



Agenda Item #: 4

Project Title: 3401 E. Washington Avenue - Planned Multi-Use Site Located in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 5. 12th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 71151

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad and Russell Knudson.

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of June 29, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a Planned Multi-Use Site located at 3401 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 5. Registered and speaking in support was Kevin Burow, representing Knothe & Bruce Architects. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Megan Walela and Mike Slavish, representing Wisconsin Housing Preservation Corporation; Mary Wright, Lisa Ruth Krueger and Lee Ferderer.

Ald. Abbas spoke in support of the project, noting the development team and neighborhood have engaged in several discussions. This parcel is in a noise contour area, and the developer will accommodate noise mitigation as part of their design, which will be extremely sustainable, as well as environmentally important. He is supportive of the project, its design, the increased housing, and how the development interacts with E. Washington and Fair Oaks Avenues. Thought has been given to the neighbors and conversations have happened with the school and neighborhood; this design reflects the community's needs.

The site layout has been enhanced by reducing the surface parking by 93 stalls, with one section of double loaded parking down the middle for more greenspace around all the buildings while maintaining the park dedication area. They further reduced paving areas by combining sidewalks for direct entry units. Building material colors have changed from a red brick to a more cohesive design and color, including cream city brick with cast stone detail elements around windows. The brick on the townhomes is repeated on the five-story building in the background, while the commercial space is highlighted by signage and outdoor plaza areas. There are direct entries to those units fronting along E. Washington Avenue, a plaza area with extensive landscaping, and a rooftop amenity area. Traffic calming measures are included as pedestrians transition across the site to the park area.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I appreciate the reduction of surface parking stalls, but I also see the commercial component along E. Washington Avenue with no street parking. How viable is the commercial storefront there without any parking?
 - We are maintaining a connection through the building to those commercial spaces on the backside. It's a busy intersection so there are no driveways allowed.
- You don't want to share a residential corridor with the backs of commercial spaces. Nobody wants to see empty commercial storefronts there. Would it be possible to set up that area so you could put four more units in there in the future, like there are on the second floor?
 - We could design to have it transition to apartments. Infrastructure could be added in the future.

- There is a strong possibility that space could be used for support services for the residents. We are trying to leave our options open in that regard, it's only 4,000 square feet. We too would do what we can to incorporate as much flexibility as possible.
- The entrance off of Fair Oaks Avenue looks like it might be more populated. There's a house right there, curious if you have a fence proposed?
 - We currently do not have a fence proposed but we certainly can put up screening in that area. We would have to verify if we're going to be required to do any sort of transitional screening between the requested CC-T zoning and the residential to the south.
- You don't want to create a barrier from the development to the walking path that connects to Fair Oaks, hopefully there is a good compromise there.
 - There are two chain link fences in that area currently. As you are looking at the proposed entrance there is signage that indicates Hawthorne School open space with a path into the park.
- I like this project and how it's holding the urban edge of the street, tucking parking behind the building, creating a neighborhood open space behind it, and I appreciate trimming back any surface parking. I think it is worth evaluating what is around here as everyday amenities to the tenants: coffee shops, restaurants, other things that might fill those commercial spaces that tenant spaces could have easy access to.
- The planting plan is a little underwhelming with blank areas along the foundation and no labels indicating what those plantings. You show pockets of shrubs with very few perennials on the entire project. What is happening along the building foundation? It would be appropriate to have more diversity in the plantings and include perennials. We mentioned last time seeing some plantings on the rooftop areas, even just containers, but it still looks like a blank paver hardscape on top of the roof. In general the renderings convey nicer spaces with landscaping than what I'm actually seeing in the plans. It is a nice courtyard space but it needs layering of other landscape elements to truly make it successful and to match what we're seeing in some of the renderings.
- You show some Quercus Ellipsoidalis pretty close to the buildings in several locations. It's probably too close for that species, swap it out with something more upright, an upright oak (Regal Prince, English oak).
- My sense is it's a little tight, you think that's a right size outdoor space for walking from Fair Oaks into the parking lot?
- I personally don't have an issue with the scale of that space. Sometimes those narrow corridors have a lot of potential, I'm picturing spaces in Europe even tighter than that.
- There's all those apartment windows right there. Not the scale of the space but the apartment windows on the ground right next to it. If building 2 were pushed further south toward the driveway to open up that space, it might help the occupants of those apartments on the ground floor gain a little privacy.
 - We'd have to study the grade access coming into the driveway.
- The pedestrian traffic doesn't need such a wide space between the buildings, maybe there's an element with a more solid feel to create more of a courtyard for those tenants facing that terrace. On E. Washington where you have seating outside commercial area, that's high speed traffic area, it's loud, opportunity to mimic to protect those occupants from the frenzied traffic and noise. Nicely developed project.
- Wonderful project. I understood the intent of this new first floor terrace is to get folks more directly to urban transit, it's a great idea. The wood trellis does seem to be more of a burden on that one side, it's very close to those windows. That does seem a little unfortunate, maybe another more solid element pulled away from one side so it's less of a burden to those tenants.
- Because Initial/Final is requested, what's happening on the roof of these buildings?
 - We have small condensing units on the roofs in the center of the buildings virtually concealed by the parapet heights. We are looking at potential installation of solar panels in the future so we don't intend to have a lot of mechanical equipment on the roofs of these buildings.
- How are you controlling stormwater from the roofs of these buildings?
 - It will all be collected internally and circulated through, we have a retention pond on southern side of the property and direct connection to storm sewer system. We are dramatically improving the situation considering it's almost 100% paved right now.
- The retention pond is truly retention, it's not a water feature like some of the renderings suggest.

- I don't think there's a blade of grass on that entire site right now. This will integrate really nicely with the neighborhood deeper into Fair Oaks. The actual experience will be much more of a pleasant neighborhood atmosphere than a big apartment building on E. Washington Avenue, it's a huge improvement for this parcel.
- We haven't talked about future signage locations and exterior lighting.
- (Secretary) There was a lot of interior parking lot lighting provided but nothing on the building or pedestrian pathways. We do not know what light fixtures are being proposed or light levels associated with them in any of the public areas.
- I could see a motion that requests those details be presented to staff upon submittal of the Final Approval documents.
- I didn't see a lot of blank walls in the elevations, which ones in particular shall we weigh in on?
- (Secretary) Building 2 is the focus as the façade faces Fair Oaks and is raised quite a bit out of ground with stairs up to front doors. The concern is making sure blank walls on that first raised elevation are screened adequately. There is a lot of blank wall as you turn the corner to the parking garage.
- That part of the blank wall didn't stand out to me. Down to the parking, I'm hoping there's some landscape relief there, having something taller on either side of that garage door. As far as the corners, they're okay to me, we're seeing a lot of this kind of corner element. It's not very exciting but it's appropriate. Where it drops down on Fair Oaks, going from 5 to 2 stories, they did a good job of identifying the corner with the stepdown at the edge of the underpass. I don't think anyone will really experience it like we are in these elevations.
- Can you speak to the accessible path for pedestrians needing assistance from interior to the street? There are a good number of stairs in that first floor plaza.
 - The accessible pathway would come out the main entry along E. Washington and have an accessible sidewalk heading to the west along E. Washington Avenue to the underpass.
- How do they get into building 1?
 - From buildings 3 or 4 they all have pedestrian connections to the sidewalk along the perimeter and in between buildings, it's just that raised plaza area between buildings 1 and 2 that you encounter steps to get down to Fair Oaks Avenue.
- I would advocate for another accessible path if there is going to be something with that pass through.

Action

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).

The motion noted the following:

- Update the planting plan to add more diversity to the plant list, including incorporating more perennials and foundation plantings.
- Look at using a different Oak species that are shown close to the building, including Regal Prince or English Oak.
- Look at potentially pulling the Fair Oaks building over toward the access drive in order to make the walkway wider for more privacy for the apartments.
- Provide a more solid screen element than the proposed wood trellis in the pedestrian plaza space for the residential units.
- Incorporate the same screen element provided on the pedestrian plaza between Buildings 1 and 2 along the E. Washington Avenue side to buffer the commercial seating area.
- Submit a lighting plan for the pedestrian areas to be reviewed and approved administratively by the Urban Design Commission Secretary.
- Add more landscaping to the roof terrace spaces. Rooftop planting plans should match the renderings in the presentation.

- The Commission will wait for a signage package to be brought forward, noting that the shallow canopy signs presented are holding signage below the second floor, but that three signs along the E. Washington Avenue frontage seem excessive.