

From: [peter.wolff](#)
To: [PLLCApplications](#)
Subject: my comment on the 817-721 Williamson Street item at the 6/1 Landmarks Commission meeting
Date: Monday, June 1, 2020 9:29:46 AM

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To: The Landmarks Commission

From: Peter Wolff

Re: The demolition and replacement of the structure at 817-821
Williamson Street

Here is my comment on the above topic,

5/31/2020

Members of the Landmarks Commission,

I have been involved on the Marquette Neighborhood Association Preservation and Development Committee (P/D) since its inception many years ago, and this is not the first time I have addressed this Commission. I was part of the recent P/D meeting that voted unanimously to recommend that the neighborhood association not approve the present replacement proposal for 817-821 mainly because the proposed building is much too large and would seriously detract from the historic appeal of the entire block face. I strongly agree with the detailed document that supports this rejection, prepared by Linda Lehnertz and signed by other neighborhood residents who have also been closely involved with this project.

This document carefully identifies the violations of several important aspects required of replacement buildings in historic districts. City Staff bases her claim of adequacy of the proposed building partly on two structural arguments. One is that the length

of the street facade, as well as the volume behind it, can be visually reduced by setting the building corners back by eight feet; and the other by claiming that, while the height of the building is ten feet taller than its closest neighbors, this is not a difference that makes a difference - the buildings are “visually compatible”. Both of these claims are considered highly questionable by us. Staff justifies several other questionable characteristics of the proposed building because they are found “in the vicinity”, and ends up by approving a building that clearly would never have been constructed at that time or location.

The south block face of the 800 block of Williamson Street is uniquely important to the district because the north block face has only three usable historic resources. One, at the western end of the block, was saved by the efforts of the neighborhood as part of the rebuild of the entire western half of the blockface. The second was recently rehabed very successfully by the owner, and the third is still in use and will hopefully survive an inevitable rebuild of the entire remaining eastern half of the north 800 block face. On the other hand the south block face of the Willy Street 800 block, the location of the 817-821 property, consists almost completely of usable historic buildings. Any weakening of historic value on this blockface would almost certainly lower the historic value of the entire 800 block of Williamson Street.

The Third Lake Ridge historic district extends from the Blair Street - John Nolen Drive intersection to the Yahara River. While the Landmarks Commission has an important governing role in the district, the preservation of its integrity requires the ongoing attention and participation of the Marquette neighborhood. Successful infill construction in the Third Lake Ridge historic district is not rare. On the south blockfaces of Williamson Street alone there have been extremely successful infill projects in the 700, 900, 1000, 1100 and 1200 blocks. They all involved the

participation of the neighborhood, the neighborhood association and the P/D committee. I hope you will respect the opinion of the neighborhood in this important decision.

Sincerely,

Peter Wolff