

May 23, 2011

Urban Design Commission
Dept. of Planning and Community & Economic Development
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Madison, WI 53701-2985

RE: Legislative File ID 21945
1001 University Avenue, St. Francis Episcopal Student Center Redevelopment

Members of Urban Design Commission:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed relocation of an existing building and construction of a twelve-story residential building. My opposition is based on detrimental effects the proposed project will have on the architectural character and sustainability of Luther Memorial Church.

As stewards of our facility, we revel in its beauty but also are tasked with its care and maintenance for future generations. Fully integral with its architecture is the effect of natural light within the sanctuary. Shading studies indicate that much of the east wall, currently receiving abundant morning sunshine, will be occluded for critical morning hours. It is the constantly changing play of light, through large stained glass windows, that becomes part of the architecture itself. Claude and Starck, the original building architects, certainly had this in mind when envisioning the sanctuary.

This is not simply an aesthetic issue, but a practical one as well. With many complicated roof shapes and intersections, direct sunshine aids in preventing snow accumulation and ice damming. We have seen this firsthand in other parts of the building, when comparing long-term maintenance issues of roof areas in shaded areas vs. those in non-shaded areas. Areas with significant shading have a much greater likelihood of failure. Simply put, direct sunshine is a sustainable and passive approach to assist in building longevity.

Luther Memorial Church was built long before organizations such as the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) certified buildings with LEED ratings. New buildings designed today are expressly judged in terms of energy efficiency, access to natural light, public green space, and many other criteria. In the spirit of sustainability, we should respect successful applications of these criteria in existing buildings. In particular, we should respect those buildings that are designed for the ultimate in sustainability, by providing useful and lasting service for hundreds of years.

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