

AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 19, 2012

TITLE: 306 West Main Street – PUD(GDP-SIP) –
11 Story Apartment Building. 4th Ald. Dist.
(27412)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 19, 2012

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Henry Lufler, Melissa Huggins, Richard Slayton, Dawn O’Kroley, Tom DeChant, John Harrington and Cliff Goodhart.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 19, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a PUD(GDP-SIP) located at 306 West Main Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were John Seamon, Joe Alexander, Adam Winkler and Att. Bill White, all representing The Alexander Company; Justin Lee Frahm, representing JSD Professional Services, Inc.; and Jonathan Cooper, representing the Bassett Neighborhood. The Secretary stated that Planning staff has no issue with the mass, height of the building or overall site plan, but do have concerns with the expansive use of metal on the façade, compared to its companion building at 309 (adaptive reuse). There have been some improvements in terms of looking at changes in plane where the metal changes color but at the same time the addition of other materials outside of the metal palette are still of some concern. In addition, there is concern with the introduction of larger windows in some areas as a break away from punched openings, and in looking at the revised design they still have concern for the uninterrupted corrugated metal and the need to add other materials outside of the profound use of metal. Seamon presented revised plans addressing the Commission’s comments from their previous review of the project. Images of the pedestrian experience were shown with images of the entry and terrace. Focusing on the view and design it has been more carefully flushed out from a landscape and architectural perspective, with the notion of the front porch becoming a bit more clear. They have looked at the possibility of a green roof. The top of the 11-story portion of the building is about 13,200 square feet in terms of roof area, but what is involved in turning that into a live green roof is cost prohibitive and doesn’t make sense relative to the budget of the project. However, they do find value in that and have chosen to use the two 5-story portions of the building. Those roofs are accessible by two of the units in the building and they are now putting a live green roof on the perimeter of that portion of the building in both instances, with the interior portion of that roof being a patio; many residents will be looking down on that view of the building with the residents having opportunities for plants on the patio. He addressed window size in terms of how this building compares to the fenestration of 309. They are about 3% apart with 309 being slightly heavier. The size and configuration of the windows were chosen very carefully with the interior of the units driving whether they are clear story or a large 4x4 or 4x6, as an example. It makes a big difference depending on where you are in the building. The design intent is to say that Capitol West has a design sensibility with an architectural presence that stands on its own; this is a “family member” to 309 with

the massing tying those two buildings together, while being able to stand on its own. Site context photos were provided for consideration of this design versus its context. Changes have been made to the exterior to take advantage of the Commission's comments regarding the vents. The previous scheme had examples of these vents, which are about 40" tall. They've been turned into stronger design elements of the building so they become less indicative of the function but also serve to bring some verticality and unify, top to bottom, the massing and the building. They played more with the push and pull of the building with the windows being modeled more in a way they will be built. All of the units have balconies with 70% of them being walk-out and 30% being French balconies. The articulation of these balconies is very important and an opportunity for layering in another texture of color, as well as the push and pull on the façade. Building materials discussed include primarily metal panels (3 different profiles) and masonry block (8x16 format). The masonry block may be upped in terms of its joint pattern and size. The three metal panels are then used with different color combinations with the intention to get different textural effects to resonate throughout the façades (color samples were distributed). This will take a lighter, airier, cleaner and crisper approach to the corner material than its "sister" building at 309, while also using metal panel. The bone white is very light in comparison to what prints out.

One of the big design intents from a landscape architect standpoint is to have those two things (309) work well together as a unified block. Frahm discussed the plans for creating a consistent plan with its own identity. They analyzed what worked and what struggled this past summer season; a number of species were replaced or discarded altogether. Highlights include shade based perennial designs on the northeast façade which allow for scaling around the foundation and some of the balconies. Outdoor seating was accommodated with mostly a greenscape that has a number of species to highlight color with a green backdrop. A bump-in allows for a deep shade area that works around the amenities of a seating area and bicycle parking. Working around the front entry and the asymmetrical mirror of 309, the intent is to rededicate that area to species that provide some layering of scale, color and backdrop. Areas with limited light (entries into the buildings) provide interest while maximizing the greenspace by delineating the planting beds and dedicating as much foundation to planting space as they could. The windows that are set in adjacent to the door entries are not compromised by the plantings. Working along the edge of the first floor (Washington Place entry) incorporates architectural grasses to carry through a rhythm from 309 to this façade, in undulating heights. Where the foundation is exposed at 6-7 feet they have suggested a vertical element with seasonal interest to provide that coverage on that prominent corner. Junipers will provide height to about 10-feet with coverage happening in due time. Focusing their efforts on the courtyard to provide a number of amenities and layered interests sets this apart from 309. The three distinct zones include the entry, a social/public gathering space with tables, seating and a trellis, and architectural materials included in the hardscape (pavers) with a design that provides a seating area without compromising circulation. Artificial, drainable turf will be used in lieu of using sod (a sample was distributed). This has an internal drain set on a paver base and can be washed/rinsed with a hose. It looks formal yet natural with a natural thatch. The entry plaza contains an ornamental tree bosque with LED uplighting to allow this to act as an architectural element in this internal entry space. Moving to the accessible entry the trees provide seasonal interest (Pear) to create a unique entry with a number of perennial colors and architectural grasses. The seating area also provides seasonal interest as well as shade trees. A number of species provide vertical elements to break up the architectural massing (climbing vines, Clematis, Honeysuckle vine).

Jonathan Cooper spoke as the Chair of the Bassett Neighborhood Steering Committee. The development has been well-received and has been looked at over four steering committee meetings. Issues of concern for committee members include the entrance to the loading dock; the current plan does not have an exterior door and would control security with the interior doors coming into the building. Aesthetically having a large opening without a door is of concern, as well as with unauthorized activity in that space since it's not secured. They are pleased with the idea of the green roof on the lower parts of the building, but would make a push for the 11th floor green roof as well. It would do a lot to help mitigate the heat sink of this development while help

control rain water issues. They appreciate the expense, but considering one of the big pitches for the redevelopment of this block was a pedestrian bridge that is now gone and was a big selling point, that money could not be spent on a green roof.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The metal panel profile of 309 takes the corner very nicely.
- I'd argue you have two more materials to play with and interject – the concrete base and the anodized aluminum storefront. In thinking about staff questions when comparing this building with 309, their anodized storefront wraps corners and cheats the eye on window proportions. Make sure your building is as strong.
- The VR panel profile taking the corner is fantastic and very clean. The corrugated metal taking the corner may have a trim piece, which again is another piece to your palette.
- Take a look at how the other building supports its balconies.
- The one thing you have that they don't is wood; I'd play with that a little bit. For example, if you wrapped all the interior windows in the stair tower you've made me more interest in how much wood is tied in.
- The change in plane in metal, the two have the same cornice and you may want a different cornice (in terms of profile/elevation height). It may help your depth to seem larger.
- It's quite deliberate that this building has a punched feeling. With all the horizontality in the siding, if some of these windows were connected to give a sense of banding as they are on 309 with the aluminum, I like that.
- I don't understand the entrance. Are there windows behind here? (Yes). When you're looking out through these units you're looking out through a void?
 - Another way to think about this is this entry is a 3-story cube with the top two-stories and the back half carved out that become outdoor space for these units.

What do you see out of the bedroom window?

Another opening to allow as much daylighting into the unit as possible.

- I'm concerned about the canopy being 20-feet in the air and being very thin. It doesn't provide any shelter and you'll be encumbered by structural realities. When you come back if you could represent what counter-flashings are going to do, and depth of structure so we see if it gets bulkier or not, when it's detailed like that. Wind or rain, I'm not sure that will provide much shelter.
 - It's primary function is to maximize daylight at that entry level because the vestibule is so tight.
 - There are no doors out to the deck.
 - Correct. This would be where the sliding glass doors would be.
 - Will the elevator have an overrun or is it back away?
 - It's back away a little bit.
- If it's going to be seen please represent it in the final rendering.
- I was struggling with the height of the entryway. Now that we can tell what the entry is, it's beautiful but it does not feel welcoming to me. It's a little too out of scale for a pedestrian. I think of buildings you have on Park Avenue in NYC where the entries are so central to bringing you in to the building and give you a sense of shelter and draw you in. This doesn't draw me in. I'd like you to think about that a little bit more.
 - The second-floor floor plan, have you thought about for those units that open up onto the townhome patio behind, how those are actually going to be used? If I were renting those units I would very quickly be spilling out into what is public space. You need to think about, for those units, how you're going to tell those tenants they can't actually put their chairs out there, or you need to decide a way to carve out that space because they're going to use it that way.

- This door here, it's really unfortunate.
- The turf, just not digging the turf. How about thyme or something dense that smells when you step on it. It doesn't have to look great but it has to be green. I think this turf would cheapen the effect of this lovely patio area.
- Some areas of your planting plan work great. What you've got going for you is the use of taller grasses. You've got this large masculine structure but these smaller plantings will be lost by the structure. Imagine the area where it slopes down, you scale it down but relative to the building they're just the same. I'd almost rather see a strong massing of geometric elements right there. I almost see taking the elements, taller pieces of a prairie but just have this taller grass that has interest with a perennial sunflower, things like that that are mixed, maybe 3-5 pieces that would contrast from around the corner. Maybe something more horizontal that would be strong. Less preciousness. Check out the Tobacco Row houses. Think in terms of big bold statements. This is similar to The Ideal where you've got great architecture but the plants just don't work with the scale of the building.
- Since the height is difficult to achieve you really need to go with the massings. Big broad strokes and masses of big plants.
- I would caution you with the Alpine Currant. I'm not sure how well that's going to do.
 - It's above the courtyard elevation where it tapers.
 It's going to need that full sun.
- The Pachysandra is going to need acidic soil.
 - Less species and more quantity.
- I have to agree on the turf. Lilyturf might work.
- On your green roof off the accessible decks, along areas near the parapet, make sure it's adjusted because of the distances so nothing goes over the edge.
- Steve Cover, Director, Department of Planning and Community & Economic Development noted that this project has a lot going for it and we really are very supportive of initial approval. We do, however, have serious concerns about the exterior materials, the finishes of the building. We sat down and had a number of conversations and staff was unanimous in how we felt about this. Bill has done a great job in presenting some information to our Fire Department about resolving some things. But the exterior materials, it's something that's going to have to be resolved before it comes back for final approval.
 - Wagner noted that he didn't hear that among the members of this Commission. What's the ordinance power that staff would have to prevent it from coming here for final approval?

I'm not saying that, it's just something that...

- You said it had to be resolved before it came here for final approval. (Wagner)

The materials being proposed for this project, we're very concerned with how it's going to turn out when it's all said and done. That's why...(Cover)

- We've listened to those concerns but I don't think that would prevent it from coming back to our agenda if it's not resolved with staff. (Wagner)

I think what the Secretary said at the beginning was that we have no problems with initial approval but we have some serious concerns about the exterior materials, and so we're not saying we're precluding it from coming back here for final approval, what we're saying is there is more work that needs to be done with the exterior materials. (Cover)

- Can you elaborate on what those concerns are? What were some of the comments during discussions about the exterior materials? (Wagner)

The amount of metal siding, the look of the metal siding, the fields of siding that are on this building. There's a real concern in terms of the appearance, longevity, it's really more aesthetic issues. If you block this and look at this corner building, it could look great but it could also look really cheap too and that's our concern. As the exterior is refined we want to make sure it looks right. (Cover)

- Has Planning staff evaluated the Marina Condos, which came before the City and I heard that same concern expressed when I was on the Plan Commission, about an all metal building. From a layman's point of view, when I walk by it I think it looks fine. Have there been problems with it? (Wagner)

Staff noted that yes, if you go by there's quite a bit of movement on the metal panels and the way it's fastened. The longevity of how it's fastened and how it's going to last, and the maintenance are all issues. Staff did inspect that building just recently. They're more comfortable with a broader mix of materials.

- Even though we have concerns with EIFS we routinely approve buildings with EIFS on them. (Wagner)

Yes but we see that as a more integrative palette. I think from a design standpoint the building you're talking about has a very different look from this. It's not necessarily the material, but there are some issues we need to work out with the applicant. (Cover)

- Are there materials that staff is opposing? (Wagner)

Staff noted that more of a range of materials and not just primarily metal. Although the renderings are well done, the reality of jointing corners, punched openings are going to come off as far as the recesses. It's going to change the character of the building. If you have a different range of other types of materials, the overall aesthetic of the building's architecture.

- We can decide on an aesthetic point of view, that's our charge. If there's a technical reason the City does not metal buildings, then I think the City has to have a policy on that and not say "it's a matter of aesthetics." I have real difficulty with that issue. (Wagner)

Staff noted that the other issue we have is this is a different approach to how we report to the Commissions. This is in between those two approaches. The fact that we didn't have time to react to the plan changes to let them know that we still have these concerns, we have to report them at the last minute, just like with informational. The new schedule allows for informational presentations to occur so we can establish a basis for discussion about issues and problems. But the new schedule says "you don't come back to the body and say we basically have come to grips with it and actually have a written report that spells out these issues and rationales." We're not in a position to do that because this is in-between the two.

Wagner noted that he did not have any problem with having a written report stating that the concerns are. But if that's a gatekeeper function before they can come to the Commission or the Commission by ordinance is set up to resolve these issues I have a concern if that's what's being set up as a policy.

- Could Dawn and Cliff please speak to the metal paneling, from an architectural standpoint? (Huggins)
 - If you look at the photographs of how the West Washington building was handled, in between windows there was solid aluminum panel versus corrugated, they show detail on how they handle the corner but there was more of a layering in this building and as Al said, there was more concrete and it broke up the mass and the large fields of metal panel that this building seems to have.
 - By looking at the other two materials in their palette, the aluminum storefront, the ability to take corners or the proportions of windows to read larger even if they aren't glass, and then the idea that there has to be a strength at the corner whether the concrete base has more strength, you may not have concrete running up the whole height as the neighboring building does, there is a definite strength to that. It's how you choose to detail it.
- Alexander noted that they wanted to come back in two weeks. He noted the good response tonight. Their intention was to take whatever suggestions they can, and otherwise explain why they're not, come back in two weeks and seek final approval. After listening to Steve Cover, they're a little confused. Where do they get their direction?

- (Wagner) I appreciate that. This is a transitional period with this new process of the staff Architectural Design Review that is occurring. As far as I know there's been no ordinance change that changes the way this Commission is supposed to operate.

Staff noted that there wouldn't be. What they're trying to provide is some general consistency about what happens to a project from beginning to end and how it manifests itself through the different levels of commissions. At the same time, when there are concerns as there are here about the amount of metal being used, it's a recommendation to the Plan Commission and Common Council, just like a staff report is a recommendation. It will still manifest itself at those commission levels, but it's not something that comes in after the Urban Design Commission has reviewed and approved a project that staff is concerned about. It's something that originates when the project walks through the door. It's all a recommendation until it's approved by the Council. You can take it to the Plan Commission and Common Council and see what they say.

Wagner noted that when you have an applicant there has to be some understanding of what the process is. There shouldn't be any changes in terms of how this body operates.

ACTION:

On a motion by Lufler, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0). The motion for initial approval noted the need to resolve issues with the building's architecture, materials and detailing as noted in the discussion on this item, along with the landscape comments.

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 6, 6, 6.5, 7 and 7.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 306 West Main Street

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

General Comments:

- Find the “punched” window expression overwhelming –would like to see more of “309” look.
- “Intimacy” of some plant material and placement does not work with scale of building. Consider stronger massing.
- Work on Main Street entry and outdoor area.
- Seek bolder landscape/large masses of texture and color.