

November 12, 2007
Lawrence City Commission/City Manager
City Hall, 6 East 6th Street
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

Dear Mayor and City Commissioners:

The members of the Board of the Oread Neighborhood Association were pleased that Thomas Fritzell solicited our comments regarding the concept and preliminary plans for the hotel project, presently referred to as the Oread Inn, at 12th and Indiana Street. Members of our board offered suggestions regarding pedestrian and vehicular traffic, trash storage and pickup, and general comments regarding the building design including setbacks from 12th Street and the elimination of an enclosed rooftop observatory. We were pleased that the developer responded by making a number of changes to the plans that we hope result in a better project for the developer and for the neighborhood.

We are aware of concerns with the height and massing of the proposed structure. However, we live in a neighborhood that abuts the University and surrounds Corbin Hall, a seven-story University residence hall. A major factor in our lack of neighborhood opposition was a promise by the developer to renovate the existing Oread Apartments and the older home to the southwest. We believe that the preservation of these structures is vitally important in securing the integrity of the southwest corner of 12th and Indiana as they blend into and protect the historic Hancock District.

There are a number of pedestrian and vehicular traffic concerns at this location. The developer has assured the neighbors that their plans include realignment of Oread Avenue and improvements to the 12th and Indiana Street intersection that has been dangerous and problematic for years. The neighborhood association had help from Community Development Block Grant funds to replace half of the flight of steps from 12th Street to Mississippi. The developer has also indicated that they also plan landscape improvements, repairs to stone work in the garden islands within 12th Street, and completion of the steps project within the Hancock District.

We have expressed concern regarding the construction of condominiums as part of this project. We understand that a hotel project may be granted variances as a unique project within our neighborhood. It would be detrimental for the neighborhood for future condominium projects to be built in the neighborhood without appropriate restrictions on height and setbacks and therefore we believe that this distinction is important. The developers have indicated that the proposed parking will be adequate. We are concerned that valet parking appropriate for hotel stays would not work as well for condominium owners and may not accommodate their guests.

We would prefer something smaller, but have tried to be fair in recognizing the developer's needs. We do ask that you require the preservation of the Oread Apartments at 1201, 1203 and 1205 Oread and the residence at 1209 Oread as part of the planning necessary to limit the encroachment of the development on the historic district, and consider not approving condominium units at this location. We would appreciate identification of the improvements external to the site that are considered to be part of this project. We believe that overall this large-scale project could help the neighborhood stabilize and improve blighted property.

Thank you,

Candice Davis
for the Oread Neighborhood Association Board