From:	Barb Garrity
To:	Plan Commission Comments
Subject:	126 Langdon
Date:	Friday, March 5, 2021 2:48:01 PM
Attachments:	Screenshot 2021-03-05-13-22-53.png
	Screenshot 2021-03-05-13-23-44.png

Dear Madison Plan Commission Members,

I am opposed to the proposed Hub II project at 126 Langdon St. I feel strongly that the elimination of the 2nd fire lane connecting the buildings located behind said project to Langdon St. creates a dangerous situation for the residents in 130, 124 and 108 Langdon St. I will attach pictures showing what will be the only driveway between 120 and 126 Langdon St. blocked from the roadway and blocked near the bottom by semi trucks delivering goods to houses on Langdon St. I would estimate that these trucks stay parked for between 1/2 hour and 2 hours at a time as they deliver to multiple clients, as many as 7, most times when they park. These deliveries, and many others, take place daily. As the Greek houses provide meal service for their residents 3 times per day, food and supply deliveries are frequent. There is no way of knowing where that driver is at any given time. They seem to park once and deliver to all area clients from that spot. They might be blocks away!! A fire truck would have no access to the houses, each with about 50 residents, if a fire broke out when the only fire lane is blocked. I feel this project, as proposed, creates an unsafe living situation for the residents of many of the surrounding buildings due to the elimination of the alternative fire lane.

Sincerely,

Barbara Garrity Tri Delta House Director







## March 5th, 2021

## RE: File # 63476; Support for construction of The HUB II at 126 Langdon Street

Plan Commissioners:

The 40,000 working men and women of the Wisconsin Building Trades Council is in resound support for the approval of The Hub II planned for the upcoming Plan Commission meeting on March 8, 2021. Our membership is excited and proud to be a part of a project that has become the personification of private and public partnerships working for the betterment of business and community. With a history of compliance to the needed changes to ensure this project's worthiness to the City of Madison and the residents of Langdon Street and the surrounding area.

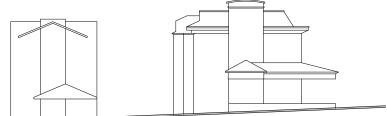
In a time where investment is fleeting communities, unemployment is an issue, and uncertainty exists within every decision we make as a society, our members would hope to see The Hub II as beneficial for our beautiful city, Madison. This project represents more than a living space, The Hub II represents hundreds of construction jobs, with those jobs come living wages, health insurance, and benefits for a dignified quality life. This project also represents opportunity for the future of our workforce, apprenticeship program investments are naturally built in to projects like The Hub II which allows the construction industry to attract a range of diverse candidates to ensure their qualifications as master Journeymen and Journeywomen. <u>A "YES" from the Plan</u> Commission regarding The Hub II at 126 Langdon Street is saying "YES" to a young person's construction career getting started.

In short, The Plan Commission's support for this project shows many positives traits with commerce and government working with one another, a time where civility, pride, and beautification within our community is a desirable outcome we can agree with.

In solidarity,

Jake Castanza Executive Director Wisconsin Building Trades Council





126 Langdon in Context February 9, 2021



126 Langdon in Context View from Carroll Street February 9, 2021



126 Langdon in Context View from Henry Street February 1, 2021



March 4, 2021

605 Erie Avenue, Suite 101 Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081 (920) 783-6303 info@legacy-architecture.com www.legacy-architecture.com

Bob Klebba 704 E. Gorham Street Madison, WI 53703

Re: Context of the property at 126 Langdon Street

Dear Bob:

The purpose of this letter is to provide a historic preservation professional opinion in the revised application for conditional use for the proposed student commercial housing property at 126 and 140 Langdon Street, Madison, Wisconsin, and its surrounding neighborhood context. The property is situated in the Langdon Street Historic District listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and is just outside of, and immediately adjacent to, the Mansion Hill Historic District. Much of the surrounding area is a dense collection of early twentieth-century fraternity houses and apartment buildings possessing a high degree of architectural integrity, a residential scale, and historical character. Presently, the property in question is cleared and open for development. A previous project application for construction brought forth by Core Campus Manager, LLC did not meet compliance with the Standards of Review with the Planning Commission. The recent resubmittal likewise does not meet these standards and should also be denied approval for a conditional use given its scale and architectural relationship to its surrounding context. Projects such as this have become commonplace in Madison, and the ramifications for historic neighborhoods in the city are considerable without a review of the city's historic preservation ordinance.

## Langdon Street Neighborhood Context

The neighborhood along Langdon Street, located on four blocks just east of the University of Wisconsin campus adjacent to Lake Mendota, consists of dense multi-unit housing built from the early twentieth century to the present. The area was first built up in the 1850s and 1860s as a collection of single-family homes on large lots. The listed historic district's period of significance began in 1870. One of the two most prestigious neighborhoods in Madison during the nineteenth century, it was home to prominent political, business, and academic leaders and was referred to as Big Bug Hill and later Mansion Hill. Some of this historic fabric still exists further to the northeast, but nearly all this character is gone from the western end of Langdon Street. During the 1890s, the neighborhood underwent a dramatic change as lots were subdivided and infill housing constructed. This was especially the case between Langdon Street at the lakeshore as additional streets were inserted to increase the buildable land available for an increase in density.

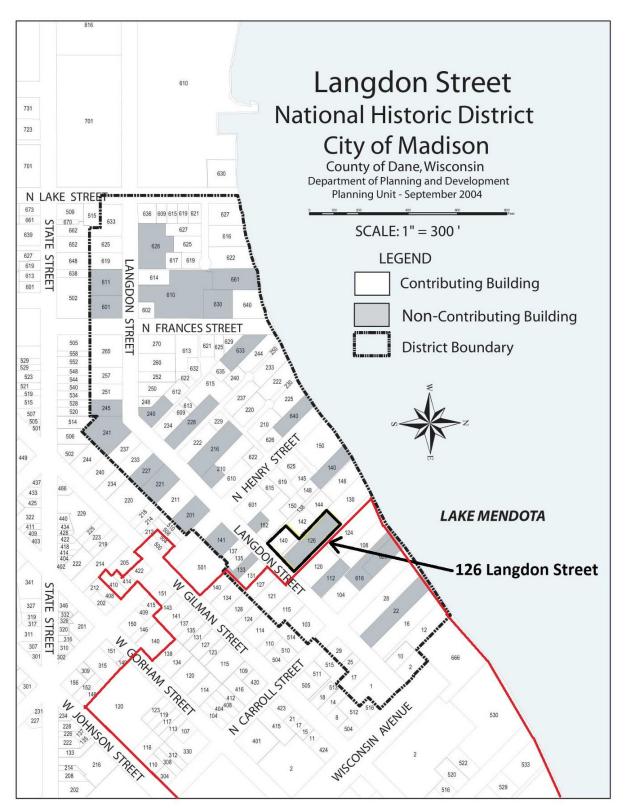
By the early twentieth century, older homes were frequently demolished or renovated for student housing, especially Greek letter societies, which become increasingly popular during these decades as the social fulcrum at the university. The first fraternity house was purpose-built in 1892, and by 1922 fraternities occupied over twenty homes in the area. Greek societies partly grew in response to a lack of student housing in dormitories, and a large segment of the male student population by the early twentieth century

was in fraternities. Most of the fraternities did not own the buildings they occupied but rented them as rooming houses instead. Public complaints about overcrowding from residents were common during the 1900s and 1910s, especially in the Langdon neighborhood. The area underwent rapid change, appearing completely different from 1900 to 1920. Not only was there significant pressure for development from a growing student body, but the homeowners of the neighborhood also sought out new suburban homes on the west side of the city, newly accessible and convenient due to streetcar lines and city services. Nearly all the nineteenth-century homes are gone. Replaced by a denser mix of multi-unit fraternities and apartments in an urban renewal of the early twentieth century spurred by a demand for greater density.

In the 1930s, a third of the buildings in the neighborhood were occupied by Greek letter societies and continue to be to the present. Over half of the buildings in the area have housed a fraternity or sorority at some point in their history. The remainder of the properties were constructed as large apartments or are converted houses. Fraternities ceased being the dominant social force at the university during the 1930s and 1940s due to the depression, war, and rapidly growing and diversifying student body that corresponds with the end of the period of significance for the Langdon Street Historic District in 1930. The neighborhood along Langdon began to see the development of apartment buildings unrelated to Greek letter societies, though the fraternities and sororities continued in the area. During the 1950s and 1960s, the area saw a large amount of redevelopment as the neighboring university grew, constructing new office and apartment buildings, which introduced a dichotomy of scale.

In 1986, much of the neighborhood was listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as the Langdon Street Historic District. The district includes 113 properties, 89 of which contribute to the history of the area with a period of significance spanning from 1870 to 1930. All the non-contributing resources were constructed after 1930, and nearly all the contributing resources are under five stories in height. The district was initially identified for both its architectural significance demonstrating high-style period revival style building and for its history as a prestigious residential neighborhood at first, and then the chapters of social Greek letter societies. Mirroring the initial development of the neighborhood during the first three decades of the twentieth century, when older homes were replaced by numerous multi-unit buildings for fraternities and rental properties to meet the demand for increased density, recent development has continued this trend by replacing these buildings with high rise apartments and office space. Much of this has occurred since the 1980s when the district was listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

To the east of the Langdon Street Historic District is the Mansion Hill Historic District, also listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places but additionally landmarked in the City of Madison. Locally designated in 1976, the Mansion Hill Historic District extends to the west to 120 Langdon Street, next door to the 126 Langdon Street site, only twenty feet away. There is significant overlap between the two districts, and they share many of the same character defining features in their residential scale and shared historic development. Indeed, the 2018 Langdon Neighborhood Character Study report recommended the creation of a locally designated Langdon Street Historic District similar in size and purpose to the adjacent Mansion Hill model.



Langdon Street Historic District. Note how 126 Langdon Street occupies a central and prominent position in the district and is sited away from the locally landmarked Mansion Hill District as well. The Mansion Hill Landmark District is indicated by the overlapping red line.

#### 126-140 Langdon Street Context

The property at 126 Langdon Street and the adjacent smaller lot at 140 Langdon is presently vacant and cleared for development. 126 Langdon was initially a brick two-story Queen Anne style house with wrapping porches constructed around 1890. The house was converted to apartments in the 1920s like the significant changes to its surroundings during the same period. New, larger revival style homes and apartments were constructed in a denser fabric on the block between Henry Street and Carroll Street. It is this historic fabric that was the subject of the Langdon Street National Register district listing. The building remained as a boarding house until 1962 when it was demolished and replaced with a large concrete eight-story apartment building, designed by Eugene Wasserman, and named the Wisconsin Hall Dormitory, was later known as The Langdon or the Royal Tower and specifically housed university students. The modern imposing structure was included in the National Register district as a non-contributing resource given its incompatible age, scale, and style and was recently demolished in 2019. Similarly, the property next door at 140 Langdon Street was originally a wood frame Victorian house dating from the early 1890s. The house was replaced with a brick revival style home in the 1920s, which in turn was converted to apartments, perhaps a fraternity. In the early 1960s, this house was also demolished and replaced with a surface parking lot.

The Wisconsin Hall Dormitory building was significantly taller than what has recently been proposed in Madison planning documents, such as the Downtown Plan, and city ordinances. While quite tall at eight stories, the profile of the modern apartment building along Langdon Street was comparatively narrow and its overall volume considerably less than the proposed project on the same site. The Langdon Neighborhood Character Study tracked the heights of buildings within the district and found that the abrupt historical transition to taller and large modern apartments, while present in the neighborhood, was a small majority of the total number of historic resources. There are twelve buildings taller than five stories in height, comprising only 11% of the total.

The property at 126 Langdon Street is roughly twenty feet away from the edge of the locally landmarked Mansion Hill Historic District. Such proximity influences the integrity of the landmarked neighborhood, even if it is not located within it. The proposed project at 126 Langdon Street is opposite the historic Suhr House at 121 Langdon Street, which is listed as a local landmark and in the State and National Registers of Historic Places besides being a contributing resource to the district. The owner allowed demolition by neglect in 2019, the first of its kind in Madison, based on provision 41.15 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2015 to maintain historic structures.

A review of the proposed redevelopment in relation to the adjoining, locally designated Mansion Hill Historic District, State and National Register-listed Langdon Street Historic District, and the current Historic Preservation Ordinance would find that the project remains incompatible with its surrounding architectural and historical context. While the proposed building meets zoning and land use conditions and is, in itself, a good design and well-intentioned, it needs to be revised considering its neighborhood site. Its L-shaped seven-story design could respond to the adjacent buildings by altering its massing so that more articulated facades resemble the scale of nearby historic two-to-four story converted fraternities, converted homes, and apartments. The proposal, at nearly 150,000 square feet in size, is nearly double that of the other buildings along the 100 block of Langdon Street combined. While the project's architectural style sets itself apart from the historic buildings in the neighborhood, its sheer mass is inappropriate for the character of the historic collegiate neighborhood. In a sense, the proposal is simply replacing a disjointed and inappropriately scaled tall apartment building with another.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing Northeast from the southwest corner of the site.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing Southeast from the northwest corner of the site.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing Southwest from the southeast corner of the site.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing North from the southwest corner of the site.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing West from the southeast corner of the site.



126-140 Langdon St. Facing Northwest from the Langdon St. across the site.

### **Standards for Review Compliance**

126 Langdon Street is located within 20 feet of the edge of the Mansion Hill Historic District listed as a Madison Landmark. The Mansion Hill Historic District section of the Madison Chapter 41 Historic Preservation Ordinance, section 41.22(4) Standards for Review covers properties within two hundred feet of the boundaries of the landmark district. New structures under the purview of the ordinance "shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways: Height, Gross Volume, ...Proportion of width and height of facades... proportions and relationships of width to height of doors and windows in facades, ...solids to voids..." and street facades "shall blend with other structures via directional expression." The proposed design of the development located at 126 Langdon Street is not congruent with any of these aesthetic concerns, specifically the directional expression of horizontality compared to the smaller and horizontal emphasis of the residential scale in the neighboring houses in Mansion Hill. In terms of the prescribed concerns for height, gross volume, street elevation proportions, rhythm, and directional expression in the ordinance the proposed project fails on these counts.

An earlier iteration of the project proposed by Core Campus Manager, LLC for 126 Langdon Street was rejected by the Madison Planning Commission for its lack of compliance with several of the City of Madison Standards for Review of Certain Types of Development Proposals. While the recent proposal does successfully address several of the issues, it does not successfully address all the standards. The project, called the Hub II, specifically does not meet the following standards:

# Standard #4, "The establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district."

Much of the Langdon Street neighborhood, and specifically its historic character, is dependent on the densely packed fabric of mid-sized fraternity houses, converted homes, and small apartment buildings on small lots. This urban fabric extends specifically from Langdon Street to Lake Mendota with narrow access alleyways giving the neighborhood its distinctive character. Combining such lots to produce a larger available building area would alter this character. It is important to recognize that the precedent that the proposed building would establish in this part of the Langdon Street Neighborhood. Such a massive building will establish the feasibility of constructing other larger buildings in the area. Present planning in the City of Madison recommends that the historic Langdon Street neighborhood of fraternities and other residential buildings be preserved. The current proposal calls for the combination of 126 Langdon and 140 Langdon to produce an L-shaped building footprint that is not in keeping with the historic normal and orderly pattern of building in the area.

Standard #9, "When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district..."

The City of Madison has identified the area along Langdon Street as a place to integrate sustainable infill housing, especially on inactive sites, with the existing historic character of the neighborhood. This proposed project does not do that in an aesthetic sense. Once again, the scale is a factor in this considering the building height, width, depth, and overall mass are incompatible with its immediate surroundings and the wider Langdon Street neighborhood. Many of the surrounding fraternity houses and apartments date from the early twentieth century, and their styles and scale belie this fact. While new construction should not seek to imitate the historic architecture, it should cooperate and produce a dialogue with it through articulating facades to make them appear residential in scale and use.

Standard #14, "When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed by Section 28.071(2)(a) Downtown Height Map for a development located within the Additional Height Areas identified in Section 28.071(2)(b), the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans, and no application for excess height shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:

a. The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned character of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the scale, mass, rhythm, and setbacks of buildings and relationships to street frontages and public spaces.

b. The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories.

c. The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the projects and create a pleasing visual relationship with them.

d. For projects proposed in priority viewsheds and other views and vistas identified on the Views and Vistas Map in the City of Madison Downtown Plan, there are no negative impacts on the viewshed as demonstrated by viewshed studies prepared by the applicant."

The height recommendations of the neighborhood state: "The base height recommendation for both areas is 5 stories, but a few taller buildings might be appropriate in the middle of these blocks if set well back from the street." The parcel itself is zoned at five stories with a 2-story excess height allowance for exceptional and compatible design. There are numerous four-story buildings, nearby six-story buildings, and a single 11-story building a block away outside the district. However, the vast majority of the surrounding neighborhood is only three-stories in height and significantly smaller in scale. While the seven-story section of the proposed project is stepped back from Langdon, with a front façade of five-stories, the massive seven-story section does face adjacent neighborhood buildings to the north, east, and west, dwarfing them in scale. From the Downtown Plan, "additional stories are to be used as a tool to encourage and reward buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to the specific context of their location and accomplish specific objectives defined for the area. A smaller building design would be more compatible with the proposed project's surroundings. The relationship of the proposed project to the neighborhood makes the request for excess height unjustifiable.

Furthermore, the proposed project at 126 Langdon Street does not meet the Standards for Review concerning the local patterns of development, aesthetic desirability, or its scale and height. Such a large project, and the accompanying density, might be feasible given changes to its overall height and improved articulation along its facades that embrace a residential scale.



## **Historic Preservation Ordinance Review**

The example of the proposed project at 126 Langdon Street and its inappropriate scale and massing to the surrounding historic neighborhood along Langdon can be understood as a caution. The Madison Historic Preservation Ordinance could address these issues in a more direct and prescriptive way. Proposed revisions to the ordinance, suggested by Legacy Architecture, Inc. in 2019 to the Landmarks Ordinance Review Committee, could have halted the proposed plans at 126 Langdon Street and set guidelines for future development that would assist in producing appropriately scaled development in historic parts of Madison.

Recommendations for the Standards for Review, which relied on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Wisconsin Historical Society's Guidelines for Planning Historic Preservation Tax Credit Projects in Wisconsin among other sources, covered new existing structures, materials, features, and systems, and site concerns. A few examples from those recommendations that may have been applied successfully as guidelines in the case of 126 Langdon included:

## "New construction shall be secondary to the historic building and shall not detract from its significance."

"Infill structures in a densely-built location (such as a downtown commercial district) must be compatible with the surrounding historic buildings—usually, the front elevation of the new building should be in the same plane (i.e., not set back from the historic building) and the façade can be broken up into smaller elements (i.e., may appear as several separate buildings) that are consistent with the historic building and surrounding buildings within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property."

"New principal structures shall be no more than one story higher than historic buildings within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property. To minimize the additional story's visibility and its impact on the historic character of the surrounding buildings, it shall be set back from elevations visible from the street and inconspicuous when viewed from a standing position from across the street."

"The gross area of the front elevation, i.e., all walls facing the street, shall be no greater than one hundred twenty-five percent (125%) of the average gross area of the front elevations of structures within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property, or the front façade shall be modulated with variations in setbacks that reflect or repeat the rhythm of adjacent historic buildings constructed during the period of significance and the spaces between them within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property."

"Openings and the windows in them should be compatible with, but not duplicate, other openings in structures within the period of significance of the district and two hundred (200) feet of the subject property. Openings shall have a similar operation (e.g., double-hung, casement, awning, or hopper), components (including sash, muntins, glazing, pane configuration, sills, mullions, casings, brick molds, or trim), and finish."

"The primary entrance to the structure shall be on the front elevation, or, in the case of a corner lot, it may be at the corner. The entrance shall either be inset or projecting from the plane of the front elevation."

This language would have guided the example to a primary façade along Langdon Street that was broken up, aligned with neighboring buildings, architecturally distinct, and maintaining a similar visual scale. The project could still be economically feasible, but with clearly defined constraints on its massing.

## Ramifications

The Langdon Street neighborhood and its surroundings have already experienced insensitive development. The first wave of building to detrimentally affect the area was during the 1960s, when a series of non-contextual modern apartment towers were constructed, including the now non-extant eight-story Wisconsin Hall Dormitory located at the 126 Langdon Street site. Other examples from this period include the Surf Apartments at 661 Mendota Court, Carroll Hall at 620 Carroll Street, the Lake Towne Apartments at 22 Langdon Street, and the Round House Apartments at 626 Langdon Street; all tall apartments that are inconsiderate of the surrounding context.

More recent examples of development with the neighborhood include, but are not limited to, the Waterfront Apartments, a six-story development completed in 2013 not far from the 126 Langdon Street site that is massive in scale with a broken façade; the five-story apartments at 613 Frances Street completed in 1995, the seven-story apartments at 614 Langdon Street completed in 2000; another seven-story apartment building at 625 Langdon Street completed in 2001; the eight-story apartment at 621 Mendota Court completed in 2011; the five-story apartment at 229 Lakelawn Place completed in 2012; and the eight-story addition to the Roundhouse Apartments completed in 2014. All these properties are within the defined boundaries of the Langdon Street Historic District and some within the Mansion Hill Landmark District. There are plenty of other examples of insensitive development elsewhere in the city that have altered historic neighborhoods. If such development continues unabated, the inherent character of the Langdon Street neighborhood, listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, will be changed, and no longer reflect its shared architectural and historic significance. Arguably, some portions of the district, specifically the western edge, are nearly at this point.

If the proposed development at 126 Langdon Street for the Hub II project is approved, it will likely have significant ramifications for future development in historic neighborhoods in Madison. Such experience will encourage property owners in the Langdon Street district and elsewhere to view the demolition of historic properties as an economically advantageous proposition in the face of demands for ever-increasing density and property values. Developers would likewise see an opportunity for large scale development that does not necessarily consider the historic fabric of a project's surroundings. Lots could easily be combined and non-contributing resources in historic districts demolished leading to an erosion of the integrity in historic districts as already seen in some parts of the city. Approval of the Standards for Review, in this case, would indicate that nearly any development, regardless of scale, would be acceptable and set a precedent.

Sincerely,

Legacy Architecture, Inc.

Jennifer L. Lehrke

Jennifer L. Lehrke, AIA, NCARB Principal Architect, Interior Designer & Historic Preservation Consultant

Hello Plan Commission Members,

I'm a big advocate for sensible historic preservation, adaptive reuse, creative strategies. I'd like to register my opposition to 126 Langdon's current proposal. I appreciate developers' wishes to create infill and density, but seriously, this project is way too huge and in a very sensitive and important neighborhood to campus' history! This building belongs a couple of blocks away at the closest. It's not appropriate by any stretch of my imagination. Sorry to say it but this is a size 13 foot in a size 3 shoe.

Thank you for your time.

Sam

P.S. I am the former president of the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation as well as believe in compromise and bridge building.

Samantha Crownover 2702 Kendall Ave. Madison, WI 53705 608-238-3577 home 608-576-6696 cell

Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible. -Dalai Lama



I am opposed to building the 126 Langdon project. This area already is very congested with traffic- both pedestrian and auto. More importantly, it would be tearing down historic buildings in an area that should be preserved. If this project were to be approved, it would open the door to more big developments in this area and the destruction of an important architectural and historic area of Madison.

Karen Goebel

If you don't have a seat at the table, you're probably on the menu. --Elizabeth Warren



Dear Madison Plan Commission,

As an 11 year member of the Delta Gamma, Omega Chapter House Corporation Board, I have been witness to many changes and challenges in the Langdon area and within our Historic District. We have worked very hard at DG to partner with the City and the Landmarks Commission to be good residents and stewards of our historic homes at 103 Langdon and 514 N Carroll Streets. We take great interest in what happens in the area especially as it relates to the safety and security of our members and residents.

After reading the numerous proposals and reports regarding 126 Langdon, I have a myriad of concerns with the proposal as it currently stands, many of which mirror what has been outlined in staff reports and among other speakers/letters from community members recorded at previous meetings. While I support development of the vacant lot, I want it to be done well and in such a way that honors the neighborhood. The current plan does not meet that threshold.

Further, I am not impressed by what I see from Core Spaces regarding other projects they have done. It seems to be an issue of profit over sustainability.

I urge the Plan Commission to listen thoughtfully and carefully to the concerns continuing to be brought forward by staff and by other residents, especially the residents and individuals who have long term interest in the area such as homeowners, House Corporation boards, long time landlords, etc. We want the final project to be something appealing and acceptable to those who will be in the neighborhood beyond one year of a lease and who have already demonstrated a sustained commitment to the neighborhood. Please stand strong in requiring the developer to make the changes necessary to have a safe, high quality project.

Thank you for your hard work and thoughtful consideration of this project.

Respectfully Submitted, Laura Stoller Delta Gamma, Omega Chapter House Corporation President