

To: Champaign Unit 4 School Board

From: PACA and Supporters of the Burnham House

Date: December 11, 2017

Re: Preservation of the Burnham House

We are writing to let the School Board know that PACA remains dedicated to finding a way to save the historic Burnham House at 603 West Church Street, Champaign, designed and built 1883-84 by the noted Chicago architectural firm of Burnham and Root. Please note that we are not asking that the school district spend any funds renovating the house. Instead, we are interested in finding a local developer who would like to purchase and renovate it. To help make that happen, we are hereby making the following requests that, when fulfilled, would help any potential buyer submit a proposal to you.

- 1) On several occasions, Chris Kloeppel, President of the Unit 4 Board of Education, has stated publicly that, were a solid proposal to purchase the Burnham Mansion presented, the Board would be willing to consider it. To that end, we request a clear statement in writing that the Burnham House is available for sale, and the asking price for it. A formal, public response to this request will finally clarify for the community your actual position on saving this important building.
- 2) As it will take time for a potential buyer to perform the due diligence necessary to make a good offer on the Burnham Mansion, we request that the School Board take the necessary action to keep the Mansion from being demolished for as long as possible. As it is to become a parking lot, it should be easy to delay its scheduled demolition until the end of the Central High renovation project.
- 3) It is public record that the School Board has purchased additional property since the original eight parcels were optioned, then purchased for the Central expansion. For the sake of transparency, and the community's right to know, we request a public update on what properties are now in Unit 4 hands or will be in the near future. We would also like to see an updated site plan for the Central High campus based on the use of these additional properties.

Please recall that PACA formally notified the Unit 4 School Board that it wished to work together with the Board to find the best outcome for the Burnham House, at least, among the whole collection of historic structures you chose for demolition for the Central project. The School Board never replied to the PACA letter of September 11, 2016, in which a variety of questions and recommendations were brought up.

As last week's City Council meeting demonstrated, an increasing number of well-informed and intelligent local people have come to support the need to preserve the Burnham House, for the sake of

the whole community. While the Council's vote largely ignored their concerns and ideas for alternate uses, the fact that the Burnham House will not be designated a landmark does not negate the historic importance of this nationally significant building. Nor will its rapid demolition win you the hearts and minds of so many who believe that your path is not really the best one.

We look forward to hearing your response to our requests soon. We hope that by working together we can find a solution that will save a majestic, historic house in addition to providing Champaign with a greatly improved Central High School.