



The Blue Grass Trust
for Historic Preservation

June 18, 2012

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Dr. Eli Capilouto
Office of the President
101 Main Building
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40506-0032

Dean David A. Brennen
University of Kentucky College of Law
620 South Limestone
Lexington, KY 40506-0048

Dear Dr. Capilouto and Dean Brennen:

It has come to the attention of the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation (“Blue Grass Trust”) that the University is moving forward with plans to demolish some historic properties on South Limestone. Specifically, sources have advised our office of the intended demolition of 658 South Limestone, (the Ligon House) and 660 South Limestone, (the Mathews House and Garden). We were further advised that this demolition would be for the purpose of renovations which are to be made to the College of Law building, including constructing a surface parking lot which would be dedicated to the use of the College of Law.

At a time when the University has agreed to positively address the issue of its past land use practices which have contributed to the destruction of charming older neighborhoods around the campus, it is unconscionable for its leadership to consider the demolition of these important historic properties. As a key investor in the research of Omar Blaik’s, Lexington, KY Anchor Institution Report, April 2012 (as was the Blue Grass Trust), the University should consider the following pertinent recommendations from his report:

- Recommendation 2: Creating a walkable vibrant campus, supported by vibrant neighborhoods and corridors whose edges blend with the University.
- Recommendation 4: Develop housing incentives for University employees to purchase and rent homes in the neighborhoods around the anchors and absorb current rental properties.

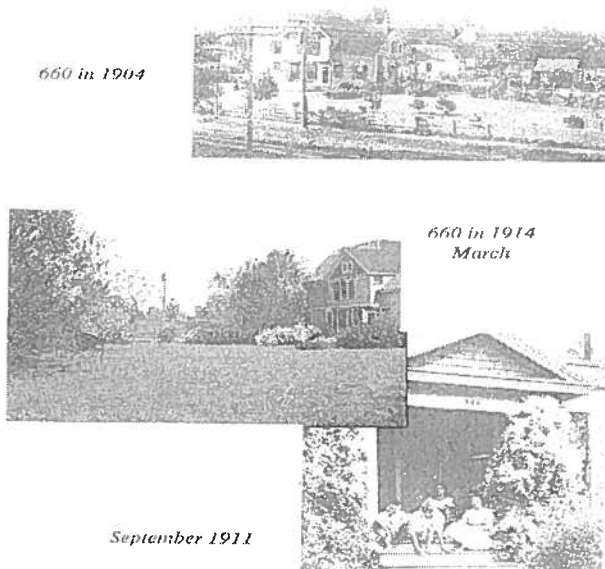
These two houses and significant botanical garden should be seen as an opportunity to fulfill two of the Mr. Blaik’s recommendations, rather than an impediment to further construction. Just as Dr. Todd allowed access to Maxwell Place, this edge of the campus could be opened as a significant path for students to pass through on the way to the central part of the campus. Additionally, the property can become a stunning example of

employee housing right on the edge of the campus.

Both buildings have beautiful bones, but 660, as designed by University icon Clarence Wentworth Mathews, is particularly important to the heritage of the University and Lexington as a whole.

Mathews built 660 South Limestone in 1908 and lived in the house with his family as the first Dean of the University of Kentucky's College of Agriculture. Henrietta, his wife, and children Ruth, Paul and George Mathews, flourished in their beautiful home.

Daughter Ruth authored *Six-sixty, the Story of A House In A Garden and The Family that Loves It* in 1976, in honor of Lexington's bicentennial year. (I would be glad to share my copy of this wonderful book with you so you can fully appreciate the importance of this property.)



Ruth's writings describe spending the summer of 1908 in Massachusetts with her mother and siblings, while her father completed their home. He met the family at the train station upon their return and they walked with their luggage to their new home.

If you've been in the house and seen the woodwork you can only imagine what the family thought when Dean Mathews first flung the front door open for them.

The lot, 175 feet wide and over 100 feet deep was an oasis for the family to play and for a horticulturalist to begin building a lifetime garden.

Also in 1908, the Kentucky legislature statutorily allowed the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Kentucky to become the State University, Lexington with Colleges of Agriculture, Law, Arts and Sciences and three Engineering Colleges. 1908 represents a significant time in the history of the University and the Blue Grass Trust challenges you to reflect on your past as you move into the future.

While the houses are currently in some state of disrepair due to neglect and because they are currently being used as offices instead of residential housing as originally intended, in light of the historic value and beautiful structural integrity of the houses, the Blue Grass Trust recommends that the University take this opportunity to invigorate the campus and city of Lexington by celebrating and restoring these historic homes and garden instead of ordering their demolition. The Blue Grass Trust urges the University to turn these gems back into quality housing stock that honors the achievements and vision of Dean Mathews. This is an opportunity to celebrate the legacy of your first Dean of the College of Agriculture. What an honor it would

be for an academic colleague to have the opportunity to live in his home. Why destroy the vision Dean Mathews had for the University and for his family in their adopted Lexington?

While doing this you also fulfill the recommendations of Mr. Blaik to develop housing incentives for University employees and create a campus that is connected to Lexington's vibrant, historic neighborhoods.

The University is better than demolition. When faced with a similar decision in 2009 when the Kentucky Kernel reported of plans to demolish the gardens for a parking lot, the University changed its plans. The University should change its plans again and embrace your consultant, Omar Blaik's recommendations and turn this into a wonderful example of faculty housing that showcases the University's heritage and history.

Sincerely,



Linda Carroll, President

cc: Blue Grass Trust Board Members