Context
Aerial View @ 1' = 60'



North Henry Streetscape As Proposed



Existing North Henry Streetscape

625 N Henry in Context
Henry Street Elevation @ 1" = 24'



Henry St Elevation as Initially Proposed



Henry St Elevation as Currently Proposed



Iota Court Elevation as Initially Proposed



Iota Court Elevation as Currently Proposed