

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 25, 2017

TITLE: 302 South Gammon Road – New
Development of a Mixed Commercial
Center. 9th Ald. Dist. (44779)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

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ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; John Harrington, Cliff Goodhart, Tom DeChant, Richard Slayton, Lois Braun-Oddo, Rafeeq Asad and Dawn O’Kroley.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 25, 2017, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of new development of a mixed commercial center located at 302 South Gammon Road. Appearing on behalf of the project were Melissa Huggins, Douglas Kozel, Jeff Vercauteren and John Livesey, all representing Livesey Company; Pat Saiki and Jeff Steen, representing Ken Saiki Design. Also registered and speaking in support, but with concerns, were Janet Hirsch, representing Tamarack Trails Community Services Association, Inc.; Judy Bluel, James Steinbach, Christina Finet, Maryanne Huttleston and Caryl Terrell. Registered in support but not wishing to speak were David Huttleston, Sohail Khan and Mary Beth Growney Selene.

Kevin Firchow, Principal Planner gave a brief overview of the project, noting the Urban Design Commission’s role in approving the design standards, as well as any addition standards added that would need approval from this body. The Urban Design Commission is also an advisory body to the Plan Commission on the overall master plan development.

The entire site is 23 acres with a proposed mix of retail and office uses scattered throughout. Much of the west and north sides are bound by Tamarack Condominiums, West Towne Mall to the south and Memorial High School to the east. The MXC zoning is new to the development team and Planning staff, with the team tackling the first iteration of design standards. The design standards should be thought about in context with the architecture and landscape design. Phase 1 includes five buildings more commercial and retail in character than much of the rest of the development might turn out to be. There are 106 apartments with 106 underground parking stalls, with retail totaling just over 60,000 square feet. Retail parking consists of 425 stalls on the surface and underground. Office space totals 22,000 square feet with 46 parking stalls underground. Bicycle parking totals over 200 stalls. In spite of the size of the site there is significant topography to factor in. Building material samples were shown for Buildings 1-4 including brick, hardiboard and lap siding. The parking structure will have a green roof for additional outdoor spaces and activities. The landscape plan will have an emphasis on sustainability, especially stormwater management practices. They focused highly on native species

and cultivated material, speaking to the architecture. A majority of this project uses mature canopy trees because building signage and wayfinding is important for this development.

Janet Hirsch spoke as a nearby resident. Concerns about the development were outlined in a letter submitted to the Commission. Tamarack Trails is a residential area with a lot of common space and mature trees. The landscaping is a point of pride in their neighborhood. Building heights are also of concern; they are requesting a maximum of up to five stories. Integration of phases, parking and open spaces were also mentioned as being of concern to the neighbors. These concerns are more with the master plan rather than Phase 1 of the project.

Judy Bluel spoke as a resident of Tamarack Trails. The transition between 302 South Gammon and going into Tamarack should be seamless. She showed photographs of the neighborhood, pointing out concerns about changing views with the construction of taller buildings, as well as the amount of greenspace and the quiet the number of trees allows for. They want to be sure the trees and the wildlife are protected and saved.

James Steinbach noted his support for the project as being good for the City. The Tamarack neighborhood is a beautiful neighborhood with lots of greenery and open space. He hopes to keep the setbacks already established in order to maintain trees and greenspace. This can be done with the right balance.

Christina Finet spoke as a Tamarack resident, noting the importance of trees and setbacks. She showed photographs of their deck and tree line with concern that there be enough of a buffer from her property and the new development.

Maryanne Huttleston spoke as a neighbor bordering the development. She pointed out a few considerations beyond what was covered in the presentation. She overlooks the area planned for senior housing. While realizing that views are not guaranteed, light is and taller buildings will obscure the light coming in as their primary source of light. Fewer stories should be considered for this reason. Traffic is also of concern as there is an apartment complex nearby with lots of children. The traffic study needs to take a very careful look at that situation. She would like to see more usable greenspace; the landscaping looks fabulous, but there is not an area where the adults can bring coffee with their kids and watch the kids run around. That would be a beneficial element to this project.

Caryl Terrell distributed additional photos showing property lines from above, as well as the amount of vegetation that will likely be gone. Replacing that with a parking lot and tall buildings, along with HVAC equipment is not compatible. The neighborhood has a good working relationship with the developer, but wants reiterated that the neighborhood is concerned about heights, shading studies, traffic studies and greenspace/plantings.

Firchow discussed the master plan for West Place Phase 1, with the request of the applicant to approve the entire master plan. The design standards would be a second stand-alone document to be approved by this body. The UDC's motion tonight will need to include positively or otherwise that the recommendations of Planning staff be incorporated.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I have concerns about approving the specificity of future phases.
- If we were to refer the mast plan for specificity and other questions we might have, is Phase 1 on hold, does it go to the Plan Commission?

- You can make the recommendation to the Plan Commission and Common Council that only a portion of the development is approved. You would be on record supporting Phase 1. But you are the approving body on the design standards.
- You talked about creating spaces but you didn't mention lighting.
 - All the lighting is LED, night sky compliant, designed so it does not leave the property. Most typically along Memorial Drive we're using light poles that are fairly short.
- I wanted to know how this will affect the neighbors (the light).
- It's reduced so much we can't read it.
- How much demolition are you doing for the first phase, and does demolition extend into the other phased property, what will be there until those phases?
 - Rural Insurance is demolished in the first phase. The "diagonal" building is going to remain for the foreseeable future.
- Is the demolition happening right at that phase 1 line, or are you going to repurpose some of the land temporarily for that?
 - We're reconfiguring this drive a bit to access that parking. In terms of site disturbance, it's all clearly within this boundary.
- I don't think we have what we'd consider a very clear master plan document on this, that's part of the problem. We heard the concerns from neighbors about where the heights are, but we don't have that kind of a document here. I'm having trouble thinking this is a master plan we could approve.
 - We could walk through it right now.
- I'd rather have documentation on the specific things we're looking for. The buildings need to be identified not just by number but architectural use; we saw that earlier but it's not here tonight. Show setbacks in feet from the property line, that level of detail for a planning document, that's what I need to see.
 - We are all trying to figure this out, we did the best we could so please continue to add these bits of information which will help us, because ultimately the City's goal is to create a new zoning district so we can get away from PD-SIP. I would strongly recommend that the landscape architects take a look at what Saiki has written for landscape standards, and the architects take a look at what Doug has written for the design standards.
- For the benefit of the neighborhood each phase needs to be shown as how it would stand alone for 5-10 years as this phases out; show what is left behind in those areas where you've done demolition but you're not constructing, how you get through the site, things like that.
- It would help to see light studies to see if the heights would impact other residences. Shade studies.
- If this were a PD we would have those kinds of things here, they're just not here at the table today. The other thing is in some ways you're trying to put this on a design review board, but when you talk about who is going to compose it, but you're not talking about who is appointing those members, and that kind of specificity is necessary.
- Instead of saying that design should respond to the nature of the building, I'd prefer to see landscape and architecture should be integrated together, one's not leading one or the other but they're working together. Under diversity and detail, the two need to be integrated.
- In your writing you talk a lot about stormwater, but can you walk me through where it's going to be daylighted, how it all sequences together and then how people are going to interpret this.
 - We're going to be establishing an underground cistern that will collect water underneath Memorial Drive and discharge through the plaza to the storm sewer system. The basin isn't big enough for the entire area.
- If you want people to understand how stormwater works you're going to have to have plaques or something to explain it, which would be great. People need to learn about stormwater and this is a great place to do it.

- I really would encourage you to find different bike racks, those aren't good bike racks.
- I do have some concerns with the landscaping. The area where Building 6 is going to go in Phase 2, you're doing a lot of planting and things are going to take 5, 6, 10 years. I don't think it makes sense; I would do something simpler. You could do something with ornamentals, but this is not going to mature for many years.
- There are some plant combinations that I'm a little concerned about. Some of the islands are planted with rings on the outside and creates a static kind of planting bed, like you're creating a moat around it with plants inside it. Create something more interesting. It would be nice to have a regional context if you're using native species. Dianella is an aggressive plant, unless you have a huge area of grass it's going to take over. You've got Oaks with upright Junipers, unless you're going to phase that in it's not going to work.
- My concerns are how you're going to buffer from the neighbors. I don't think they should have to necessarily see front and center your building, and that's one of their concerns. How are you going to set back those buildings that border the neighbors? I'd also like you to show us what buildings are going to be demolished instead of just the roofs.
- For us approving it as a plan, it should have all of that information clearly presented. We're excited about the project, we like Phase 1, but as an overall plan we're finding gaps.
- This is a great starting place to talk about your concepts, but I need to see more specifics.
 - I took the zoning text and tried to weave in the new ideas and it became cumbersome and onerous. Instead we refer to the MXC District, so these are all laying on top of very specific zoning requirements, which is why we're trying to create these principles.
- Things like lot coverage should be part of a record and document that we act on and that the public bodies act on so that in the future that is clear, so the neighbors who have concerns now understand that that's part of a document. Just 85% maximum seems to me allows the whole area to be developed at 85%.
- (Staff) The guiding document for the open space would be as shown on the approved master plan, in addition to the minimum standards in the Zoning Code.
- Alder Carter would also like a demolition schedule.
- (Secretary) This is an attempt to provide for a different type of zoning that doesn't involve every single phase coming to the Commission for design review, it's a great departure from how things have been done in the past. At the same time a lot of it is covered by the Zoning Code, but there has to be certain relationships between the master plan and what the code is showing, so that everybody who looks at the plan has a sense of comfort that it meets the Zoning Code, they can see it, in order to provide answers to the neighbors. The master plan should cover drainage. It's a larger scope but it gives credence that it's all being thought of at a master plan level.
- How have you addressed some of the concerns of the neighboring property owners? If you can't answer that now, when you come back please show us how you've addressed those concerns about building heights, buffer zone, shading, etc.
 - Absolutely. The biggest one we got from our neighborhood meetings was the location of the bike path which we moved to accommodate concerns. We added a lot more landscaping too, that's one of the bigger ones. When you go to a master planning level, I struggle with what we're going to be able to give you. We can absolutely label things better so we can show how this actually lays out in terms of setbacks, heights and uses. What we can't 100% do, for instance one of the neighbors was reading what would happen right along here; we know as high as this can be is 25-feet or two-stories, and again this information is all buried in here and hard for you to find. I hear you. I would like the Commission to recognize that the uses that go into this building are to some extent going to determine the shape of the building. I don't want to lock us into something but we want to give you the detail you need.

- But the range of heights and the setbacks you will have on them will determine the shading, and that's one of the concerns that the neighbors have.
 - My expectation was that we would do formal shading studies when we actually had a project. If we do it now, I wouldn't want to hang my hat on it.
- We understand these are not designs yet, but there has to be something that is more defined for us to give such a blanket approval on this master plan to these things.
- When you say you want 3-6 stories, that may be fine with us. But we may find out when you do a shadow study that 3-5 is all we're going to say the master plan should allow. The height is going to be an issue.
- A little bit very generically about topography; it's very hard for us to tell what's high and what's low on this site.
- These design guidelines are too thin.
 - Today I had a discussion with someone about hardiplank versus hardiboard. Just a range of materials.
- I'm less concerned about the code per se and some of its fine details than a public document that lets more citizens understand enough about the master plan so that when something comes in, this is what was talked about at this time and was approved, and they don't have that sense. Many of them do not read code.
- The spaces between the buildings, the nestling and the contours, those are things that we don't see being encouraged in the document.

ACTION:

On a motion by Harrington, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0). The motion to refer provided for address of the above stated concerns relative to approval of the master plan.