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October 5, 2011

City of Madison Plan Commission
c/o Brad Murphy
Planning Division Director
215 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Madison, WI 53701-2985

RE: 1112 Spaight Street

Commissioners:

My clients, Connor and Abigail Sabatino, wish to demolish the house at 1112 Spaight Street and construct a new single-family home on the site that will fit into the existing historic neighborhood. They live around the corner in a two-flat which they own. After moving into the new house they intend to continue renting out the two-flat. If all goes well, they will start construction late this fall, and move in to their new home in summer of 2012.

The house was built in 1889, has been remuddled many times over the years, and is in itself not unique or architecturally significant. It is a contributing building to the Third Lake Ridge local and national historic districts, as well as the Orton Park National Historic District. It is next door to one local and National Register listed landmark, the Curtis-Kittleson House, and across the street from another, Orton Park. None of which makes it easy to recommend its demolition. However, in its present condition it is not helping to fulfill any of the purposes for which the historic district was created, and it is unlikely it ever will again.

The house at 1112 Spaight is, and has been, a rental property for many years. Its condition reflects its history. City records indicate many, and substantial, repair orders on the property dating back to the 1950s.

An estimate of costs required to bring the house to current standards of living, life safety, and energy consumption was done at request the request of the Landmarks Commission. The figure is daunting, and far beyond the value of the house after completion. It is my opinion, and the opinion of most people who have examined the house, that the scale of repairs and rehabilitation needed put it beyond reasonable hope of retrieval.

The house we are proposing to construct in its place is a revival of a type that is common in the neighborhood. The proposed design is intended to be a respectful and modest complement to its neighbors. It should contribute to the health of the neighborhood for the next 100 years.

I hope we can have a productive and healthy conversation on the merits of this project at the November 21 meeting of the Plan Commission, at the end of which I hope you will vote to approve the demolition of the house at 1112 Spaight Street.

Sincerely yours,

Amy Hasselman, AIA



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Condition Assessment of 1112 Spaight Street

The house is a two-story frame structure. The original portion dates to 1889. The main 18' x 26' two-story rectangular portion is original. The two-story side ell, the single-story rear kitchen, and the porch and other entries are additions, likely pre-1920s.

Exterior:

- The roof covering is in good condition.
- The exterior walls are covered with asbestos siding, done according to city records in 1950. Judging by the depth of the siding adjacent to the window trim, there is likely more than one layer. The siding is in poor condition.
- Windows and doors are in fair to poor condition. None have broken glass.
- The front porch, and the two other entries to the building, are sagging off the building. The front porch floor is rotted, and the base of the porch posts swing freely. The front porch roof is pulling away from the house.
- Gutters and downspouts are in poor condition.

Foundation & Basement:

- The foundation is original sandstone. The exterior was tuckpointed and parged at some point in the past, but has since crumbled. The stones are mostly intact, but the mortar is crumbling and the walls leak water. The fill between the stones can be seen washed out on the floor of the basement.
- There is a trench drain connected to a sump in the basement floor. Its drain looks to have been jerry-rigged into the city sanitary sewer system. The receptor is a 5-gallon plastic bucket.

Utilities:

- The original lead water supply pipe has been replaced.
- The sanitary sewer appears to be original to the plumbing in the house.
- The furnace, and water heater are gas-fired. They appear to be in good condition.
- No information about the size of the electrical service can be seen. The panel consists of four fused circuits to serve the entire house. Judging by the number of blown fuses littering the floor, this is insufficient. According to the realtor, the wiring is knob and tube.

Structure:

- The floor framing visible in the basement is insufficient per current structural standards. The first floor bounces, and dips in places. 40% of the existing floor joists in the original portion have been cut to fit duct-work into the walls above, without anything to hold them up.
- The second floor framing has the same bounce and dips as the first floor, but is not visible. Joists in the bathroom floor were cut for plumbing.

- The roof framing is insufficient per current structural standards. The ridges appear to be straight.

Interior:

- The interior walls are painted plaster. They are in fair condition. The interior ceilings are also painted plaster, except for the alcove below the bathroom. The ceilings are in poor condition. The ceiling below the bathroom has been covered with acoustical panels, because the plaster has fallen down.
- The interior trim is a hodgepodge of different styles, but is in fair condition.
- Based on the thickness of the paint on the walls and trim, it is assumed there is 90 years worth of lead paint under the current coatings.
- The stairs from first to second floor are steep (7-3/4" risers, 8" treads), have only 5'-4" headroom, and are a life safety hazard. The stairs to the basement are also unsafe.
- The kitchen and bathroom are outdated, and in poor condition.
- Floors are carpet or linoleum, and are mostly in fair to good condition. Original wide pine floorboards below the first floor carpet could be restored.

Sincerely yours,

Amy Hasselman, AIA