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Richard Miller

November 24, 2014

Martin Tully, Mayor  
Village of Downers Grove  
801 Burlington Ave  
Downers Grove, IL 60515

*RE: 942 Maple Avenue - Edwards House and proposed residential condominium development – December 2, 2014 Village Board Meeting*

Dear Mayor Tully and Members of the Village Board,

Landmarks Illinois is requesting a deferral of the proposed residential condominium development at 942 (and 936) Maple Avenue so that village staff may have more time to work with the developer and Landmarks Illinois to find a design solution that incorporates the historic Edwards House. While the project has been recommended for your approval by the Plan Commission, we believe not all options have been explored.

We understand and agree with the effort to focus new high-density development in the downtown area close to public transportation and businesses. However, new developments should not be approved at the expense of Downers Groves' important early architecture, which defines the early development history of the village. The Edwards House, recognized as historically significant in the village's architectural and historical survey by the Lakota Group, which was accepted by this Board, is an important example of the village's heritage and is still viable for the purpose of commercial or residential reuse.

The village's comprehensive plan emphasizes the need for transitional zones between the downtown business district and the residential neighborhoods. The proposed residential development is not only larger in scale than anything built in the vicinity, but is located in an area of Maple Avenue that is more appropriate for this type of a transitional zone, especially due to several existing historic houses, many of which have had successful commercial uses.

The Edwards House can still serve a commercial use as part of a larger mixed-use development or be converted to accommodate multi-family units as part of a larger residential development. In fact, if locally landmarked by the developer and converted to for-sale units as part of a rehabilitation, those units can be marketed to potential buyers with a property tax assessment freeze. Several developers in the Chicago region have found

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this a successful model for combining the rehabilitation of an historic structure with new residential construction.

Incorporating the Edwards House into the proposed development will not only save an important historic structure, but also downscale the project to be more appropriate for its location. Landmarks Illinois is happy to assist village staff and the developer by bringing additional architectural expertise to the table to assess how the proposed development could incorporate the Edwards House, how many units could be accommodated in the house and in surrounding new construction.

We hope the Board will consider this offer and defer the project so that a more thoughtful design solution can be explored.

Sincerely,

*Bonnie McDonald*

Bonnie McDonald  
President

cc: David Fieldman, Village Manager  
Ken Lerner, Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance  
Tom Nybo, Maple Avenue Preservation Committee