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To: [PLLCApplications](#)
Subject: Agenda item #2, 817 Williamson St opposition
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Dear Landmarks Commission Members,
I am writing to you in opposition to Agenda Item #2, 817 Williamson St.

I have lived on Williamson St since 1970 and have owned my home at 1020 Williamson Street since 1975. As a longtime resident of Willy Street, I have witnessed immense changes – some good, some not so good. I have participated in many neighborhood “charrettes” (community design get-togethers), Willy St Build #1 and #2, Landmark ordinance reviews, countless related meetings and am a founding member of Friends of Historic Third Lake Ridge, a group intended to find balance between the needs of Madison’s ever increasing population and that of preserving something worthwhile from our past.

I believe that what is most germane to 817 Williamson St is that my neighborhood is unique in its landmark designation. All the others are intended to preserve architectural style - the articulation of buildings – the “froufrou.” Ours, however, intends to preserve the RELATIONSHIP between the buildings – the “rhythm between the voids and the solids.”

OK – let’s unpack this. What is rhythm? “A strong repeated pattern” or as I would put it – “variation that produces harmony.” Solids? The buildings. And voids? Empty spaces. Another very important point that is relevant here comes from the Willy St Build guidelines – that bigger, denser buildings should be allowed closer to the capitol – and that as one progresses towards the river, that rhythm of voids and solids should become quieter, less dense, with more single family homes, duplexes and smaller businesses.

So yes, there are bigger buildings two blocks away – in the 600 block. But, take a look at the other buildings on the 800 block – a couple that are already too big – and a whole host of smaller buildings whose AGE – time on the street – should take precedence over the SIZE of the newcomers (one of which was built recently by Brandon Cook himself.) Once another monstrosity is built on the 800 block, that harmonic rhythm is gone – BOOM, BOOM, BOOM - and the rest of the blocks on the street are threatened as well.

Then, of course, is the question of VOIDS –the empty spaces. How can there be a harmonious rhythm between solids and voids when there are NO VOIDS? NO EMPTY SPACES? A 2 foot setback??? Lets get real! Placing buildings that extend virtually lot-line to lot-line should never be allowed in this neighborhood – not if you intend to uphold the ordinances, you are charged with protecting.

Finally, on a personal note, some of us are tired of fighting this fight. In some ways, we were much better off when Willy St was considered to be the “worst” street in town. Even though there are two (newer) developments on the opposite side of the block on which I live (which are way too big) at least they are occupied by stable neighbors – one as a condominium – the other as long-time

renters.

The building next to me at 1018 Williamson was Brandon Cook's first venture on Willy St. I did not oppose it – maybe I was too tired to get involved – maybe I was thinking to give him a chance. Even though the doubling of the size of the building permanently blocks sun I once had, the paint & tar left on my driveway from the project was never cleaned up, and the light on the rear of the building is so bright, the students could do their homework out there, worse is that they are student renters who stay for one year at best. They never take out their own garbage – never shovel their own snow – and never become part of the community.

I was much better off when the house belonged to notorious landlord Ron Putkammer – who at least kept his rents cheap enough that the Gomez family stayed there for over a decade – their children becoming lifelong friends with my children. Therefore, really, the quality of my life has gone down with the advent of the project next to me. And, by the way, what with the Gomez family's 5 children, mom & dad and assorted cousins, there was greater density back then than there is now with a building twice the size as the one before.

In conclusion, I urge you to turn this project down. In its place could be two 2-flat homes, with owner-occupiers who would commit to building a life here on Willy Street as many of us have – not just using it as a pass-through as they prepare for their “real” life. Please do not violate the landmark ordinances pertaining to this neighborhood, and do not allow a monstrous building to be built here that you would not allow to be built on your own street.

Thanks

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