

AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** July 29, 2020

TITLE: 8355 Mansion Hill Avenue – Residential Building Complex. 1st Ald. Dist. (60816) **REFERRED:**

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary **ADOPTED:** **POF:**

DATED: July 29, 2020 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Shane Bernau, Craig Weisensel, Jessica Klehr, Syed Abbas, Tom DeChant and Rafeeq Asad.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 29, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a Residential Building Complex located at 8355 Mansion Hill Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, Bob McCaigue, Evan Weiss and Matt Saltzberry, representing Continental Properties/D’Onofrio Kottke & Associates. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Dan Day, representing Continental Properties. McCaigue presented updates to the project, noting the team took specific feedback and direction from this group. They softened with landscaping and broke down the scale with plantings.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I would like to see more green on that wall in the distance by clubhouse on the left. It’s stark with the stair and retaining wall.
 - It is intended you would see that terraced down to the walls beneath the brick, it should be shown covered in ivy.
- Is it more about covering the wall than terracing it?
 - The drawings didn’t catch up.
- Like most plants, Unanimous Fortunei can tend to be invasive and should be swapped, or increase the other two vines you have listed. The islands have trees but no ground cover materials, make sure it’s not just mulch. I still have concern with the overall wall height, it’s still heights of 16-feet, 13-feet, most of those were around the less public spaces, but the wall that Lois just pointed out would still benefit from breaking up that mass. I like what you did with the inside of that space but there’s still some pretty tall walls and when you pair that with the material you’re proposing, you haven’t changed the block itself and I’m really not a fan of the block you’re showing, both the scale and size as well as color. I think it’s the stark striation in the coloring that really doesn’t sit well with me, and for how much of it is used it would be a very bold move and I don’t think it’s the right material yet. The stormwater ponds still are kind of rigid in form, realize you have limited real estate. Softening those not just in landscape but in the contours would make them feel more natural and be more of an amenity to the development.

- Is there an exhibit in the application with regard to the wall material you were referring to?
- Does the landscape work out OK in the context of signage?
 - It's definitely improved. Realize there are limited choices to use of ivies. The ones selected will definitely do the job. It's still hard for me to get by the sheer amount of the retaining walls, it's just the necessary requirement for the way they decided to develop this site, but I don't like it. I still find it to look like a bunch of very similar buildings set up on a fake looking pedestal. I can handle the retaining wall materials in lesser amounts, but aesthetically I can't wrap my head around it. The things they're doing will be helpful, they might still want to consider planting annuals that will come down from the top until the vines coming up from the bottom take over for that. Most of the projects that come before us with retention ponds have nicely detailed plans with a palette selected for these types of applications, plants that can handle lots of moisture on the bottom, I would have liked to have seen that.
- A larger unit would still help. I have a particular objection to the colors on screen and the contrast of the very fake looking dark stripes against the orangey beige. The image on the bottom is the better of the two aesthetically.
- Instead of a wall with vines over it, are you doing walls where plants can grow through it? Like a green wall.
 - The intent is to climb the wall. We keep longevity in mind, we are hesitant to select species that will get really into the block so we're focused on species that will be on the surface so as to not affect the integrity of the wall.
- The top of the retaining wall looks like there's grass on top of it and a metal fence coming down. How is that little strip of grass maintained? Is safety an issue? It's an unusual combination to have a high retaining wall and fence and plantings.
 - The intent is to have the fence as close to the wall for the reason you're alluding to. Fence, landscape bed and then sidewalk and strip of grass on the top side of the wall so we don't have issues maintaining that. It's anchored independent of the wall behind it.
- The shrubs on the retaining wall side of the fence would change it significantly if ultimately we would see landscaping and the fence would be concealed after they mature somewhat.
- While this might be OK from a couple hundred feet away I don't think it's going to be as nice in person. I'm still struggling with this as a material myself because it's hard to picture any of these colors in this quantity.

ACTION:

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-2) with Asad, Klehr, DeChant, Abbas, Braun-Oddo and Weisensel voting yes; Bernau and Harper voting no. The motion noted the following:

- Preference for the cross section fence rather than the rendering.
- Naturalize the geometry of the retention pond.
- Confirm there are ground cover plantings in the tree islands.
- Eliminate Unanimous Fortunei as a climbing vine.
- Stay with the graphite tones with some sort of texture in the retaining wall materials.