

Dear Members of the Plan Commission:

The 700 East Johnson project is at long last in front of you, following a journey that began in January of 2017, eighteen months ago. The development team has worked hard to design a project that meets the relevant city plans, desires of the neighborhood, and needs of the community. As the staff report concludes, the project does indeed meet the 2006 City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and the TLNA Neighborhood Plan's long-term recommendations for the 700 block. The project also meets the compelling needs of our growing community, providing much needed additional housing units with a range of housing options; increasing density in a major transit corridor; and activating street life in our dynamic city.

The TLNA Neighborhood Plan was adopted in 2008, and as stated in the staff memo this project should be evaluated based on the **long-term** recommendations included in the plan. The plan states "the long-range vision anticipates the expansion of the NMU district to the 700 block as well." (See, Note One, Future Land Use Map, TLNA Neighborhood Plan). Importantly, our community faces different challenges than it did in 2008, which was the depth of the great recession. Right now, we face an historically low vacancy rate combined with a robust economy and growing population. That means we have a choice: Sprawl or Smart Growth. Good planning and principles of healthy, sustainable development dictate that density is the most appropriate and effective solution to these challenges in transportation corridors, just like East Johnson.

UDC provided a largely supportive advisory opinion for the height, contemporary architecture, and the pedestrian experience this project offers. They did, however, have some concerns regarding Conditional Use Standards 4 and 9, some due to the lack of knowledge of the surrounding context and a focus on the **near-term** recommendations of the TLNA Neighborhood Plan. The staff memo also raises questions about whether these two standards can be met. Finally, in addition to Conditional Use Standard 4, Alder Zellers' email states that the demolition standards have not been met, although we disagree for reasons stated below.

To that end, I would like to address these concerns directly.

The area around the project site is actually more architecturally diverse than simply converted single-family homes. City Row is one block to the northwest and Norris Court is one block to the northeast. The Matty project (under construction), which will be tucked between this project and the commercial buildings that are home to the Caribou and the laundromat, is an urban, multi-family building form. Looking across Dayton Street from the rear yard of the project site, you can see Veritas Village as well as Das Kronenberg.

The density of this development, at 50 dwelling units per acre, is less than the density of all the projects listed above. City Row is 75 dwelling units per acre and Norris Court, which was built in the 1920s, is 60 dwelling units per acre. The Matty project, currently under construction and adjacent to this project, is considerably denser, at 94 dwelling units per acre, almost double this project. Across Dayton Street, Veritas Village is 84 dwelling units per acre and Das Kronenberg is 65 dwelling units per acre.

The length of this development is not, in fact, more than 300 feet. Each building is less than 130 feet, separated by a pedestrian plaza, which is 30 feet wide, a total of 290 feet. In addition, it will be experienced as two buildings. In contrast, City Row is approximately 330 feet. As for the depth of the buildings, the rear façade moves in and out, broken up by the pedestrian plaza and the patios and also steps down to two stories. The closest rear neighbor, an older multi-family building, is 61 feet from the project while the older single and multi-family homes are between 72 and 102 feet.

The architecture of the building is contemporary, but the form and the rhythm of the building address and echo the historic pattern language of the TLNA neighborhood in an exciting way. The building mass is broken down so that the façade, divided into regular segments, is reminiscent of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, the project preserves five of the existing houses on site and fills an existing gap in the block, blending the new with the old. A pedestrian walking by the finished project would **experience** the new buildings similarly to the older houses.

Reviewed in the context of the **long-term** recommendations of the TLNA Neighborhood plan, a more accurate understanding of the surrounding area, and the architecture and form of the development, this project clearly relates to the "Normal and Orderly" development of the surrounding properties (Conditional Use Standard 4) and "creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or **intended** character of the site" (Conditional Use Standard 9, my emphasis).

As to whether this project complies with the demolition ordinance, we note that the ordinance specifically states that it "is to aid in the implementation of adopted City plans, protect neighborhood character, preserve historic buildings, encourage the reuse and/or relocation of existing buildings..." I respectfully disagree with Alder Zellers' conclusions. The project does, in fact, implement Note One of the Land Use Map of the TLNA Neighborhood Plan as described in detail above. It also reuses existing buildings by relocating them not just on East Johnson but also on East Gorham, thereby protecting the character of both streets.

Despite seven steering committee meetings, two meetings with the TLNA Council, and the extensive changes made in response to the feedback we heard during that process, the TLNA Council ignored long term goals, seizing on near term goals only. In addition, as you can see from the numerous and thoughtful letters of support, there are many who are not in agreement with the Council. These supporters have a more holistic view of the neighborhood's growth and development **and** the needs of the Madison community for the long term. The supporters understand the value of increasing the number of new units (which will be ADA accessible and energy efficient) to accommodate the on-going need for more housing, while at the same time preserving five of the original houses on site and two others on a long vacant site on East Gorham. Supporters would like to see the extension of East Johnson's commercial district, as recommended in the TLNA Neighborhood Plan, increasing the number of neighborhood amenities and creating an active streetscape with dynamic place-making.

I strongly urge you to support this project.

Respectfully,

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