

Am I the only person in Eau Claire that is upset and opposed to the projection of raising the historic buildings on the first block of South Barstow Street from the Eau Claire river to Eau Claire Street, west side of street. I can't even envision the concept - even with the glorious drawings which have appeared in the local newspaper time after time after time. These beautiful old buildings are prime property for renovation into exactly the type of stores/apartments projected by the Confluence/University people. A perfect example of a restored down town building is Luttrell Photography - which was renovated several years ago into a business on the ground floor and a great apartment above. This can be done to the Northern State building, the Fashion Store, Stevensons, etc.

I am a third-generation Eau Clairite - my children fourth generation. I am humbled - to have been born and raised in this beautiful city. My grandfather, Ole Arnstad, was part owner/architect of the E. M. Fish Company located on the Chippewa River (parking lot for the MET Credit Union), who built many of the historic homes in Eau Claire. I would not be surprised if my grandfather had not been partially involved in the construction of those historic buildings on South Barstow. The lies that have been put forth by the Confluence Project, Mr. Shaefer particularly, stating these buildings are built on sawdust and sand . . . how outrageous! Do they really believe our ancestors were that ignorant!!!! And do you think for one minute the buildings would have remained standing for 100 years or more!!!! That is such a bold faced lie. They are built on shale and rock - and are solid. Cracks, why, of course. Wouldn't any building 100 years old have a crack or two - which, by the way, can be mended quite satisfactorily.

My parents lived on "Hodgeboom" Avenue when I was born, and every Friday night during the summers was an adventure - we had dinner, piled into the car, and headed for down town -in a hurry to obtain a strategic parking place on the main street to watch the people walking up and down the street, looking in the store windows (they changed their windows every week) to view their beautiful wares. Friday night the stores remained open until 9:00 p.m. (stores were open only one night of the week until 9:00 p.m., and no stores were open on Sundays). Sometimes we would walk down the street to the post office (Federal building now), cross the street and walk back up to Samuelson's dry goods store (and maybe stop at Blomer's - a popular gathering place for high schoolers - for one of their double decker ice cream cones - the first in Eau Claire - nummmmmmm). This was an every Friday night event in my family - and I feel I am not alone. Oh, how I remember those beautiful days. And the next generation relished the beauty of down town also. I would have one child in a stroller and the other riding her tricycle down town for the parades celebrating the national holidays - watching the Junior High School, Senior High School, Regis High School, bands strut with their high stepping pace. Oh, your heart beat so fast when they marched by, and you, with your hand over your heart, as the American flag passed by. These memories should come forth as you stroll down South Barstow Street today - with the buildings lending their beauty and history.

Eau Claire does not need the University down town - the University is not land-locked. They have spent over a million dollars recently for property which can be used for expansion. I heard one gentleman speak at the Planning Commission meeting saying, ". . . the University should be spread around town." Now, really!!! They are already - in student housing in every ward of the city. Dorms should be built on University property - or let private investors build them, as is currently being constructed on West Clairemont Avenue.

I hope this will stimulate other residents to speak up in favor of keeping the down town area a historic area. Breathe new life into old - for Eau Claire.

Sincerely,

Corinne Charlson