

AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: March 18, 2009
TITLE: 600 Block East Johnson Street – PUD-SIP for Deconstruction and Construction of New Residential Buildings. 2 nd Ald. Dist. (13146)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: March 18, 2009	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Mark Smith, Dawn Weber, Ron Luskin, Jay Ferm, Marsha Rummel, Todd Barnett and Bruce Woods.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 18, 2009, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a PUD-SIP in the 600 Block of East Johnson Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Richard Linster and Patrick McDonnell, both representing the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association; J. Randy Bruce, representing Stone House Development; Abbie Moilien, representing Renaissance Property Group; Joe Lusson, Jonathan Coleman and Michael Matty. The project as presented by Bruce featured the following:

- The current version is a modified approach in regards to density with new residential development to be developed by Stone House Development on the southerly portion of the site with 85 units of affordable housing featuring a drop in density from a previously proposed 114 dwelling units.
- The project still provides for the preservation of existing housing along the property's Gorham Street frontage and provides for the demolition of the remainder of the residential units on the site on southerly portions of the site.
- A previously proposed center townhouse building has now been eliminated with a three component residential building on the Johnson Street frontage of the site that overlays a contiguous lower level parking deck providing parking for all buildings including those buildings to be maintained on Gorham Street.
- The overall building material palette features the use of fiber cement board and masonry.
- All units will have individual entries and porches, in addition to the overall building as a whole having public entry points.

A review of the landscape plan emphasizing the creation of a central public space at mid-block connected by pedestrian routes, bulked up plantings on the roof deck, as well as provisions for public garden plots.

Following the presentation the Commission noted the following:

- Provide accessible apartments.
- Provide direct access to accessible gardens.
- Identify windows and skylights on the loft level.

Testimony from the public was as follows:

Joe Lusson spoke in opposition, spoke to problems with the bulk of the building still being too massive; need for Stone House to work out remaining issues with the neighborhood, underlying the need for referral of the project and the following:

- Opposition to the demolition of eleven buildings as well as the location of the new structure within 10-feet of the back lot line.
- He noted his appreciation for the number of units but non-support for the overall bulk of the building which remains unchanged. He further noted the building should be pulled back and reduced in height. He noted the existence of many mature trees along the southerly lot's back lot line, requesting their preservation with a 20-25 foot building setback from the rear lot line.
- He further noted the need to reduce the amount of underground parking and reduce the size of the combined buildings, in addition to maintaining parking entries and pads on Gorham Street to offset the minimum level of available on-street parking.
- In response to questions from the Commission Lusson further noted that the buildings that could be saved would be 508 Blair Street and the easterly building on Johnson Street.

Following Lusson's testimony Pat McDonnell, president of the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association spoke to a memo distributed at the meeting in support of the project. McDonnell noted the following:

- Like design, moving in the right direction but needs address of issues contained in memo.
- Like Urban Design Commission feedback on issues but request referral.

McDonnell, in response to questions by the Commission noted the following:

- Project needs to address the mass and lot line issues.
- The buildings are noted as 3-stories but really 4; need roofline brought down, eliminate the "hat."
- The architectural vernacular appropriate to neighborhood but building is too tall with use of lofts.

Jon Coleman spoke in regards to the project, noting the need to maintain some of the buildings to be deconstructed, one on Blair and a storefront along Johnson Street. Coleman further noted the need to incorporate a storefront on Johnson Street within the new construction. He further noted concern with driveway conflicts with bikes on sidewalks, the driveway to underground parking should be on Blair Street. He requested consideration for more historic architectural features such as a "witches' cap" along with the incorporation of alternative energy sources such as wind and the preservation of one single-family home on Johnson Street. Michael Matty, developer spoke in favor of the project. He noted support at a recent meeting of the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association and Kitty Rankin, former Preservation Planner for the proposed demolitions.

Following testimony Bruce noted that grade issues presented providing an entry on Blair Street to the lower level underground parking, as well as any adjustments relevant to the setback issue to the proposed footprint of the building would require that the building actually be increased to a full four-stories where building height is already an issue. Continued discussion by the Commission noted the following:

- Provide at least one stairway connection from parking to the street (one or both).
- Need to see independent report on housing to be demolished.
- Be nice if the green building could be moved.

- Look at providing wheelchair accessibility to the greenspace behind the Gorham houses to be maintained.

ACTION:

On a motion by Rummel, seconded by Barnett, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of the project to address the above stated concerns, including providing a report on the houses to be demolished and deconstructed, as well as a report from Kitty Rankin relevant to the demolition of the buildings, as well as providing additional context for the proposed building in juxtaposition to adjacent residential development and existing residential development to be maintained. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1) with Luskin voting no.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 6, 7, 7 and 7.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 600 Block East Johnson Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	7	7	7	8	-	7	6	7
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
	6	7	7	7	-	6	8	7
	6.5	6.5	-	-	-	6.5	7	7

General Comments:

- Connection from garage to street, please.
- Partnership with Stone House allows new direction in design and density. Interested in results of historic structure report and report of preservation planner.
- Much better than first iteration. Building heights are acceptable. Explore wheelchair accessible amenities. Continue to explore ways to bring life to Johnson Street, including exit from parking garage.
- Walk-ups with porches, a very appropriate architectural response. Interior of block is also successful and will be useful to block residents. I'm OK with the density.
- Study public entry, elevate entry façades. Review existing trees and if reducing parking would allow saving trees of value.

**CITY OF MADISON
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
CORRESPONDENCE**

To: Plan Commission
From: Rebecca S Cnare, Acting Preservation Planner
re: Landmarks Commission Meeting 4/20/09
Date: April 27, 2009

The Landmarks Commission, on a referral from the Common Council recommended the following at its meeting of April 20. Below is a summary of the Landmarks Commission action:

Legistar #13960: 602-630 East Johnson St, 309-323 N Blair St, and 601-625 E Gorham St PUD (GDP-SIP)

On a 5-2 vote, the Landmarks Commission made the following recommendation:

“Due to the proximity of the Fourth Lake Ridge National Register Historic District, the loss of eleven 19th-century houses, the size and scale of the proposed housing project, and the existing adopted neighborhood plan, the Landmarks Commission recommends that the houses not be demolished because of the number of houses, and the context of the houses on the block.

However, if the project is approved, the Landmarks Commission recommends that the Plan Commission require the applicant to return to the Landmarks Commission for review of each of the proposed rehabilitated houses or that the applicant applies for Historic Tax Credit Certification with the State Historical Society according to the Secretary of Interior Standards; and the Plan Commission should consider the impact of the proposed green space plan that uses part of the Fourth Lake Ridge National Register Historic District for its required open space.”

The Minutes from the 4/20/09 Landmarks Commission meeting were as follows:

J. Randy Bruce, 7601 University Ave, presented the project information to the Commission. Mr. Bruce also handed out additional information about the project, including updated plans, and the SIP information for the rehabilitation of the homes on Gorham St.

Mr. Levitan asked about the status of the Section 42 tax credits. Mr. Bruce replied that the credits were not yet awarded, but that they had had been encouraged by their discussions with WHEDA.

Richard Arnesen, 114 Nautilus Drive, confirmed that the rehabilitated houses were now part of the SIP, instead of only the GDP, and that the houses would be renovated over a maximum 8-year time span, or one house per year.

Michael Matty, 745 Jenifer Street, confirmed that he would be happy to return to the Landmarks Commission for approvals for the houses to be renovated.

James Roper, 746 E Gorham Street, registered in opposition. He opposed the project, but only because of its location, as he generally is supportive of affordable housing. He noted that the Neighborhood Association had asked for a smaller project during many discussions, and were split on their final vote.

Paul Schoeneman, 1108 E Gorham Street, registered in opposition and noted that he had attended a presentation by the applicant, and was very concerned by the deep shadows that would be created between each of the large buildings. He asked that the roof shape be changed to hip roofs in several locations. Mr. Schoeneman also asked that the applicant consider selling the buildings proposed to be demolished to allow them to be moved to other locations.

Ledell Zellers, 510 N Carroll Street registered in opposition with a concern about the demolition of the eleven buildings, noting that their removal will completely change the character of the block and the immediate neighborhood. Ms Zellers also objected to using the fact that a building has been altered, or isn't listed as a potential landmark, as reasons to allow it to be demolished. She noted that the proposed buildings were extremely large, and while workforce housing is a good goal, the new proposal is very close to the houses on Gorham Street that are located in a National Register Historic District.

Joe Lusson, 627 E Gorham Street, registered in opposition and noted that during the neighborhood meetings, the neighborhood kept asking for smaller buildings, and while the applicant moved the buildings around and removed a few units, the buildings remained very large. He objected to the proposal's bulk, noting that this will put pressure on a lot of nearby buildings to be redeveloped rather than rehabilitated or restored. Mr. Lusson noted that a conservation district, as discussed for the future, may have prevented this development.

Mr. Levitan asked the applicant if they could address the issue about selling the houses. Mr. Arnesen and Mr. Matty noted that they have been trying to give the houses away, and have even offered to help pay for some of the costs of moving the houses, they have used both Craigslist and online realty listings to encourage moving the houses.

Mr. Levitan asked if the applicant was going to try and salvage any of the building materials during demolition? Mr. Matty said that they will save everything that they can and also have Habitat for Humanity come in and get anything that they want.

Staff also handed out four letters received regarding this project:

- James and Julia Gray, 13878 Rooster Valley Road, Spring Grove, Minnesota wrote in opposition to the project.
- Joe Lusson and Aleen Tierney, 627 E Gorham Street wrote in opposition.
- Carolyn Friewald, 1442 Williamson Street, wrote in opposition.
- Patrick McDonnell wrote on behalf of the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association to support the project and included the following statement:

"The TLNA Council determines that the redevelopment proposal by Stone House Development for part of the 600 Block of E Johnson, submitted to the city on 2/18/09, as revised on 4/8/09 has sufficient merit to be granted an exception to the standards set for this block in the adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan."

Ms Gehrig noted that this is an intact block, so it is a tough situation. Ms Konkel also stated that the Neighborhood Association vote was very split, and that the statement that was described in the letter was about all they were able to agree to. Mr. Rosenblum noted that it is a tough decision to weigh the neighborhood support against the existing plans, along with the demolition of 11 buildings that are all about 100 years old or older.

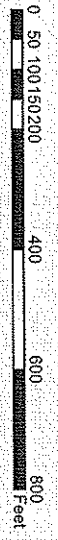
Ms Taylor stated that she thinks that this project is too big, and that while some of the houses proposed for demolition have little value, others have some interesting features.

Ms Konkel also noted that the open space required for the large buildings is being calculated using the backyards of the houses on Gorham Street. She added that many large trees would also have to be removed which will change the character of the area.

Mr. Stephans noted that it is a very tough decision, and if the project is recommended to go forward, that the rehabilitation of the Gorham street properties should follow Secretary of Interior Standards for restoration/rehabilitation.

Fourth Lake Ridge National Historic District

City of Madison
County of Dane, Wisconsin
Department of Planning and Development
Planning Unit - May 2004



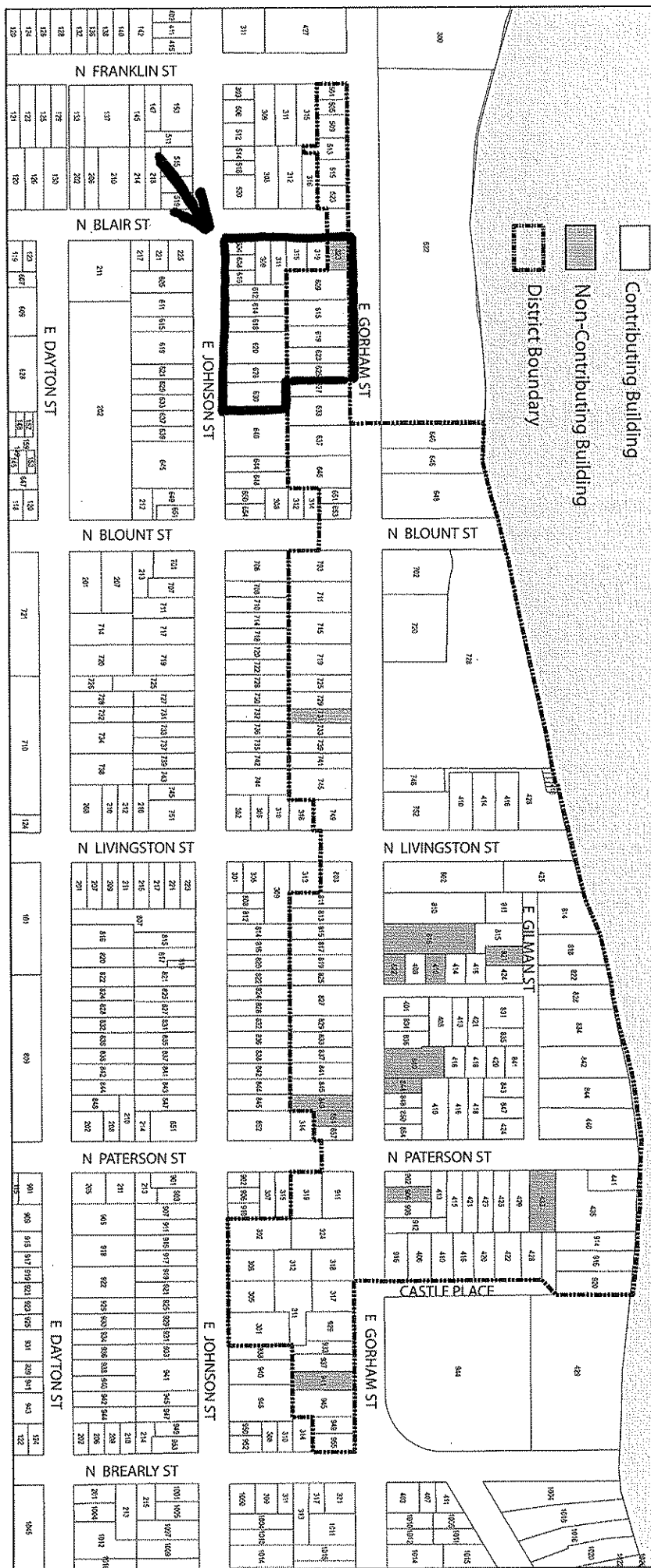
SCALE: 1" = 200'

LEGEND

- Contributing Building
- Non-Contributing Building
- District Boundary



LAKE MENDOTA



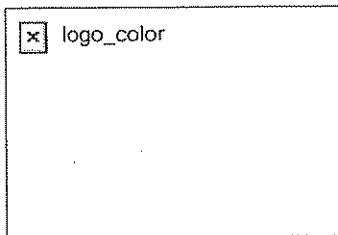
Parks, Timothy

From: Richard B. Arnesen [rarnesen@stonehousedevelopment.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2009 10:00 AM
To: Parks, Timothy
Subject: FW: Voting results - 600 E. Johnson Street proposal

Tim,

FYI – see below. The TLNA Council approved our project last night.

Richard Arnesen
 Vice President
 Stone House Development, Inc.
 608-251-2399 (direct)
rarnesen@stonehousedevelopment.com



www.stonehousedevelopment.com

From: Patrick McDonnell [mailto:pmcdonnell@tds.net]
Sent: Thursday, April 16, 2009 9:49 AM
To: tlna.newsletter@gmail.com; timothy.olsen@sbcglobal.net; sturvoni@tds.net; Sandy Ward; rlinster@tds.net; Richard Freihofer; Jim Wright; Jim Roper; Gay Davidson-Zielske; Emrys Linster; dwaugh@morningwoodfarm.com; durenhouse@sbcglobal.net; Diane Milligan; Diane Brusoe; Bob Shaw; Ariana Hauck; Alan Crossley; Atty. Adam Walsh
Cc: Lusson, Joe - DCF; Richard B. Arnesen; Helen Bradbury; Michael Matty; Randy Bruce; Joe Lusson; Bridget Maniaci; Brenda Konkel; gigiholl@sbcglobal.net; Andrew P. Fielding; Erik Paulson
Subject: Voting results - 600 E. Johnson Street proposal

Hello TLNA Council and friends,

I want to thank everyone for their thoughtful participation in this decision - not just in the 4/8 and 4/15 meetings and vote, but in all of the previous public, council and working committees meetings. The discussions were reasoned, heartfelt and civil throughout. This is one of the most difficult questions we've worked through in a long time.

The vote of the full TLNA Council on the resolution (text below) is as follows:
 Yes - 11

4/16/2009

4

No - 6
Abstain - 1

ALSO - At the 4/15 meeting, we asked members to write down pros and cons about this project that TLNA will use to communicate its reasons for granting this exception to the adopted Neighborhood Plan and for evaluating future proposals that may seek similar exceptions. Sandy Ward will assemble these for us to review. **Please email your thoughts on the pros and cons to Sandy if you haven't done so already.**

Resolution:

"The TLNA Council determines that the redevelopment proposal by Stone House Development for part of the 600 Block of E. Johnson, submitted to the city on 2/18/09, as revised on 4/8/09 has sufficient merit to be granted an exception to the standards set for this block in the adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan."

Pat

No virus found in this incoming message.

Checked by AVG - www.avg.com

Version: 8.0.238 / Virus Database: 270.11.58/2061 - Release Date: 04/16/09 08:12:00

4/16/2009

4

Parks, Timothy

From: Patrick McDonnell [pmcdonnell@tds.net]
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2009 3:50 PM
To: Parks, Timothy
Cc: Murphy, Brad; Martin, Al; Fruhling, William; Brenda Konkel; rlinster@tds.net; timothy.olsen@sbcglobal.net; sturvoni@tds.net; Bob Shaw; Diane Milligan; dwaugh@morningwoodfarm.com; Jim Roper; Joe Lusson; Lusson, Joe - DCF
Subject: 600 Block E. Johnson PUD-SIP

Hello Tim,

After our public meeting on 3/2, the TLNA Council met on 3/4. After extensive discussion, the TLNA Council passed the following resolution:

"The TLNA Council conditionally determines that the redevelopment proposal by Stone House Development as submitted to the City on February 18, 2009 has sufficient merit to be considered for an exception to the criteria for this block contained in the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan. The design as proposed still has short-comings in the areas of density, overall mass, and proximity to rear lot lines. We ask the UDC and Plan Commission to pursue improvements that would achieve reductions in these areas before approval of an exception."

Please share this with staff and the UDC prior to next Wednesday's UDC meeting.

Note that we did not endorse the project as submitted. However, we do feel there are significant merits to the proposal that could result in our endorsement of a project that exceeds the standards adopted for this block in the Neighborhood Plan. We have formed a steering committee to work with the developer on changes to the proposal. We are very interested in hearing the UDC's reaction next Wednesday to what Stone House is presenting. We hope the UDC will then refer action to 4/1 to allow more time for the neighborhood and Stone House to negotiate further changes.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best Regards,
Patrick McDonnell
President
Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association

13878 Rooster Valley Road
Spring Grove, Minnesota 55974
April 14, 2009

Plan Commission
City of Madison
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

Dear Members of the City of Madison Plan Commission:

As former residents of the 700 block of East Gorham and members of the now extinct Old Marketplace Neighborhood Association, we are writing to share our concerns in regard to the development plans for the 600 block of East Gorham and East Johnson Streets and the 300 block of North Blair. We are most definitely opposed to the demolition or exterior alteration of the houses on East Gorham and North Blair which are in the Fourth Lake Ridge Historic District. We are also opposed to the demolition of the Joseph Bayer House and the August Bayer House located at 311 and 309 North Blair Street. These houses were constructed in 1852 and 1886, respectively, of old growth woods, and, as such, are irreplaceable. The August Bayer House is a particular favorite of ours.

As much as we would like to see all of the houses on East Johnson Street saved from demolition and restored, we understand that is not likely. However, we do think that the proposed replacement plans for the demolished buildings are out of balance with both the historic and current ambience of the neighborhood. Placing 83 new units in a 3 1/2 story building on 3 1/2 city lots is totally out of character with the remaining neighborhood. Recent developments in the area, such as the 24 unit Blair House, the 20 unit building at 20 North Blair, and the 23 unit Coachyard Square are much better suited to the scale of the neighborhood. While larger complexes exist and are being built west of Blair Street, closer to the Capitol Square, it is important to us that the area between East Washington Avenue and East Gorham Street, bounded by North Blair and North Patterson Streets not lose its historic character by creeping large scale development. This area was inhabited by the workers, artisans, and small merchants of early Madison and needs to be saved for future generations to appreciate.

We are also concerned with the fact that while hundreds of new dwelling units are being and have been constructed in the area over the past 10 to 15 years, no effort has been made to provide such amenities as a full-service grocery store, drugstore, or hardware store. It seems to us that it serves little purpose transportation-wise to move occupants into downtown Madison without providing the businesses which would supply essential everyday needs.

While we now live in Minnesota, we still own and have a residence in the 700 block of East Gorham, and thus are concerned that the neighborhood maintain as many of its late 19th century characteristics as possible.

Sincerely,

James R. Gray

Julia H. Gray

Parks, Timothy

From: Ed Hughes [edhughes9@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, March 03, 2009 9:16 PM
To: brendakonkel@gmail.com; pmcdonnell@tds.net; Parks, Timothy
Subject: 600 Block of East Johnson

I am sorry I was unable to attend the neighborhood association meeting last night on the proposed project for the 600 block of East Johnson. I'm a member of the School Board and we had a meeting that lasted for quite a while (by our standards, not those of the Common Council).

I did want to add my two cents to the discussion. This is my personal opinion and certainly doesn't represent the views of the School Board or school district.

The proposed project, with the inclusion of nine three-bedroom units, sure looks to be positive from the perspective of the schools.

Lapham's enrollment this year is 229 students, which is about 66% of the school's capacity of 349 students. The school district's current projections show that the kindergarten enrollment trend over the next four or five years at Lapham is likely to be essentially flat.

New housing construction in the Tenney-Lapham neighborhood that is family-friendly should give a boost to Lapham enrollment and help ensure the continued vitality of this critical neighborhood resource.

It seems to me that if we want more kids in our downtown neighborhood schools, we need to support the development of more housing stock where those kids can live. Authorizing the construction of this project doesn't absolutely guarantee that we'll get more kids at Lapham, of course, but it certainly seems to be one of the most positive steps in that direction that the community can take.

Thanks for considering my views.

Ed Hughes

Parks, Timothy

Subject: RE: 600 block E. Johnson/300 block N. Blair

From: Joe Lusson [mailto:joelusson@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2009 9:07 PM
To: Murphy, Brad
Cc: Parks, Timothy; Waidelich, Michael
Subject: 600 block E. Johnson/300 block N. Blair

Brad,
Please include the following letter in commissioners' packets for the May 4 Plan Commission meeting.
thank you,
Joe

Joe Lusson and Aleen Tierney
627 E. Gorham St

April 25, 2009

Re: 600 block E. Johnson/300 block N. Blair

Dear Plan Commissioners:

As the only owner-occupants on the block in question, we have taken great interest in this project. We are in favor of some infill development at this location, but not development of this scale. The proposed buildings are too deep, too wide, and too tall to "play well" with the surrounding 19th and early 20th century homes.

This is an intact, historic block with only one modern structure. The block is east of Blair Street, outside the traditional defining boundaries of Downtown. It is an area of homes and mature trees, with the potential for more reclaimed back yards, one block from Lake Mendota.

We are fixing up our home on Gorham as well as a rental property next door. The neighborhood is destined for great things. That is why it is shortsighted to remove so many 19th century homes, and their yards. Those homes would be more likely to house families in the future, than will these large apartment buildings.

The Tenney-Lapham neighborhood plan, adopted by the city just last year, calls for retaining homes of this scale, or replacing them with similarly scaled infill. The same plan calls for much greater density, but directs that it be closer to East Washington and East Mifflin streets.

The bulk of the proposed apartments is so out of scale with the existing neighborhood that it will create tremendous pressure for similar nearby old homes to be demolished and replaced. Two of the three proposed buildings will extend from the front of the lot to nearly the back lot line. On a 132-foot lot, that means buildings more than 100 feet deep. At 3 1/2 stories tall, all three buildings will be quite imposing.

While the project was reduced in unit-count, the bulk of the buildings essentially did not change. Instead, they replaced studio apartments with 2- and 3-bdrms. The third building was reduced, but not by much.

4/28/2009

As Madison natives who care about the historic fabric of the central city, and the future vitality of its residential neighborhoods, we are appalled by the proposed demolition of 11 contiguous homes on an intact block bordered on one side by a national register historic district.

We urge the Plan Commission to recommend saving at least a few of the Blair/Johnson homes. Surely there is a way to design a more creative and sensitive development that respects the history and scale of the area, including the neighboring Fourth Lake Ridge historic district.

A recommendation that leads to further size reductions on this project and helps it fit more respectfully in the neighborhood, would be gratefully appreciated. A more balanced blending of old and new would bode better for the future of the Johnson and Gorham corridor.

Sincerely,

Joe Lusson and Aleen Tierney

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

April 27, 2009

Re: 600 Block E. Johnson



Dear Plan Commissioners:

We recognize the difficult decision the 600 block of E. Johnson project presents. It has some solid positives and the folks behind it are good people who have done good work. The promised restoration of the Gorham Street houses is warmly welcomed.

However, we cannot support the demolition of 11 homes on an intact block, many of them among the oldest in the city. While the previous owner ran them down, the main reason they haven't been fixed up, is that they haven't been available for individual sale for decades. If put on the market individually at reasonable prices, there would be few that could not be restored.

Of particular appeal:

1. Bayer house, 309 N. Blair (1886-1887) vernacular Queen Anne with two attractive bay windows, walnut stair rail and colored glass windows
2. Schubring Grocery Store, 614 E. Johnson (1903) a vernacular mixed-use building designed by noted local architects Gordon and Paunack
3. Pearce House, 626 E. Johnson (1867), a small cottage with fine detailing. In better shape than some of the others because it was under separate ownership.

Demolishing numerous homes from the 1850s to 1880s drives home that this is a lost opportunity to restore more of Madison's historic fabric, while blending a more appropriately-scaled infill project.

The three proposed buildings on E. Johnson street, at 100 feet deep and 100 feet wide each, are far too massive for the scale of the neighborhood. A full 10-feet taller than the buildings across Johnson Street to the south, the new buildings, given their width and depth, will be an imposing presence to pedestrians and neighbors. They rely almost entirely on the Gorham properties for their green space.

Rewarding a prior owner's neglect by giving the new owner the right to full-scale home removal and such a large replacement project is an ominous precedent for the rest of the residential neighborhoods of the central city. It does not bode well for the beautifully intact 500 block of E. Johnson/E. Gorham, nor for the more typically-scaled homes on the south side of E. Johnson. It will likely drive the price of homes out of reach of the individual rehabber.

We understand the difficulty of restoring old housing stock, as well as the difference between buildings that are unique enough to merit landmark status and those that we can simply appreciate as part of our city's historic fabric. The latter is what we are losing at a rapid rate.

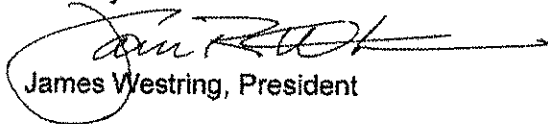
We have recently lost three 1850s buildings: one in the Williamson Street historic district, St. Raphael's Cathedral, and one in the recently-raised Pinkus McBride triangle block. At some point the commission, and the city, needs to consider the big picture, or each of our oldest remaining structures will be removed before we know it.

Whether the term is razing or demolishing, dismantling or salvaging, the net result is the same: a substantial portion of one of our city's oldest blocks will effectively have disappeared. Because the block in question is at the far edge of the Tenney-Lapham neighborhood, surrounded by rental housing, it is naturally more vulnerable. But that doesn't mean its historic character and scale should be discarded.

If the developers would be required to take a half-story off their project, reduce the bulk of the buildings, and retain at least a few of the original homes, then we might be able to endorse this as a win-win. Why not build two buildings rather than three, retaining all the homes on Blair, for instance.

We urge the Plan Commission to require a smaller-scaled project and retention of some of the historic homes on Johnson and Blair. Preserving as much of the historic fabric of our downtown is the reason that many of us work so hard at fixing up our homes and our neighborhoods.

Thank you.



James Westring, President

Chuck Mitchell
1514 Rutledge St.
Madison, WI 53703

Madison Plan Commission and
Staff of the City Planning Department

RE: Stone House Development/Renaissance Property Group project – 600 block of
Johnson St. Approval vote schedule for Planning Commission May 4, 2009

Dear Alders, Plan Commission members and staff,

I have seen elevations and landscaping plans for this development, as well as several other properties developed by Renaissance Property Group (RPG) over the years. While this project is more ambitious than their previous endeavors, it demonstrates the careful attention to historic detail and blending with the neighborhood that RPG has become known for. These projects conform to the mayor's interest in urban infill without the usual construction of a large box-type building. There is an aesthetic here that will improve the neighborhood. I welcome interesting and historically conforming design such as this!

I hope you (the Commission members) will agree with me and vote in favor of this development. Thank you for your consideration of my views!

Sincerely,

Chuck Mitchell

The Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association supports the request for a PUD-SIP rezoning the properties at 609-625 E. Gorham Street, 604-630 E. Johnson Street and 303-323 N. Blair Street with the intention to demolish 11 houses, build 3 apartment buildings and restore 8 houses.

TLNA applauds the commitment by Renaissance Property Group to restore 8 houses in or adjacent to the 4th Lake Ridge Historic District on E. Gorham Street and supports their long range goal of returning them to owner-occupancy.

While the proposed demolition and replacement by Stone House Development is not consistent with standards adopted in our Neighborhood Plan, the TLNA considers that the proposal merits an exception for the following reasons:

- The proposal upgrades the existing housing stock with new construction that is a grade far superior to the usual construction standards for apartments, including a significant emphasis on green construction features.
- The severe deterioration of many of the properties makes it extremely unlikely that they can be rehabilitated short of this current proposal.
- Section 42 housing is not targeted to the student rental market. This project will attract Workforce renters including families that will likely increase business for the E. Johnson Street Business District and increase enrollment at Lapham Elementary School. This supports the overall goals of the neighborhood.
- Restoring 100% green space to the backyards of the historic properties that are over 80% deteriorated surface parking lots.
- Each developer has demonstrated high quality performance in their given area- RPG for restoration of existing properties and Stone House for delivering successful Section 42 developments.

The exception is granted for the aggregate of reasons mentioned above. No single reason is sufficient to earn a future exception. Nor is the exception to be considered a precedent for approval of future demolition requests for structures in the neighborhood. The assembly of these properties by a single owner predated the Neighborhood Plan by decades and was a notable exception to the neighborhood at large. TLNA does not support the assembly of properties for redevelopment.

The text of the resolution passed by the TLNA Council at our April 15, 2009 meeting follows:

“The TLNA Council determines that the redevelopment proposal by Stone House Development for part of the 600 Block of E. Johnson Street, submitted to the City on 2/19/09, as revised on 4/8/09 has sufficient merit to be granted an exception to the standards set for this block in the adopted Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Plan.”