

## AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

## REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** April 25, 2018

TITLE: 209-261 Junction Road – PD Modification  
and SIP for “Prairie Towne Center.” 9<sup>th</sup>  
Ald. Dist. (41566)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

## REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: April 25, 2018

**ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Michael Rosenblum, Tom DeChant, Cliff Goodhart, Amanda Hall, Rafeeq Asad, John Harrington, Dawn O’Kroley and Christian Harper.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of April 25, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for PD modifications and SIP for “Prairie Towne Center” located at 209-261 Junction Road. Registered in support of the project were John Seamon, James Worker, Rick Zalatoris, representing UBS Realty; and Kevin Yeska, representing JSD Professional Services.

Seamon provided an introduction regarding building placement, recognizing the UDC's previously raised concerns with front and back-of-house issues, street orientation, and how this impacted the pedestrian experience and rights-of-way. One of the enhanced pedestrian walkways the development team had proposed was widened to address the Commission's concerns. The team wanted to keep the building right up to Junction Road to keep a stronger pedestrian connection because they feel the auto-oriented nature of the development will change over time. This allows them to bring approximately 1,100 square feet of landscape area right up to the street edge, to have some form of entry in the building right off the street, and allows them to have two patios and two bicycle areas that have direct access from the right-of-way. The architecture that previously did not present any hierarchy now has an approach that would treat the façade along Junction Road differently by incorporating window display boxes for activation. The team believes it to be infeasible to move the building back.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The window boxes are not engaging. There's not a liveliness to that, I'd almost rather be able to see through and see that it's open. They become advertising or become neglected.
- This project is before us with a Junction Road address and it's not facing Junction Road. This is the third informational presentation and the comments have been pretty consistent that a building with a street address should face the street. It's a perfectly fine building but it needs to be turned to face Junction Road. To do that I imagine the tenants will want some parking in front of the building. You've got a sea of parking in this lot, you can figure it out.

- I agree.
- I think we've been consistent with our comments the last two times.
  - It's not that you haven't been consistent. We wanted to enhance the pedestrian connection, and we've gone down this path previously, putting it on Junction Road. We got some pretty clear direction from staff to have it on Junction Road.
- You can have it on Junction Road but you have to put the front-of-house there, not the back-of-the-house.
  - Let's say we flip the façades, with back-of-house facing the parking area just like we do now. We would then have two pretty clear entries from the parking field and multiple clear entries from Junction Road.
- I don't know if a simple flip is what you're looking for. It's there, just go with it. You have patios, landscaped area, why would you want your parking lot to be the front?
  - Because the restaurateur wants it there, they want people to be able to walk right in. These people have a certain box that's cookie cutter. These people have this down to a science and if they can't fit in, they just pass. We're doing this because sales are stagnant and we need food. Food increases the number of trips, lengthens the stay, thereby drives sales. We need to do things to attract customers.
- A lot of chain restaurants also have a presence in urban areas where they get what they get in terms of a building, and they make it work. I don't see how this could be any different than that. This is a shopping center but there's a lot of housing across the way, and to have that facing the back of the building is disrespectful. It's really close to being there, if things were flipped a little bit you could have back-of-the-house and still have an entrance.
- We have not said you can't have parking in front of the building. Have the building face Junction Road. This is the Urban Design Commission, this isn't the Olive Garden Cookie Cutter Approval Committee.
  - But that's who we're leasing to.
- We're doing our job, you're doing your job. But looking at Land's End as a template, you can't say this is going to turn into a pedestrian walkable edge on one hand and then say no it won't work that way on the other hand. The reality is this is car-oriented.
- Maybe there's an opportunity for non-cookie-cutter chains that aren't so set in their ways as to square footage and design.
  - We'll take a look at anybody, but we're concerned about credit, can they pay the rent, single users have difficulty expanding because they don't have the cash to do so. These people who would be leasing these spaces will put in triple that. Somebody like Chipotle has the money to expand and keep expanding. The middle space will be non-food, ideally something quick serve. Typically to justify the cost of construction you have to be in the 30s.
- Site plan #2 has more than 40 stalls in front, I think that's the direction.
  - We had to get Roundy's and then Kroger to be on board with this, and went through that whole legal process with them to agree to a site plan that we started to go down that put it on Junction Road, we did that because that's what we heard from staff, which was fine. But now that's what they're expecting, they've got stalls per their lease and they're not wanting to budge from that. We're trying to make that the best we can. It's also having the front facing the tenants.
- You're saying there wouldn't be any entry on the back-of-house?
  - That's how they would wheel in the deliveries.
- Where would the delivery truck park?
  - We're going to have to set up a rule that deliveries will have to be done before 10:00. They'll park in the side, wheel their stuff in and be gone. That's very common shopping center practice.
- Staff likes the on-street siting plan?

- (Firchow) Staff had initially recommended the building be oriented towards Junction Road. Based on the latest UDC review, staff agrees with UDC's comments for the building to have a strong street orientation towards Junction Road. Staff could support, as UDC suggested, a small amount parking and the building facing Junction Road. We shared the same concern about having a deadened façade. The other option that we asked the group to take a look at was moving back-of-the-house at mid building so essentially you would have two open street fronts and wouldn't have a back-of-the-house facing the street. The example given was one on University Avenue.
- What if the back-of-the house were up against that entry lane into the shopping center so that the front looked at the parking field?
- The problem though with the boulevard entrance as the main entrance to the center, if it was anchoring that corner and the back-of-the house was facing Kroger's, but as everybody's coming in there...
  - One of the things I'm hearing, if there is something more like a mirror of what we're proposing, that at least gets us closer to a solution for front of house and back of house.
- I didn't hear that that solution was getting any traction. I don't want to delude you on that.
- I think you're close. If this is your third informational, I think it's clear that the Commission is not looking for back-of-the-house on the front of the street, so I would accept that and try to move forward knowing you cannot have the back-of-house on the front of the street where the address is. They're cookie cutter buildings but they're also urban density. If you need a McDonald's here you're going to fit it in however you can get it, they have to make it work, that's what they get paid for.

### **ACTION:**

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.