

## AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

---

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** April 27, 2015

**TITLE:** 906-910 Williamson Street – Third  
Lake Ridge Historic District –  
Demolition of existing building and  
construction of a new 4-story apartment  
building. 6<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist.  
Contact: Randy Bruce

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Amy Scanlon, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** April 27, 2015

**ID NUMBER:**

---

Members present were: Erica Fox Gehrig, Chair; Christina Slattery, Jason Fowler, Marsha Rummel, and Michael Rosenblum.

### SUMMARY:

Gehrig opened the public hearing

Randy Bruce, representing the owner, Louis Fortis, registered in support and wishing to speak. Bruce briefly explained the project. He explained that the Williamson Street BUILD plan identifies the site on the corner of Paterson & Willy St as one appropriate for redevelopment. He also explained the preferred setback on the upper levels (3 stories on Willy Street, stepping back to 4 stories) is consistent with Williamson St BUILD plan and that after many neighborhood meetings, the project team made many adjustments to design drawings. Bruce explained that the neighborhood is concerned about saving the tree on the corner of Paterson and Willy St so they moved the building mass from the corner which provided space for the tree and breathing room for the corner itself. Bruce explained that the massing pulls the height to middle of the block and away from Williamson St. The project team chose very traditional appearance and materials on the front side of the building and a more industrial feel along the back side. The neighborhood thought there was too much metal siding and would prefer a masonry façade so the project team changed the whole back piece to masonry. The project team also used a different window pattern on the industrial piece to purposely create a modern and eclectic feel. The staff report suggests that barrel shaped roof is not appropriate, but this element received a positive reaction from the neighborhood. Bruce explained that the project team reviewed building heights and volumes and how the proposed building relates to the surrounding areas. On the corner of Paterson and Willy, their bldg is 30' high; surrounding buildings are 29'7", so it's slightly taller. Other buildings are predominantly two stories. Top of barrel shaped piece is 52' high and then the back piece is 49' high. That compares to the bldg in back at 41.5'. In terms of volumes, the buildings range between about 104,000 cubic feet; 215,000 cubic feet; and 135,000 cubic feet. Bruce explained that the proposed building works in this collection of masses.

Janine Glaeser, registering in support and wishing to speak. Glaeser spoke of sustainability issues, green building, insulation and windows, green roof, rain water harvesting and solar opportunities. She explained that they are willing to work with the residents on a recycling plan.

Ken Saiki, Ken Saiki Design, registering in support and wishing to speak. Mr. Saiki said they met with the Landmarks Commission, the neighborhood association, P&D and MNA. Saiki explained that this project will benefit the neighboring property owner. They didn't find any recorded easements that allow access to the existing parking behind the Cha Cha building. If the proposed building was built to the property line, there would not be a compliant parking lot area so they worked with Chris Warren and made the suggestion to memorialize the access to this parking lot and set the bldg back far enough that would allow it to be a legal parking lot with permanent access. The building that is being requested for demolition has been neglected for years. Saiki explained that the project team has been working with neighborhood to do something of quality on this site.

Louis Fortis, registering in support and wishing to speak. Fortis explained that he lives in the Third Lake Ridge historic district and that the neighborhood plan indicates that this property should be improved. He explained that there have been multiple meetings with MNA and other individuals about this project. MNA is concerned with lack of affordable housing. The project team reached out to Jim O'Keefe (City of Madison) regarding affordable housing and discussed a new buy-down program to allow for low-income housing.

John Coleman, representing the Marquette Neighborhood Association (MNA), registering in opposition, and wishing to speak. Coleman was asked by MNA to convey their concerns. Affordable housing is important to the neighborhood. A viable building should only be demolished under extreme circumstances and the house proposed for demolition is in better condition than many houses and was recently assessed at \$250,000. Fundamentally there is nothing wrong with the house. The house at 912 would be orphaned by the demolition of 906 Williamson Street. The proposed is not an exceptional project that would justify the demolition in a historic district. The proposed project does not allow affordable housing or green space. The MNA voted to oppose demolition of this building because it has historic significance and contributes to the fabric of the neighborhood. Coleman explained that he served on the BUILD Committee and from his understanding of the plan, the proposed project would need more than one floor of parking to be qualified for bonus stories (page 33 of the BUILD plan). It could also qualify if it provided affordable housing or if it preserved a historic structure within the immediate neighborhood.

David Lohrentz, registering in support and wishing to speak. Lohrentz stated that he is the co-owner of Madison Sourdough which is located two buildings over from the proposed site. He explained that a previously proposed project was not supported for this location and that this design has improved since the first iteration. The house is not a strong addition to the neighborhood. If this project isn't approved, this property may remain in disrepair.

Anne Walker, registering in opposition of the demolition.

Linda Lehnertz, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. Lehnertz referred to her written statement to the Commission. She explained that under the ordinances, demolition of this building is not appropriate. The BUILD plan relates to areas where buildings could be improved and improvement does not mean redevelopment. Carey Court named after the Carey family that were long time residents of the house proposed for demolition. Sanborn maps show that there has always been open space on the block related to this residence. Condition issues have been raised and repair costs are unknown, but related to other single-family residences, this property has a low assessment so there is room to invest in needed improvements. Lehnertz explained that the brick portion of the proposed building is twice as large as the neighboring property. The mass is too far forward and the BUILD plan shows the height must be pushed back. She explained that previous demolition decisions before the Landmarks Commission have related to specific needs – not just a developer wanting to make money.

Lindsey Lee, registering in support and wishing to speak. Lee explained that he supports the proposed project. He explained that the Landmarks Commission is supposed to protect historic properties, but the City also needs more density to support mass transit. This property is not remarkable and does not relate to a grouping of historic buildings. He also explained that other precedents at 731 Williamson Street were supported and did not follow the BUILD plan. Lee explained that the addition of more brick is an improvement and that the curved roof is a nice design.

Peter Wolff, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. Wolff said he strongly supports the recommendations of the Landmarks staff report as well as the MNA Board to deny the demolition. Only four residential structures remain on the block. The existing building is seen as a detraction because it is different when it is historically appropriate. Wolff explained that the development pressure on Williamson Street is intense and the Landmarks Commission is the first line of defense. If values continue to rise, then other commercial assessments will rise and affect existing businesses and local/new businesses. It is important to hold the line on these buildings in the historic district. Large multi-unit developments have been created and many more may be allowed by the BUILD plan. If buildings continue to be demolished, there would be no historic district left to preserve.

Steve Silverberg, registering in support and wishing to speak. Silverberg stated he is in favor of the proposed project. He explained that the house does not greatly affect the feel of the historic district. The proposed project made great accommodations for the parking situation at Cha Cha and made a significant effort for improved architectural design on the street.

John Rolfsmeyer, registering in support and wishing to speak. Rolfsmeyer has had a view of the happenings at 936 Williamson Street for 40 years. He served as the President of Williamson Street Business Association for 12 to 15 years and has been a strong supporter of building up Williamson Street and increasing its viability and value. He explained that he strongly supports the proposed project. As a merchant on the street, he has found that a new development like this will attract people to the area and continue to strengthen the retail impact and keep our restaurants viable and strong. Also the added living space would do the same. He explained that he is not impressed by architectural uniqueness of the house.

Gehrig closed the public hearing.

Rummel explained that she toured the building and it is in good condition. She noted that all old houses need work, but the large lot containing this house is interesting to developers. She explained that demolition standard g allows the commission to consider the compatibility of the proposed building. The development team has not made a case for demolition under f. and cannot show that it is not the fault of the owner.

Rosenblum explained that he feels similarly. He explained that this is the Landmarks Commission. An existing historic building can be a vernacular example and it is the purpose of this commission to weigh the new development against the loss of a building in a historic district.

Slattery explained that she has a similar feeling. She explained that the Commission can give decisive weight to any or all. She explained that while she will consider standard g, she cannot put all weight on standard g.

Fowler explained that the proposed building is interesting, but demolition of the existing building does not seem warranted.

Gehrig explained that she reviewed the report by Quagliana and MNA memo and remembers previous meetings where the commercial/residential differences on either side of the street have been discussed.

Bruce requested clear direction for how to meet the standards and requested referral to have time to reevaluate the proposed project.

Rummel explained that the proposed mass is much wider than its neighbors and the rhythm isn't similar; it's a larger piece than what surrounds it.

Saiki explained that he is confident the street trees can be saved.

Rosenblum explained that exceptional design is not being provided and that the lack of window alignment was bothersome and did not relate to the context.

There was general discussion of compatibility of massing, roof form, and window alignment.

Rummel explained that she is interested in seeing an option with a patio in middle would possibly work.

**ACTION:**

**A motion was made by Rosenblum, seconded by Rummel, to refer to a future meeting.**

Motion passed by voice vote.