

From: [Bob Klebba](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: 619-621 N Lake St at 18 May CC meeting
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 9:46:49 PM
Attachments: [Klebba Comments on 619-621.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Alders,

I must address Alder Bennett's email of 13 May concerning the appeal of the demolition permit for the AXS. The D8 alder presents many false assertions and inaccuracies in her appeal for the demolition of the fraternity buildings. In addition, please review my attached comments to the Plan Commission which are pertinent to your consideration of this appeal.

While historic preservation is often presented as an issue for the entitled elite, It is important to recognize that the existing buildings at 619 and 621 N Lake provided safe and affordable housing for AXS members before they were neglected and abandoned. The proposed development requiring the requested demolition will provide affordable housing only for the AXS members. 81% of the bedrooms in the proposed building would be rented at market rate. **The claim that the proposed development will increase the availability of affordable housing is disingenuous.**

Alder Bennett cites problems with the building, all of which are a result of maintenance by neglect. For example the engineering report for 621 documents a missing downspout on the north wall which likely contributed to the failure of foundation. Ignoring the foundation failure caused subsequent structural issues. The report submitted by AXS also documented a straightforward procedure for repairing the 15' of foundation. Both the foundation and the structural issues are common problems in older buildings. Yet the building owner chose to not repair it. **The fraternity did not dedicate "significant time and resources to the upkeep and maintenance of the two homes."** In spite of the numerous faults in the buildings cited by the applicant, no condition report has ever been submitted by a qualified professional. I assert that these buildings are not beyond repair and with appropriate care will live to see another 100 years.

Because the applicant assumed they would demolish their buildings, the heat was turned off in 621. The burst pipes shown in the applicant's documentation of the building's condition are a result of allowing the building to freeze without draining the plumbing.

In my tour of the buildings, I saw no apparent issues with the wiring. The applicant's documentation shows unruly data wiring that was well organized at the time of my tour. However, it was obvious that even simple maintenance issues had not been addressed in the last few years. **Mismanagement of the fraternity's housing resources is not a justification for their demolition.**

While the D8 alder may want to change this historic district to exclude 619 and 621 as contributing buildings, the official plan for the historic preservation of the Langdon Street neighborhood includes all of the Langdon Street Historic District. This plan is not controversial, regardless of what Lehrke and Davidson, AXS's paid consultants, think. **These buildings not only remain integral to the historic district but define the front edge of the district.**

You will hear many testify about the good things that the fraternity does for the student community. As a chemist trained at UW-Madison I was well aware of the work of AXS. However, none of this testimony at the Plan Commission was germane to the issues of allowing the demolition of contributing buildings in an historic district.

I appreciate Alder Bennett's energy in her promotion of the applicant's proposal, however **she is also promoting the demolition of an important part of our city's historic fabric**

and its replacement with mostly market-rate, off-campus student housing.

The Landmarks Commission recommended unanimously that *“the buildings at 619 N Lake Street and 621 N Lake Street have very significant historic value based on architectural and historic significance as noted in the 2018 Langdon Neighborhood Character Study and property files at the State Historic Preservation Office, the significant integrity they retain, their status as contributing structures in the Langdon Street National Register Historic District, and their serving as a gateway to the Langdon Street National Register Historic District and therefore having prominence in the overall district.”*

The Planning Division staff report stated, *“Staff does not believe the demolition standards can be found met. Specifically, staff believe the proposal does not meet the standards of approval regarding the proposed demolition's compatibility with the adopted Downtown Plan [per 28.185(7)(a)(2) MGO] and regarding the report of the City's historic preservation planner and the report submitted by the Landmarks Commission [per 28.185(7)(a)(4) MGO].”*

Pertaining to the proposed market-rate apartment building, the same report states, *“Staff also believes the conditional use approval standards cannot be found met, specifically with regards to the proposal's consistency with the recommendations of the Downtown Plan.”*

The Plan Commission voted unanimously to deny the demolition permit. I strongly urge you to uphold their well considered decision and not to allow contributing buildings in an historic district to be demolished, just because the owner has neglected their maintenance.

Sincerely, Bob Klebba

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Bob Klebba he him his
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Affirmative Action Commission

City-County Building, Room 523
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703
Phone: (608) 266-4910 | Fax: (608) 266-6514
dcr@cityofmadison.com
cityofmadison.com/civil-rights

April 22, 2021

Members of the Common Council,

The Affirmative Action Commission works to ensure that the City of Madison acts in accordance with its values and ensures that the public good is achieved through a variety of measures. We are well versed and are subject matter experts in the issues impacting our community related to construction and development, as well as the disparities that exist within our community in these areas. Within our ranks are longtime Madisonians, living in neighborhoods across the city, who are housing advocates, labor leaders, activists from communities of color, and attorneys.

It is for this reason that we urge you to approve two important policies that will ensure that our community advances racial equity and social justice, and that the City of Madison take strong action to right historical wrongs.

The first are the proposed zoning changes. The second is the homeless shelter.

Zoning Changes

The Affirmative Action Commission fully supports the zoning changes before the Common Council. As many others have said, these zoning changes are a direct result of the Imagine Madison Comprehensive Plan, where the City of Madison engaged in one of its most robust public engagement efforts to date. Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT), immigrant, and many more diverse and historically disenfranchised communities worked hard to engage their communities and provide the city invaluable feedback. To set aside the zoning recommendations and disregard the input of our community will continue a traumatizing pattern of soliciting feedback from historically marginalized communities only to completely disregard their thoughtful feedback. We simply cannot continue to do this if we wish to further the community's rightful calls for equity and justice.

Another origin of these recommended changes come directly from an equity impact analysis of the Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Study. After this Study was completed, an equity analysis was completed and the first recommendation was to implement zoning changes that would benefit historically marginalized groups. It is clear that the current zoning code disproportionately harms communities of color as well as communities of lower incomes.

We understand that these zoning changes are also opposed due to the perception that neighborhood residents will not be able to provide input regarding developments going in to their community, therefore potentially decreasing public participation and benefitting developers. We fear historically marginalized communities' housing needs are being given less

importance in this argument than the desires of privileged neighborhoods advocating to keep their neighborhoods majority single family. We must remember that these proposed changes resulted from robust public participation of historically marginalized groups. As a community, it is time to equitably listen to our residents and their needs. It is time to put everyone's need for housing above the desires for some communities to stay homogenous.

We also understand that some have claimed that these ordinance changes will disproportionately benefit developers. We believe this will not be the case. The main reason for this, again, is the origin of these recommendations. There will also be other beneficiaries of these policy changes. While developers will likely build the housing, those who need affordable housing will have greater access to it in more neighborhoods. Additionally, in accordance with the Affirmative Action Commission's work, this housing growth will provide opportunities for developers that come from historically marginalized communities. We should be creating opportunities for these developers to build wealth, and this type of small development opportunity increases their chances to get in to this market. At the same time, we must reject resistance to this policy based in the fears of those most privileged in Madison being confronted with sharing their neighborhoods with those from different backgrounds.

Finally, we cannot forget the very real historical context of housing, segregation, and the impact of redlining in our community. We should all be well aware that housing segregation, sanctioned by red lining in the early to mid-twentieth century, has continued to exacerbate racial and wealth inequality in our beloved city. It is clear that throughout the country and in our community that the legacy of redlining, while outlawed in the 1960s in Madison, continues to have disproportional impact through the existing zoning laws. This is our chance to address one of the legacies of historical discrimination.

We urge the Council to take this opportunity to adopt this policy in alignment with all of our community's needs.

Homeless Shelter

We are extremely dismayed by the baseless, discriminatory, and painful public arguments against this shelter. They rely on stereotypes about homeless people being dangerous and/or criminals, which is extremely disappointing. We must be better. We must do better.

Most concerning is the scarcity mindset present in the arguments against the homeless shelter that pit homeless people against small businesses owned by BIPOC in the area. We have enough resources, time, energy, and support for both of these communities if located in close proximity. We also must remember the societal oppression that cause BIPOC individuals to experience homelessness at a higher rate. Supporting this homeless shelter is supporting BIPOC communities. It is supporting all communities.

We are also aware that a business has stated they will not invest in this area if the homeless shelter is located here. It is time for our city to understand that having a business owner that does not advance our values is a bad investment. It is better for our community to invest equitably in those who need us. Our homeless community needs us. We need this shelter.

April 23, 2021

Page 3

In closing, both of these policies are designed to open up opportunities to people and neighborhoods that need support the most. Adopting these policies will make our community better. Adopting these policies will allow us to live up to our reputation as a liberal city that cares about all of its people, especially its most vulnerable and marginalized - instead of moving backwards.

Sincerely,

Alder Arvina Martin

Awais Khaleel

Damon Glenn

Erica Janisch

Linda Ketchum

Michelle McKoy

Ryan Moze

Cc: Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway
Deputy Mayor Dr. Linda Vakunta
Norman Davis, Director of the Department of Civil Rights
Melissa Gombar, Affirmative Action Manager
Matt Wachter, DPCED Director

Bcc: All Affirmative Action Commissioners

From: [Stephanie S](#)
To: [Martin, Arvina](#); [All Alders](#)
Subject: Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity Housing Support Request - 63305
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 9:52:25 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Alder Arvina Martin,

I hope you are well. I'm reaching out to you, as an alumnus of The Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity and resident of Madison, to provide some information about our organization and hopefully engage your support as we seek to save our home.

Alpha Chi Sigma is a co-ed, professional chemistry fraternity. Our organization has been very blessed to inhabit the homes at 619 and 621 N Lake Street as a significant part of our history. After decades of lovingly caring for our houses, we have reached a point where the century-old houses are no longer livable due to significant structural issues and ever-increasing maintenance costs. The Alpha Housing Corporation has put significant effort into identifying a sustainable, long-term solution for over seven years. Ultimately, the most viable plan for us is to partner with a local developer to turn the two houses into a new, eight story apartment building. Our organization would occupy two floors while the remainder would be publicly available apartments for rent. We can assure you that we've exhausted all other options before reaching this point, including historic tax credits and rehabilitation of the existing houses, as none were financially viable.

1. Our key contribution to the University of Wisconsin-Madison has been our involvement with the Department of Chemistry.

- a. Alpha Chi Sigma offers a free tutoring service, which is offered to any student that is enrolled in chemistry coursework. Students are encouraged to join us for help with chemistry concepts, homework and test prep.
 - i. Our members are diligent about keeping an up-to-date library of text books, chemistry model kits and archived exams to provide to our colleagues as resources.
 - ii. We've received quite a bit of positive feedback from students who attend. This type of professional chemistry outreach is a priceless campus resource, and currently the only one of its kind.
- b. We also support the Chemistry Department by hosting the sales of laboratory manuals, notebooks and other equipment needed for chemistry lab courses.
- c. We maintain a close relationship with the Chemistry Department staff and many of them are actually professional members of Alpha Chi Sigma.

2. Alpha Chi Sigma is active in the scientific community outside of the UW campus as well.

- a. We have participated routinely in Biocore nights and afterschool programs at local elementary and middle schools, allowing young students and their families to engage with us through fun demonstrations and hands-on learning.

- b. Not only are these events hosted on a volunteer basis and free of charge, but they expose students to science from a lens they may not have experienced prior in a classroom setting.
 - c. Students attending schools with a low budget for scientific training or lab supplies are allowed a chance to further understand the importance and to renew their interest in pursuing science.
- 3. Our commitment to the Madison community does not stop with chemistry. Alpha Chi Sigma has always been a community leader in promoting the sciences while concurrently engaging in other outreach activities wherever community support is needed.**
- a. Alpha Chi Sigma frequently volunteers to cook meals for families in need at the Ronald McDonald house, as well as packaging meals at the Second Harvest food bank.
 - b. We've adopted a segment of the beltline highway (which we clean up a few times a year)
 - c. We've participated in spreading cancer awareness by partnering with the St. Baldricks Foundation.
- 4. Alpha Chi sigma prepares young professionals to be leaders in the scientific field with solid core values.**
- a. The core of our fraternal values are centered around long-lasting brotherhood, the advancement of chemistry and attaining our goals as scientists by honorable means.
 - b. Collegiate members are provided a multitude of opportunities for growth by taking on leadership roles, planning events or mentoring other students.
 - c. Alpha Chi Sigma does not allow hazing, bullying or discrimination of any kind. This is strictly enforced and monitored.
- 5. The Alpha Chapter houses, located in the heart of the UW campus, have provided generations of students a safe, affordable and inclusive place to live while pursuing their education.**
- a. The Alpha Housing Corporation rents out 1-bedroom units and parking spaces to students at an affordable price point (approximately 50% less than most available units in the State-Langdon neighborhood).
 - b. Rental is available to both members and non-members
 - c. The Alpha Chi Sigma houses are located conveniently on campus, just a short walk to most academic buildings, student unions and libraries.

It's critical that we maintain a housing option for our members in order to continue thriving in the Madison community. The Alpha Chapter of Alpha Chi Sigma, founded in 1902 at UW-Madison, played an important role in Madison's history and will continue to have a positive impact in many ways for years to come.

Please don't hesitate to reach out with additional questions or comments. We greatly appreciate your time and hope that we have your support as we embark on this major next step for The Alpha Chapter of The Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity.

Best regards,

Stephanie Severa
3911 Mineral Point Rd
Madison, WI 53705
262-203-0567

From: [Bennett, Juliana](#)
To: [All Alders](#); [Badger Herald](#); [Daily Cardinal](#)
Cc: [bhangraj@gmail.com](#); [axsalphachapter@gmail.com](#); [canamadison@gmail.com](#); [patrickproperties@tds.net](#)
Subject: District 8 Alder Call to All Alders to Support 619/621 N Lake St Development
Date: Thursday, May 13, 2021 2:34:27 PM

My fellow colleagues,

I'm writing to you regarding an upcoming Plan Commission Appeal of the proposed development at 619/621 Lake St--Alchemy Apartments for the Alpha Chi Sigma (AXS) co-ed chemistry fraternity. This is a development in my own neighborhood, and our decision on this matter will greatly impact the continued efforts at providing affordable student housing and density to the downtown area.

AXS has been contributing to Madison since 1902. The 619 house was built in 1899 and the 621 house, in 1909 - soon thereafter, AXS acquired both houses and maintained them at the highest quality possible. Over the course of battling natural decay and constant repairs, the houses have fallen into irreparable disarray. Displayed in the [photos](#) and livestream video (see District 8 Alder Instagram for video), you can witness foundational issues, burst pipes, broken boilers, exposed wiring, and outdated plumbing systems that have made the homes an uninhabitable health hazard. Notably, the North wall of the 621 N Lake St house is bowing into itself at an exponentially fast pace. Supported by merely four expired beams, the house is at the end of the line. The question you have to ask yourself is if you want to displace this historic fraternity and let this property fall into further disrepair or give AXS the opportunity to redevelop their home at its founding location.

I urge all my colleagues in Common Council to support Alpha Chi Sigma's fantastic alternative proposal to approve 619-621 N Lake St houses for demolition and redevelopment of a mixed use, apartment complex. The proposal is strongly supported by [the neighborhood](#), brings much needed affordable housing and density to the area, supports a local Madisonian developer, and preserves the fraternity's place in the downtown area.

Last year, the Plan Commission placed the [619-621 N Lake St proposal on file](#) for not meeting [demolition](#) and [conditional use](#) standards, largely based on a controversial understanding of historical preservation. Although the houses are identified as contributing structures under the

National Register Historic District, both [Jennifer Lehrke and Rowan Davidson](#), authors of the Historic Preservation Plan that the Landmarks Commission, City Council, and Plan Commission adopted in Spring 2020, determined these houses should no longer be considered as the contributing historic structures in the Langdon Neighborhood. They voiced strong support for the 619-621 N Lake St proposal. The two houses are not identified as contributing structures to a local historic district and therefore nothing is stopping Council's decision on that front. Furthermore, the fraternity dedicated significant time and resources to [the upkeep and maintenance of the two homes](#), even though they were [ineligible to receive other tax credits for historic preservation](#). The incongruence between the original Historic Preservation Plan and the updated support from the authors, along with AXS regular upkeep prove that the houses were simply not built to last over a century and therefore, the Landmarks Commission made a grave error in their recommendation to Plan Commission to not approve the proposal.

The neighborhood has gone through significant change over the past years, including the approval of a near identical development on the same block. In 2014, the Plan Commission approved [Sigma Alpha Epsilon's \(SAE\)](#) partial demolition and redevelopment of their house. It is worth noting this property was in better condition than 619-621 N Lake St houses. The neighborhood itself is shrouded by luxury developments, such as the Roundhouse and Surfside properties, which separate the historic value of this corridor from the National Historic District as a whole. It is clear that this proposal at 619/621 Lake St. is entirely appropriate and germane with the surrounding area. It is unfair to argue this fraternity is not justified in making such requests for redevelopment.

AXS desires the same opportunity the City afforded to SAE. AXS has always prided itself on providing affordable housing to its members and has vowed to continue to do so should the Common Council approve the proposal. The new building—[Alchemy Apartments](#)—will have 20 units and a total of 81 bedrooms, some allocated to the fraternity and the rest to general student housing. Patrick Properties, a local Madisonian developer that has a long, positive history of providing below market rate housing for over 50 years, will manage the apartment complex. By approving this proposal, we'd ensure that AXS can offer affordable student living and density near campus, which is a rare opportunity, given the broader state of affairs that often leaves students out of affordable housing initiatives. **Highlighted by the Campus Area Neighborhood Association's steering committee report, the demolition for 619-621**

N Lake St is both appropriate and necessary and approval of the redevelopment will significantly benefit the community and neighborhood.

My fellow council members, I ask: what is more important: the property, or the people of the fraternity that gave the property its value? Alpha Chi Sigma contributes to the downtown area in more ways than just a building: they are a co-ed educational, professional, and social community that has a proven commitment to providing safe, intersectional, equitable living situations. This community includes not only current paying members of the fraternity, but it also comprises of past students, students interested in Chemistry, STEM-driven groups of students, faculty who support the fraternity's work, staff on campus who are involved in STEM initiatives, and neighboring fraternal partners more broadly. **The community is what we must preserve.** **See attached documents on how AXS plans to [preserve its past](#).

The Downtown Plan calls on building upon its “history as a traditional student neighborhood, including a concentration of fraternities and sororities”. How can we build on this history if we are displacing the fraternity out of the neighborhood? The guise of “historic preservation” has contributed to [the displacement of low income folx and lack of affordable housing](#) throughout the nation. **By not supporting the demolition of these houses, the Common Council would be perpetuating the overzealous and misplaced preservation of houses that have simply long outlived their useful life.** The real costs of not approving the proposal will be Alpha Chi Sigma losing the place they've called home for a century. The two houses will continue to decay, until likely in the near future, the homes will quite literally collapse into itself causing wreckage to the surrounding neighborhood. With this proposal, we have an opportunity to prove our commitment to providing density and affordable housing. Most importantly, we will be preserving an invaluable community of folx of many backgrounds that want to contribute to this neighborhood for a century to come. I call on all of your to **Please Vote Yes** to approve the 619-621 N Lake St proposal.

Sincerely,

Juliana Bennett

Alder, [District 8](#) – she/her/hers

C: (608) 286 - 4484

E: district8@cityofmadison.com

Common Council Office
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

From: [Amol Goyal](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Cc: canamadison@gmail.com
Subject: Fw: 619-21 N Lake St Steering Committee Report
Date: Sunday, May 16, 2021 11:29:55 AM
Attachments: [619-21 N Lake St Steering Committee Report.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear all,

I am Amol Goyal, a Spring 2021 UW-Madison graduate. I am also the President of the Campus Area Neighborhood Association. Please see my message below re: neighborhood input on the 619-621 N Lake St development.

Best,
Amol Goyal

From: Amol Goyal
Sent: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 7:12 PM
To: Punt, Colin <CPunt@cityofmadison.com>
Cc: pccomments@cityofmadison.com <pccomments@cityofmadison.com>; district8@cityofmadison.com <district8@cityofmadison.com>; Patrick Heck <district2@cityofmadison.com>; ELIAS TSAROVSKY <etsarovsky@wisc.edu>; canamadison@gmail.com <canamadison@gmail.com>
Subject: 619-21 N Lake St Steering Committee Report

Colin (and others, cc'd),

I am a senior of the UW-Madison campus, studying mathematics, economics, and classics. I am also the President of the [Campus Area Neighborhood Association](#). Please find attached herewith the steering committee report on the proposal for 619-21 N Lake St, Alchemy Apartments.

A little bit about the outcome of our work, also found in "Steering Committee Recommendations." At the steering committee, attendees shared detailed feedback about the proposal with the architect and developer. Consequently, the significant majority of them voiced strong support for the overall concept and project. Most members also deemed the demolition of the two houses used by fraternity to be necessary and appropriate, so that the fraternity could retain its original "historic" location. A minority of them, however, shared unease with a demolition of two houses in a National Historic District due to houses' contribution to the District's architectural variety. Those attendees did provide valuable recommendations and feedback to the developer, though they eventually did not support the project being approved. Nevertheless, all attendees' opinions and considerations are

articulated in the report.

May I also request if I can please be granted the opportunity to speak to this project at the beginning of the Plan Commission meeting. I have a virtual exam at 7p and would value my academic obligations first as a student. If this does not get to the agenda by 8:45p, when the exam finishes, my colleague, Eli Tsarovsky, will be available to answer questions from the Plan Commission. After that, I will too and if necessary.

In the meantime, please direct any additional questions or concerns to Eli and me.

Best,
Amol Goyal

From: [Frances Ingebritson](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Item #5 - Appeal 619 & 621 N Lake St.
Date: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 8:58:22 AM
Attachments: [Item #5 63305 619 & 621 N Lake p1 May 18, 2021.pdf](#)
[ATT00001.txt](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Alders:

I apologize for the lateness—computer problems. I hope this works.

Frances Ingebritson

From: [Kurt Stege](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Opposition to appeal to Common Council relating to demolition of 619 and 621 North Lake
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 11:39:21 AM
Attachments: [619 and 621 Common Council letter 5.17.21.pdf](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Please review the attached letter from the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation strenuously opposing the appeal from the Plan Commission's vote to reject the demolition of two contributing structures in the Langdon Street National Register Historic District.

(Item 5 on the Common Council's agenda for May 18, 2021.)

Thank you.

Kurt Stege
President
Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

From: brandon.hacha@gmail.com
To: [Verveer, Michael](#)
Cc: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Please Approve Agenda Item 63305 At Tomorrow's Common Council Meeting
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 3:43:32 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Alder Verveer and the Common Council,

My name is Brandon Hacha, and I am a chemistry Ph.D. student at UW-Madison. As a resident of the 4th alder district, I am emailing today in support of agenda item 63305 (Appeal of the Plan Commission action on the Conditional Use request for 619-621 N Lake Street) of tomorrow's Common Council meeting.

I realize that, on paper, this project is essentially converting a fraternity townhouse into an apartment building which seems like a really weird thing for me to be concerned about. That said, let me explain a bit about why I enthusiastically support this project and plead for the council to approve this appeal (speaking as an individual, not on behalf of our department). **The Alpha Chi Sigma co-op fraternity has tutored thousands of students for free and is a huge help to undergrads in our department. As we fight to make our department more inclusive and welcoming, it's only fair that we also do the same for the affiliates that help us. Alpha Chi Sigma needs updated, ADA-compliant living conditions and the Council can make that happen by simply approving this appeal.**

This project also comes with new apartment units, and I imagine that's why the Plan Commission did not approve it initially. There are often valid concerns about upzoning and increasing density in neighborhoods, but the fraternity neighborhoods near the Pyle Center and Alumni Center are not at risk of losing affordable housing, because there is none. On the other end of the block (621 Mendota Ct) you can get a 2-bed unit for about \$2,100 or up to a 6-bed for \$5,100 (a couple of years ago, anyway). The "affordable" options include the units at 625 Langdon, including a 2-bed for \$1,800 . Adding new units nearby certainly won't cause those prices to increase any faster, and would provide more housing options in an already densified area.

As for the historical importance of these properties, I offer a bit-too-blunt "who cares?" There are undoubtedly many properties in Madison that fit well within their neighborhoods and provide a sense of character that helps improve neighborhood pride. Is a dilapidated single-family style home on a corner flanked by a conference center and apartment building actually contributing the character of the neighborhood? Does that contribution outweigh the benefits of redeveloping?

The outcomes here are either a.) a new, ADA-compliant Alpha Chi Sigma fraternity building will be constructed with additional meeting space and more neighborhood housing or b.) a house-turned-fraternity will continue to slowly fall apart until the plot of land gets sold to the highest bidder so that a similar request comes before the Council several years from now.

I hope that the Council can realize that this development ask is a rather simple decision that will

benefit the whole community. Please approve tomorrow's Common Council agenda item 63305.

Thank you,

Brandon Hacha

brandon.hacha@gmail.com

(260) 273-8363

From: [Jay](#)
To: [All Alders](#); [Bennett, Juliana](#)
Subject: Re: 619-621 N Lake St at 18 May CC meeting
Date: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 11:04:59 AM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Good morning Alders,

I hope this note finds you well!

I was informed late last night by a kind community member that Bob Klebba sent a strongly worded message which contained many inaccurate statements, misrepresentations, and omissions of fact in regards to the appeal of the demolition & conditional use permits for the Alpha Chi Sigma properties at 619 & 621 N Lake St. In advance of today's Common Council meeting, I would like to clarify matters for the record.

In short, the main driving factor behind this building proposal is a lack of money within the Alpha Chi Sigma Building Corporation. **If our organization had the substantial financial means to sufficiently repair & renovate the houses, we would have done so**, and this project never would have even been considered. Unfortunately, **Bob Klebba has not acknowledged this basic fact** since the initial application, despite it being mentioned at the 10/5/20 Landmarks Commission, relevant meetings of the Campus Area Neighborhood Association, every single neighborhood Steering Committee meeting regarding the project, the 11/23/20 Plan Commission, private correspondence, and numerous articles in local newspapers.

In fact, Bob Klebba even rejected such rationale at the 10/5/20 Landmarks Commission, where he stated (paraphrasing) that a lack of financial means should never be a reason to disregard historic preservation. Yet only a few days later, he gave this quote to Cap Times reporter Nick Garton in a Q&A article[1] published on 10/13/20: "I don't want to come off sounding like development is bad. It's good. Increasing density is valuable. It's lower cost to build new than to remodel old. The new buildings are more energy efficient." **This proposal is intended to accomplish exactly these concepts.**

Bob Klebba's commentary inherently assumes that everyone has the means to carry out a particular vision of maintenance and upkeep, and that any deviation or shortfall must come from poor judgment or bad decision-making. He outright dismisses the challenges of a limited income and budget, where some months we had to decide between repairing a broken window screen or keeping the lights on. On the other hand, you have Alpha Chi Sigma, an organization and a community that has poured hundreds of thousands of hours of labor, love, and money to keeping their home and keeping it affordable for students for generations, and they have deliberately made an effort to open it up to those who are NOT of means, NOT of privilege, and NOT typical of the cis/white/heteronormative backgrounds that otherwise predominate the Langdon neighborhood.

There is no legal or moral imperative to use or maintain the houses to Bob Klebba's standards, especially when doing so would require financially exploiting the diverse student residents to the detriment of their own community. His arguments are entirely in bad faith, where old buildings have more value than communities or people, and he is

perfectly content to displace the very organization that has created that history in the first place. I will next dive into his claims in an attempt to fully put them to bed.

"While historic preservation is often presented as an issue for the entitled elite, It is important to recognize that the existing buildings at 619 and 621 N Lake provided safe and affordable housing for AXS members before they were neglected and abandoned The proposed development requiring the requested demolition will provide affordable housing only for the AXS members. 81% of the bedrooms in the proposed building would be rented at market rate. **The claim that the proposed development will increase the availability of affordable housing is disingenuous. "**

This is utterly FALSE. Bob Klebba's statements from his cursory, outside knowledge directly contradict the firsthand lived experience of hundreds of members. The houses were VACATED due to imminent structural issues and recurring health & safety concerns (e.g., boiler failures in the dead of winter). Moreover, there have been times in the past where AXS was not able to fill all its rooms with members, and in those instances, the fraternity would rent the remainder to non-member students at the same rate. This practice would not change in the new building. Klebba also misrepresents the "market rate" for the area by failing to recognize that there is a "luxury" market rate and a more attainable market rate for area properties--an upper and lower end of a range, essentially. Patrick Corcoran, our partner, has repeatedly stated and demonstrated that his properties' rooms are at the lower end of, or even below, the market rate for the area (e.g., 621 Mendota Ct). Moreover, Klebba fails to recognize that housing largely follows the basic principles of supply and demand. This development will quadruple the available supply of rooms in the same area, creating stability in the current room rates so they do not continue to increase indefinitely. The housing shortage & affordability issues are not unique to Madison, and the desire of residents in cities across the US facing these challenges remains the same: build more housing so we can afford to live here.

"Alder Bennett cites problems with the building, all of which are a result of maintenance by neglect. For example the engineering report for 621 documents a missing downspout on the north wall which likely contributed to the failure of foundation. Ignoring the foundation failure caused subsequent structural issues. The report submitted by AXS also documented a straightforward procedure for repairing the 15' of foundation. Both the foundation and the structural issues are common problems in older buildings. Yet the building owner chose to not repair it. **The fraternity did not dedicate "significant time and resources to the upkeep and maintenance of the two homes."** In spite of the numerous faults in the buildings cited by the applicant, no condition report has ever been submitted by a qualified professional. I assert that these buildings are not beyond repair and with appropriate care will live to see another 100 years. "

This is a great example of cherry-picking, because Bob Klebba deliberately ignores the detailed information outlined in the AXS Housing Maintenance Overview memo provided for Plan Commission[2], including the fact that the winter of 2013-2014 had record low temperatures with the ground freezing upwards of 8 feet deep, followed by a flash flood of Mendota Ct the following spring/summer. It was after these major climate events, in the summer of 2014, that AXS discovered the foundation issues of 621. Immediate consultation with contractors indicated that complete stabilizing renovations would be upwards of \$1M, money that AXS did not have and could not obtain despite extensive efforts to do so. Bob Klebba's arguments become even more disingenuous when one considers the fact that AXS had just depleted its capital reserves and taken on significant debt to finance the installation of a city-mandated sprinkler system in the

couple years prior, and it completely disregards the fact that AXS had spent ~\$175K in maintenance expenses and ~\$35K in professional property management services in the seven years prior to vacating the houses, far exceeding benchmarks for homeowner maintenance expenses. He seems unable to grasp the fact that not everyone can obtain hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the air to address serious issues in rapid succession. Furthermore, there is no legal requirement nor request (beyond his own) for a condition report, and his assertions should be disregarded, because he has as much firsthand experience with the properties and expertise in the matter as any random individual picked off the street.

"Because the applicant assumed they would demolish their buildings, the heat was turned off in 621. The burst pipes shown in the applicant's documentation of the building's condition are a result of allowing the building to freeze without draining the plumbing. In my tour of the buildings, I saw no apparent issues with the wiring. The applicant's documentation shows unruly data wiring that was well organized at the time of my tour. However, it was obvious that even simple maintenance issues had not been addressed in the last few years. **Mismanagement of the fraternity's housing resources is not a justification for their demolition.**"

This is a complete misrepresentation of events. Bob Klebba never physically toured the buildings. His only interaction with them was through a VIDEO tour in late October/early November (due to the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time) taken on a cell phone camera over Zoom. Video capture, even at its best, is unable to accurately convey the detailed extent of deterioration within the houses, especially over a blurry and grainy internet stream. Alder Bennett was able to walk through the buildings earlier this month and see firsthand the extent of the issues and deterioration that AXS has enumerated, and it is absolutely appalling that Bob Klebba would make blatantly false claims of this nature.

" While the D8 alder may want to change this historic district to exclude 619 and 621 as contributing buildings, the official plan for the historic preservation of the Langdon Street neighborhood includes all of the Langdon Street Historic District. This plan is not controversial, regardless of what Lehrke and Davidson, AXS's paid consultants, think. **These buildings not only remain integral to the historic district but define the front edge of the district.** "

There is **NO OFFICIAL PLAN** for historic preservation of the Langdon St Neighborhood. The document Klebba incorrectly references--the 2018 Langdon Neighborhood Character Study--was never formally adopted by Plan Commission nor by the Common Council. Even more appalling is that he denigrates the expertise of Lehrke and Davidson, of Legacy Architecture, the very same authors of the City of Madison Historic Preservation Plan which WAS officially adopted by the Common Council on May 27, 2020. **AXS and the developer team took the historic context of their properties seriously and went to the very same experts that the City of Madison consulted with in order to get a reliable opinion.** Jennifer Lehrke and Rowan Davidson are highly regarded professionals in the field of historic architecture. Bob Klebba is not.

" You will hear many testify about the good things that the fraternity does for the student community. As a chemist trained at UW-Madison I was well aware of the work of AXS. However, none of this testimony at the Plan Commission was germane to the issues of allowing the demolition of contributing buildings in an historic district. "

To put it simply: this is Bob Klebba saying that buildings are more valuable than people & community.

" The Landmarks Commission recommended unanimously that *"the buildings at 619 N Lake Street and 621 N Lake Street have very significant historic value based on architectural and historic significance as noted in the 2018 Langdon Neighborhood Character Study and property files at the State Historic Preservation Office, the significant integrity they retain, their status as contributing structures in the Langdon Street National Register Historic District, and their serving as a gateway to the Langdon Street National Register Historic District and therefore having prominence in the overall district."* "

The hearing of this project at Landmarks Commission was conducted without proper notification of the property owners as defined in city statutes and before the application for demolition & conditional was even formally submitted. This recommendation should not be given consideration due to this lapse in process.

The rest of his comments are just summary / restated conclusions built upon incorrect information, faulty assumptions, and poor logic. Alders, I implore you to consider the breadth and depth of personal testimony, firsthand lived experience, and knowledge of the many past residents of these properties and to take the appropriate action to allow an organization which has occupied this corner of Lake St to keep their home into the future.

[1] https://madison.com/ct/news/local/neighborhoods/q-a-bob-klebba-wants-madison-to-realize-what-it-will-lose-with-some-new/article_1c699c73-ce2b-5b35-a549-bb6928952aac.html

[2] <https://madison.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8933053&GUID=ACEDE73B-7EE0-47E3-93F3-FC7B3A63EAFB>

Warm regards,
Jay

Jay Sekhon
President

Alpha Chapter of Alpha Chi Sigma, Building Corporation
(608) 279-0465

From: [Benjamin Pierce](#)
To: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Regarding the proposed demolition at 619-621 N Lake St
Date: Monday, May 17, 2021 10:10:48 PM
Attachments: [Statement Regarding the proposed demolition at 619-621 Lake Street.odt](#)

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

From: [ELIZABETH CHAPMAN](#)
To: [Foster, Grant](#)
Cc: [All Alders](#)
Subject: Support for Agenda Item 63305 to be hard at the Common Council Meeting on 5/18
Date: Friday, May 14, 2021 3:43:41 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

Dear Alder Foster,

I hope you are well. As an alumna of The Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity, I wanted to provide some information about our organization and hopefully engage your support as we seek to preserve the opportunity for our current fraternity members to maintain their home near campus.

Alpha Chi Sigma is a co-ed, professional chemistry fraternity that was founded here in Madison over a century ago. The homes at 619 and 621 N Lake Street have been an important part of our fraternity's story for decades. Despite strong efforts from current fraternity members and many devoted alumni, we have reached a point where the century-old houses are no longer livable. They have substantial structural issues and ever-increasing maintenance costs that have become unaffordable. The Alpha Housing Corporation, which owns and manages the property on behalf of the fraternity members, has put significant effort into identifying a sustainable, long-term solution for over seven years. The group explored all alternatives to preserve the homes that we have all loved. They have sought historic tax credits and rehabilitation of the existing houses, all the while trying to address the structural problems that have arisen in the interim as proactively as possible. Ultimately, however, the only feasible plan for us is to partner with a local developer to turn the two houses into a new, eight story apartment building. Our organization would occupy two floors while the remainder would be publicly available apartments for rent.

It is critical that we maintain a housing option for our members – having our own space to gather is critical to the function of the fraternity and provides an option for affordable lodging for our members. The Alpha Chapter of Alpha Chi Sigma was founded in 1902 at UW-Madison. It has played an important role in Madison's history and our members intend to continue to serve the community going forward.

Unlike the many social fraternities on campus, Alpha Chi Sigma is a group of future professionals that was formed to advance careers in science and to provide service to our community. The group aims to advance chemistry as a science and a profession through work on campus and beyond. We have strong and close relationships with many faculty members in the Department of Chemistry and elsewhere. As an alumna, I am proud of the work the fraternity does. This includes promotion of the sciences while concurrently engaging in other outreach activities wherever community support is needed. Our members provide free, drop-in tutoring in chemistry for students on campus and help with outreach programs in area schools to spread our love for science and get kids interested in STEM. Our fraternity members also frequently volunteer to cook meals for families in need at the Ronald McDonald house, as well as packaging meals at the Second Harvest food bank. We've adopted a segment of the beltline highway that we clean up a few times a year, and we've participated in spreading cancer awareness by partnering with the St. Baldricks Foundation.

My personal involvement in the fraternity spanned from 2001 through 2006, while I was an undergraduate student and, later, a medical student. The fraternity provided me with an opportunity to explore leadership roles and gave me skills that I use to this day as an educator and physician in Geriatric Medicine at the University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics. Though I did not live in the houses myself, they provided a refuge from the stressors of life as a student and were home to many of the close friends I made while I was a member. I remain close with many of these alumni today, and I credit the houses for being a place where we could gather and share our love for science and service to the community.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with additional questions or comments. I greatly appreciate your time and hope that we have your support as we embark on this major next step for The Alpha Chapter of The Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity.

Best regards,

Elizabeth

Elizabeth N. Chapman, MD

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Pronouns: she/her/hers

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