

AGENDA # 9

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: March 17, 2010
TITLE: 666 Wisconsin Avenue – PUD(GDP-SIP) – Edgewater Hotel Expansion. 2 nd Ald. Dist. (15511)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: March 17, 2010	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Bruce Woods, Marsha Rummel, Richard Slayton, John Harrington, Dawn O’Kroley, Jay Ferm, Mark Smith, Todd Barnett, Richard Wagner and Ron Luskin.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 17, 2010, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a PUD(GDP-SIP) located at 666 Wisconsin Avenue. Luskin recused himself with a conflict of interest. Appearing on behalf of the project were Amy Supple and Sarah Carpenter, representing Hammes; Ken Saiki, representing Ken Saiki Design; David Manfredi, representing Elkus Manfredi; Scott Watson, representing Carpenter Local Union 314; Scott Vaughn, representing Building Trades Council; Dan Murray, representing The Edgewater; Mark Huber, representing BT Squared, Inc.; Mike Brassler, representing Mortonson Construction; Steve Bretlow, representing Building & Construction Trades Council South Central Wisconsin; Mark Hoffmann, representing International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 159; Ald. Bridget Maniaci, Kim Donovan, James Tye, Rory Linder, Judy Karofsky, Nick Weisnicht, John Baltes, Gary Stebnitz, Dennis Davidsaver, Craig Argall, Christopher Culver, Tim Sherry, Pete Stern, Tom Bergamini, Steve Harms, James Greel, Tim Valentyn, Brian Denley, Alice Mowbray, Stuart Zadra, Terry Nelson, Ron Hanko, Rosemary Lee, Scott Faulkner, Lynne Faulkner, Joel Kapusta, Ellen Seufferer, Richard Tatman, Robert N. Keller, Kristopher Benish, Dan Burke and James Meicher. Registered in opposition and wishing to speak were Peter Ostlind, James McFadden, Eugene Devitt, Fred Mohs, Cedric Price, John Sheean, Ledell Zellers, Kitty Rankin and John Martens. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Pat Sheldon, Fae Dremock and Aaron Crandall. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Edward Kuharski. Registered neither in support nor opposition and not wishing to speak were Ald. Julia Kerr, Tyler Holland and Tim Pierie.

The plans as presented emphasized the movement of the upper story guest room floors 15-feet to the east, along with relocation of structured parking across the Langdon Street right-of-way extended with separate access on the NGL property allowing the elimination of the auto court portion of the upper deck plaza. The plans also emphasized the provision of truck loading, bus storage and dumpster location within the attached loading dock’s interior. Following the presentation Ald. Kerr spoke in appreciation of the efforts of the Urban Design Commission in providing for improvements to the project as proposed. Public testimony both before and against the project noted the following:

- Project should celebrate the Edgewater in its original form but doesn’t. It doesn’t honor its Beaux Arts elements with its fussy design.

- Question the fit into the surrounding neighborhood; it doesn't.
- Relevant to the height provisions for Downtown Design Zone #2, it did not include this site since it was already limited to a 50-foot height limit as required within a historic district which precluded its need to include. Also concern about the gross volume and issue with providing good access at the public street.
- Context photos in packet not indicative of the scale of the neighborhood and homes. The Comprehensive Plan supports stepping down from Capitol, as well as five stories within the Mansion Hill area with the Langdon District at 2-3 stories.
- Inappropriate building in size and scale.
- Opposed, concern with accessibility issues, meets accessibility minimums but circuitous route provides no direct access to the lake.
- Suggest using an elevator to provide direct access from the upper terrace to the lakefront.
- Move building back 30-feet and take off two stories which are dedicated for condominium use.
- Serious issue with sufficiency of parking far away from alternative resources; critical to provide more on-site parking and provide more loading.
- Problem with noise in Mansion Hill, a quiet residential neighborhood where music events are improper in a residential neighborhood 12-feet away.
- Problem with providing bike parking next to residents, not next to the hotel, stairs next to residential not next to hotel, hotel way too big for site; needs to be built to code.
- Alternative designs can provide that the hotel can meet all criteria with efficiently designed and with removal of top two floors.
- Issue with adequacy of parking, need 500 stalls to satisfy Zoning Code requirements.
- Loading area located in the fire access path which is also proposed for bus loading.
- Lower three stories should have 10-foot setback as required according to the 60's ordinance.
- Plans provide for a lack of information on the parking garage elevations.
- Volume and mass of building has increased closer to the lakeshore building, taller.
- Corner café impacts not addressed.
- Many unresolved issues such as no public agreement on use of plaza, adequacy of public restrooms, entry and exiting too close to Wisconsin Avenue, no sections are detailed on plantings and planters, no details on original Edgewater rooftop demolition and improvements, no details on signage and lighting, the landscape plan versus building elevations don't match along with no details on parking ramp gate house.

Ald. Maniaci spoke in support of the project noting her happiness and excitement about it with details provided especially elevations and renderings where the building designs are better because of input and critique.

Continued discussion by the Commission noted the following:

- Question breaking a promise to people who have already invested in this area and neighborhood relying on adopted plans and ordinances.
- Question whether Ald. Maniaci will recommend that the project go back to Landmarks for further consideration. Maniaci noted agreement in favor of the recommendation.

Brad Murphy then spoke to issues raised with the underlying zoning requirements for the R6H Historic District, as well as that portion of the site zoned OR Office Residential, in addition to a discussion on the applicable criteria to be utilized in making a determination that the PUD standards are met. Murphy suggested that the Planned Unit Development District (PUD) Criteria for Approval relevant to Character and Intensity of Land Use and Preservation and Maintenance of Open Space provisions as most applicable in the Commission making a finding on the project to the Plan Commission and Common Council.

Continued discussion by the Commission on site and landscape design noted the following:

- The packet doesn't match the old display renderings; Saiki noted that the renderings were more accurate.
- Question a way to provide to incorporate more green plaza areas.
- The concept of snow chutes, needs more work.
- Question the vegetative strip on the upper plaza, it will block views.
- Utilize the paving pattern design to abbreviate movement and parking in the circle of the upper plaza to limit fire access areas use for parking.
- Simplify ADA access.
- In response to issues to speak to compatibility of the massing of the tower itself, Manfredi noted that the design pinches the building diagonally, vertically and horizontally to reduce mass and height in overall appearance.
- Make the penthouse more beautiful, looks "trailer-like." Question can it be made as equal quality of the building.
- Penthouse elevation taller than the NGL building, look at alternative for height reduction for the new tower, examine reducing floor to floor from 10-feet to 9'6".

Luskin noted his conflict of interest with the project and his recusal. With this notice, Ferm was a voting member for the record.

ACTION:

On a motion by Wagner, seconded by O'Kroley, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-4) with Woods breaking a tie vote of (4-4) with Wagner, O'Kroley, Rummel and Slayton voting in favor and Ferm, Harrington, Barnett and Smith voting no.

In support of the motion Wager noted that many of those 19th century stone mansions were still there but when we created the historic district it was not a 19th century neighborhood. Those unique buildings were there but the 19th century neighborhood was not there. And so the purpose of the historic district was not to preserve the 19th century neighborhood, which was long gone, but rather to try and keep some of those houses which were so unique to Madison's history still there. The tool was to try to preserve those mansions because they were important and significant and my own gut sense is that for things like Third Lake Ridge, historic districts have worked pretty well, University Heights, they've worked pretty well, they've encouraged a lot of preservation. But I'm not sure they're sufficient tools for Mansion Hill, I think Mansion Hill needs some additional tools. So I'm not as whetted to clinging to just the historic district as the only way to try to do preservation of Mansion Hill. I think we need to think about that as a City in a much broader way. Approving this project is not going to repeal the historic district, they're still going to be there. This project would change the zoning for one parcel that is now RH6 to add it to the rest of the parcel which is OR and we never put an overlay zoning in the OR part so that's why there are not height restrictions in the OR, so really the question is whether it's appropriate to add this additional parcel, not the question of the height in my mind. If you look at the lakefront, none of that lakefront between the existing Edgewater and James Madison is that small residential scale, you have the barracks in there, you have several high rise apartment buildings, you have the University's concrete style boathouse, so it's not the lakeshore that is that 19th century neighborhood, as I said it's largely gone. The other thing that was interesting during this debate is that we've heard some of the opponents say oh it will be fine if we simply just lay it on its side and they've shown a model that sort of took all that mass and laid it over the National Guardian Life property. Either the mass is too big whether it's upright or laid down, but it's the same mass, and so I'm not sure it's the question of the mass. So then you get back to the question of the actual design we have. I do want to compliment the architect. We have seen I think remarkable design work on this, and such good work we should have on other projects in the City we would be very happy with. Any project has pluses

and minuses, in this case solving that 70's mistake is a big thing for the rest of the City I think, because it gives us lake access and views. The other thing that is a Citywide issue is the restoration of the 1940's building and I think that's a big advance for preservation. Condos as owner-occupied is another thing on the City's plan, and sharing parking is one of those policies that we've talked about for a long while. So there's a lot of goods with this project and perhaps some drawbacks. I come down on the side that it is approvable and the design I think is a masterpiece of design, for us not to recommend it would sort of say something about well, you can take a project and change it and come up with a better design and then we won't recommend it, and I don't think that's a good way to act as a City either. Further discussion on the motion by the Commission noted:

- Ald. Rummel noted that, "for me as an Alder who represents three historic districts and a national/federal district, so I'm unique I think on the council and they're different districts but they each share this notion of the visually compatible area and so I feel personally very concerned that that standard not get diminished by anything that we do here. And so that's why I asked Alder Maniaci if she was going to recommend to the developers that they go back to Landmarks. I heard her say yes and I would reaffirm my request. When I look at the PUD standards which I've had in front of me all night long, I think there's still some questions that the PC will be addressing and the compatibility with the physical nature of the area, I really would like to hear what Landmarks has to say before I finally decide because at the Council I have to go back and overturn, or not, a decision which was a previous iteration of this plan.
- My biggest concern is still the precedent that's being set.
- We spoke about the massing of the tower itself and how that's compatible on a smaller scale to the neighborhood and to the changes that have been made to the design. It's had substantial changes from what was first brought to us and it's becoming more and more compatible and I look forward to seeing during them during the final review process getting down to a level of providing details on the fenestration of this building and I think with that the building becomes even more compatible with the site at the level.
- This has been a tough project. I support the principal of the project, I think it's a great use of the site. There are so many pluses that you guys have brought to it and I really respect the work that you put in, you've been very responsive and you're gone above and beyond in a lot of cases in terms of digging into rethinking your design from moving, how you evolved the parking garage to moving the parking garage entirely. I really think you guys have moved mountains in that sense. This is a unique location, it's a confluence of historic districts but it's also a confluence of different densities, old vs. new, it's part of why it's so complicated, it's also why it's such a cool site. I still think we have a fair amount of progress to go on the architectural side because I think that it's not quite there yet, but I can see it's within sight in terms of it being good enough. At this point I'm leaning towards initial approval, but I do think that there is still a ways to go before we can say it's good enough.
- I believe that the team has made an honest effort to try to address the issue of height with this proposed building, specifically the tower, I still find it unacceptable mostly because as I mentioned back in August, you've got a privileged site here. You've got the privilege of sitting in the front row of a performance if you will, on the lake, and yet that doesn't seem to be good enough here, it seems to be the case that the applicant feels the need to stand up rather than sit in the front row. I can't describe it better than that, I mean that says it all. However, they have made the case time and time again as they've come before us, that they need all these rooms, they need this height, they need this mass, or this project isn't feasible. I'm not sure this is the only way to accomplish it, I'm not convinced. So as this project is currently proposed before us this evening I cannot support it based on that particular issue.
- As presented this project does lots of great things, and I would hope that everybody even if you're in opposition can actually recognize it. It restores an old building, it provides lakeside access, it improves the view, it provides amenities, but I'm still struggling with the height as I'm sure all of you are aware from my questions.

The motion passed with the following conditions:

1. Provide detailing on the plaza and how the landscape is going to affect the views, how people are going to flow pedestrian traffic through the plaza.
2. Initial approval specifically be site design relative to the mass of the new structure with everything that's on the ground still open for massaging.
3. More work is needed, specifically details of the café space and corridor and entry with some close-ups of the main entry and that of the wheelchair accessible entry to the end of the building.
4. In the elevations and renderings, you're looking at it from a long distance off and you can't see the details. It's a big building in a complicated space and so what we're going to need provided are the details. For example, how the stairs actually look along with what the entrance to the parking garage, how the plaza is going to be with the ballroom (if you're standing on the plaza how does it look into the ballroom or look out?), along with all the requirements for final approval including all details of the site and landscape plan elements, the 40's building restoration and the extra floor, including the finish of the penthouse of the tower and all affected building elevations.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 5, 6.5, 7 and 8.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 666 Wisconsin Avenue

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	5	6	6	-	-	5	5	5
	7	6	6	6	-	6	7	7
	5	7	6	-	-	6	7	6.5
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8

General Comments:

- New tower as proposed is simply too tall and too massive. NGL clearly represents a mistake, not a precedent for new development. Redevelopment is desired and this project as currently proposed comes close to bringing a solution. However, it has too many fatal flaws – height, massing, location, context and use.
- Project has come a long way. It provides for tremendous public benefits. The height is fundamentally incompatible with the rhythm along Wisconsin Avenue. While the plaza will be a beautiful public space, the architecture quality of the new tower is not high enough to compensate for the height.