

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: November 26, 2012

TITLE: 619, 625 Henry Street, 140, 145 Iota Court – Construct “the Waterfront” a 7-story student housing development adjacent to a designated landmark (Psi Chi Lodge) and in the Langdon Street National Register Historic District. 2nd Ald. District. Contact: J. Randy Bruce (28348)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Amy Scanlon, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: November 26, 2012

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Erica Gehrig, Vice Chair; Jason Fowler, David McLean, Marsha Rummel, and Michael Rosenblum. Stu Levitan and Christina Slattery were excused. Rummel left after Item 4.

SUMMARY:

Randy Bruce, 7601 University Avenue, representing Palisades LLC, appearing in support and wishing to speak. Mr. Bruce briefly presented the proposed project. Mr. Bruce described setbacks, building articulation and stepbacks, site circulation, building layout and circulation, redevelopment of Langdon Lane, Cliffdwellers improvements, 150 Langdon renovation scope, building heights/stories, building materials, and architectural style.

Jason Tish, 2714 Lafollette Avenue, representing Madison Trust for Historic Preservation, appearing in opposition and wishing to speak. Mr. Tish emphasized the negative impact of the demolition of 3 adjacent buildings that are contributing to the National Historic District. Mr. Tish noted that a historic district is evaluated as a summation of its individual parts. The integrity and character of a historic district is necessary to convey its importance. Mr. Tish requested that the Landmarks Commission support the themes of the staff report and advise the Plan Commission on the issues.

Fred Mohs, 512 Wisconsin Avenue, appearing in opposition and wishing to speak. Mr. Mohs explained he lives nearby and is a member of the Psi Chi Fraternity. Mr. Mohs explained that the fraternity has maintained the adjacent landmark building and that the building has served as a source of pride for the fraternity. Mr. Mohs explained that he is concerned that the owners have allowed these buildings to fall into disrepair and that this project will set a precedent. Mr. Mohs explained that in a previous plan, the student residential structures were allowed to be constructed on University Avenue so that the Langdon area could retain its unique character.

Mr. Mohs stated that the proposed development is too large for the district and buildings of this size will negatively impact the neighborhood and the historic district.

Staff briefly explained the differences between a National Register Historic District and a local historic district.

Stephanie Stender, 601 North Henry, representing Kappa Kappa Gamma, Panhellenic House Corporation Board, appearing in opposition and wishing to speak. Ms. Stender explained that the Kappa Kappa Gamma building, at the corner of Henry and Langdon, was constructed in 1926 as designed by Frank Riley in the South African Dutch Colonial style specifically for the Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. Panhellenic House Corporation Board includes all of the historic sorority buildings in the Langdon district. Ms. Stender explained that the organizations are opposed to this development due to the potential dilution of the unique character of the neighborhood and to the negative impact that it will have on a historic district that has National importance.

Ms. Stender explained that they are also opposed to the demolition of three contributing structures, the mass and height of the proposed building, and the increased traffic and safety issues that the proposed development would bring. Ms. Stender explained that the sororities in the area have made a commitment to this neighborhood by investing in the maintenance of historic buildings as attractive alternatives to high rise residential structures.

Benjamin Pierce, 556 State Street #10, appearing in opposition and wishing to speak. Mr. Pierce explained that as an alumnus of Nottingham Co-op, he is concerned about the practice of approximating the traditional style of historic buildings in new construction, the use of the potential improvements to the Cliffdwellers and to 150 Langdon as leverage for flexible new development, the continuation of the development of intrusions into a cohesive neighborhood character, and the process that has been used on this project and others to have public meetings related to new development in this city. Mr. Pierce stated that he opposes this proposed development.

Tim Morgan, 146 Langdon Street, appearing in opposition and wishing to speak. Mr. Morgan explained that he is a resident of Nottingham Co-op. Mr. Morgan explained that a portion of the proposed site improvements affect access to the driveway. Mr. Morgan explained that Nottingham was designed by Clarence Shepard, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright, in the Mediterranean Revival Style. Mr. Shepard was an architect that practiced in Kansas City where he designed 600 building in the Prairie Style. Mr. Morgan surmises that Shepard was familiar with the Langdon area, possibly due to the connection with Frank Lloyd Wright, and was inspired by the architecture of the area including the buildings proposed for demolition. Mr. Morgan explained that he does not appreciate the design and size of the proposed building when the design and size of the existing buildings are appropriate to the historic context.

Rosenblum asked Randy Bruce for the square footage of the proposed building. Mr. Bruce explained that the footprint is approximately 17,000 square feet.

Attorney David Sparer, 16 North Carroll Street, representing Nottingham Cooperative, appearing in neither support nor opposition but wishing to speak. Attorney Sparer explained he represents Nottingham Co-op as a corporation that is concerned about this development. He explained that Langdon Lane is privately owned and the Co-op residents access their parking area from Iota Court. This issue will need to be resolved before any improvements or development can occur in the area and the resolution may affect the design.

Alex Chelesnik, 601 North Henry, appearing in opposition but not wishing to speak.

Jason Batten, 2106 Sheridan Drive, appearing in support and available to answer questions.

Chris Houden, 6417 Normandy Lane, appearing in support but not wishing to speak.

Randy Bruce explained that the owners maintain the properties, but the buildings were designed with issues that are not functional or safe for the residents based on modern standards. Mr. Bruce noted the single central stair and resulting jump platforms and small kitchens and baths as significant issues of functional obsolescence.

Rummel asked Mr. Bruce to clarify the number of stories in the proposed development. Mr. Bruce explained that the Downtown Plan describes the method for determining stories from the highest point of the site. From this point, there are seven stories plus a penthouse. As grade drops across the site, more of the lower level of the building is exposed.

Rosenblum explained that he finds that the proposed building is massive and is not compatible with the neighborhood in mass or scale and would negatively impact the adjacent landmark. Rosenblum stated that he appreciates the articulation of the building to help reduce its size, but it is still too big. He concurs with the comments in the staff report.

McLean explained that he agrees with the comments in the staff report. He stated that the proposed building would be good in another location in the city, but that it is not appropriate in this context. McLean stated that the existing smaller buildings create depth and layers that are consistent with the character of the neighborhood.

Rummel explained that there is an intimate quality in the neighborhood that would dramatically change with the proposed development. Rummel also explained that the building is a good building, but it is in the wrong location. Rummel stated that the proposed building would be visually intrusive to the context and the adjacent landmark.

Fowler stated that he agreed with the other comments and wanted to emphasize that the building is too large for this location.

Rosenblum stated that it is difficult to allow the demolition of three neighboring, contributing structures regardless of the development potential.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Rosenblum, seconded by McLean, to provide the staff report of November 26, 2012 in its entirety to the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission as the advisory opinion of the Landmarks Commission. The motion passed by voice vote/other.