

Cnare, Rebecca

From: Patrick McDonnell [pmcdonnell@tds.net]
Sent: Monday, April 20, 2009 10:23 AM
To: Cnare, Rebecca
Cc: brmaniaci@gmail.com; rlinster@tds.net; Richard Arnesen; Helen Bradbury; Michael Matty
Subject: Landmarks Commission tonight

Hello Rebecca,

Please forward this message to the members of the Landmarks Commission regarding item 13960 on the 4/20 agenda:

The Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association supports the request for a PUD-SIP rezoning the properties at 609-625 East Gorham Street, 604-630 East Johnson Street and 303-323 North Blair Street with the intention to demolish 11 houses, build 3 apartment buildings and restore 8 houses.

TLNA applauds the commitment by Renaissance Property Group to restore the 8 houses in or adjacent to the 4th Lake Ridge Historic District on Gorham Street and supports their long range goal of returning them to owner-occupancy.

While deeply concerned about the demolition and replacement of 11 parcels of traditional 19th and early 20th structures by Stone House Development, TLNA nonetheless believes that the benefits of upgrading the housing stock in this area of the neighborhood with high-quality constructed, Section 42 workforce-affordable housing outweigh the negative impacts. The request for demolition and replacement is not consistent with the standards adopted in our Neighborhood Plan and TLNA considers this an exceptional request and not a precedent for approval of future demolition requests for structures from this era in our neighborhood.

Here is the text of the resolution passed by the TLNA council at our April 15, 2009 meeting:

"The TLNA Council determines that the redevelopment proposal by Stone House Development for part of the 600 Block of E. Johnson, submitted to the city on 2/18/09, as revised on 4/8/09 has sufficient merit to be granted an exception to the standards set for this block in the adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan."

Sincerely,
Patrick McDonnell
President
Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association

Carolyn Freiwald
1442 Williamson Street
Madison WI 53703

April 19, 2009

Dear members of the historic preservation commission:

I am not able to attend the meeting tonight, but encourage you to oppose the demolition of the 11 houses on East Johnson Street. I have renovated three century-old homes and worked on successful landmark nominations for some of Madison's notable buildings, including the Pinckney Street block, the Suhr building on King Street, and the original Silver Dollar (formerly Badger Office Supplies) on Mifflin Street. I understand how difficult it can be to restore old housing stock, as well as the difference between buildings that are unique enough to merit landmark status and those that we can simply appreciate as part of the historic fabric of our city. And the latter is what we are losing at an unprecedented rate.

We have recently lost three 1850s buildings: one in the Williamson Street historic district, St. Raphael's Cathedral, and one in the Pinkus McBride block project triangle block that recently was razed for student housing. Gary Tipler has estimated that there are but a handful left in the city, and Kitty Rankin informally approved demolition of a fourth 1850s building on East Washington last year. At some point the commission needs to consider the big picture, or each of our oldest remaining structures will be razed, one-by-one, before we realize it.

We do have comprehensive plans, but they have not been closely followed. The McBride block actually was identified, along with other now-razed blocks nearby, as a potential conservation area. The block in question tonight lies next to the remaining part of this area and adjacent to an historic district. I would argue that additional study is needed before any approval, or even acquiescence, of additional large-scale demolitions is given. And whether the term used is razing and demolishing, or dismantling and salvaging, the net result is the same: one of our city's oldest blocks will effectively have disappeared.

There is a second important point. Mr. Matty was kind enough to provide a tour of the buildings, and agreed during the tour that each could be restored, but that he just wasn't interested. I appreciate his candor, and realize he was not responsible for the state of disrepair that some (not all) of the properties are in. But that is not justification for demolition. At some point – hopefully tonight – we need to turn the question around: it's not why the buildings *shouldn't* be torn down, but rather, why should they?

I appreciate the difficulty in tackling complex issues of development, growth, and preservation in historic neighborhoods. It would be great to see more creative new architecture in Madison, but more cheap housing in an already deflated rental and condo market isn't justification for razing of an entire block of some of the oldest homes in the city. I encourage you to vote against the demolitions and for preserving the historic fabric of our downtown, which is the reason the rest of us work so hard at fixing up our homes and our neighborhoods.

Thanks for your time,

Carolyn Freiwald

new #4

13878 Rooster Valley Road
Spring Grove, Minnesota 55974
April 3, 2009

Landmarks Commission
Planning Unit
City of Madison
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

Dear Members of the City of Madison Landmark Commission:

As former residents of the 700 block of East Gorham and members of the now extinct Old Marketplace Neighborhood Association, we are writing to share our concerns in regard to the development plans for the 600 block of East Gorham and East Johnson Streets and the 300 block of North Blair. We are most definitely opposed to the demolition or exterior alteration of the houses on East Gorham and North Blair which are in the Fourth Lake Ridge Historic District. We are also opposed to the demolition of the Joseph Bayer House and the August Bayer House located at 311 and 309 North Blair Street. These houses were constructed in 1852 and 1886, respectively, of old growth woods, and, as such, are irreplaceable. The August Bayer House is a particular favorite of ours.

As much as we would like to see all of the houses on East Johnson Street saved from demolition and restored, we understand that is not likely. However, we do think that the proposed replacement plans for the demolished buildings are out of balance with both the historic and current ambience of the neighborhood. Placing 83 new units in a 3 1/2 story building on 3 1/2 city lots is totally out of character with the remaining neighborhood. Recent developments in the area, such as the 24 unit Blair House, the 20 unit building at 20 North Blair, and the 23 unit Coachyard Square are much better suited to the scale of the neighborhood. While larger complexes exist and are being built west of Blair Street, closer to the Capitol Square, it is important to us that the area between East Washington Avenue and East Gorham Street, bounded by North Blair and North Patterson Streets not lose its historic character by creeping large scale development. This area was inhabited by the workers, artisans, and small merchants of early Madison and needs to be saved for future generations to appreciate.

While not particularly a concern of the Landmarks Commission, we are also concerned with the fact that while hundreds of new dwelling units are being and have been constructed in the area over the past 10 to 15 years, no effort has been made to provide such amenities as a full-service grocery store, drugstore, or hardware store. It seems to us that it serves little purpose transportation-wise to move occupants into downtown Madison without providing the businesses which would supply essential everyday needs.

While we now live in Minnesota, we still own and have a residence in the 700 block of East Gorham, and thus are concerned that the neighborhood maintain as many of its late 19th century characteristics as possible.

Sincerely,

James R. Gray
Julia H. Gray

Joe Lusson and Aleen Tierney
627 E. Gorham St

April 14, 2009

Re: 600 block E. Johnson Street demolitions

As homeowners in the Fourth Lake Ridge historic district, we appreciate the rehabilitation and restoration that Mr. Matty has undertaken on 609 E. Gorham. That property has been greatly improved. We are eager to see additional homes on E. Gorham restored.

However, we cannot support the removal of 11 homes on N. Blair and E. Johnson, nor their replacement with 3 large apartment buildings. The 11 houses, although deteriorated, embody a great deal of local history and represent appropriate scale. Of the 11 homes proposed for demolition, six date from the 1850s to the 1880s.

Of particular appeal:

1. Bayer house, 309 N. Blair (1886-1887) vernacular Queen Anne with two attractive bay windows
2. Schubring Grocery Store, 614 E. Johnson (1903) a vernacular mixed-use building designed by noted local architects Gordon and Paunack
3. Pearce House, 626 E. Johnson (1867), a small cottage with fine detailing. In better shape than some of the others because the landlord Kozak never owned it.

Most of these homes haven't been for sale for over 30 years. When they sold, they sold in a multi-million dollar package. If put on the market individually at reasonable prices, there would be very few that could not be restored.

The bulk of the proposed apartment buildings is so out of scale with the existing neighborhood that it will create tremendous pressure for similar nearby old homes to be demolished and replaced. Two of the three proposed buildings will extend from the front of the lot to nearly the back lot line. On a 132-foot lot, that means buildings more than 100 feet deep. At 3 1/2 stories tall, all three buildings will be quite imposing, given their width and depth.

While the project changed from 115 to 83 units, the bulk of the buildings essentially did not change. Instead, they replaced studio apartments with 2- and 3-bdrms. The third building was reduced, but only by pulling it 33 feet off the back lot line instead of 10.

We urge the Landmarks Commission to recommend saving at least a few of the Blair/Johnson homes. Surely there is a way to design a more creative and sensitive development that respects the history and scale of the area, including the neighboring Fourth Lake Ridge historic district.

A recommendation that leads to further size reductions on this project and helps it fit more respectfully in the neighborhood, would be gratefully appreciated. A more balanced blending of old and new would bode better for the future of the Johnson and Gorham corridor.