



**Agenda Item #:** 5

**Project Title:** 1904 Bartillon Drive - Public Building, City of Madison and Dane County Men's Homeless Shelter. 12th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 78514

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Shane Bernau, Amanda Arnold, Marsha Rummel, and Rafeeq Asad

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of June 28, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new men's homeless shelter located at 1904 Bartillon Drive. Registered and speaking in support were Jon Evans, and Carl Miller.

Proposed is a two-story, 40,000 square foot purpose built shelter facility to serve men in our community, located near Reindahl Park, and close to Stoughton Road. This is zoned CC and is a permitted use, and is also located in the TOD Overlay. The southern half of the site is in a wellhead protection area and the airport height protection zone, although the building height is well below that. The former McDonald's site is owned by the City and it may be used as a future complementary use. The facility entry is along Bartillon Drive to the south with a private drive connecting to Kinsman Boulevard. There is a 40-foot DOT easement along Stoughton Road with an anticipated multi-use path in the future. Most of the surrounding buildings are one-story, metal panel and masonry buildings. Massing elevations show the primary entry to the southeast with a two-story lobby space. The shelter intake and queue lines will be screened from Stoughton Road. Toilet and shower facilities are located to the east with mechanicals in the middle of the building; this causes areas of walls with no windows. The west elevation facing Stoughton Road shows a large photovoltaic covered outdoor porch, and transom windows above garage doors. A mixture of fixed windows and vision glass will be installed to provide safety features as being impact and graffiti resistant, while allowing light into the space. The DOT highway setback causes the building to be more long and narrow than it could be otherwise, and it does set the building back from the highway. The TOD Overlay forces this to be a two-story building where they would probably be looking at a one-story building. There are some outdoor patio spaces along the east side of the building for a guest smoking area.

Questions for staff and the development team:

- Will the McDonald's building be demolished?
  - The City doesn't own it yet. One of the conditions of sale is McDonald's wants the building demolished. That timing is up in the air, by the time this building is done it will be demolished. We're thinking of using it as a construction trailer during construction of this project.
- If the Commission were to say 100% brick masonry do you have the budget for that?
  - We have included brick masonry to the full extent shown in these drawings, we've been carrying that in our budgets.
- What is driving the size and proportion of all those small windows? It tends to give it an institutional feel, is that programmatically you are stuck with?
  - There is room to play with that rhythm. Those are high transom windows. There is a high sill there above the vision line.

- The massing above the brow of the building, you said that was solar panels that will go away?
  - We're trying to maximize every possible surface but we've moved away from that because they're not as efficient.
- So the top of the brow is the roofline?
  - No, the top of the building is the top of the parapet.
  - We're not removing solar panels from the project, they'll just be installed elsewhere.
- I'm curious how many beds this will have, and is the City designing it so that at a future date it becomes transitional housing or another use? I know we are not reviewing the interior, but I am curious about future use.
  - Right now we're designing for up to 250 guests. Instead of one large dorm we'll have five smaller dorms. As far as future use, we don't have any plans to turn this into transitional housing. Being flexible in the way we're designing, I feel this will always be used in some way for homeless services, and for that we want high quality materials and a building that will stand the test of time.
- I just think about helping to solve the homeless problem and what this building could be used for in the future is that is the case.
- You talked about something called transom windows. Those are exterior to dorms for the guests?
  - Yes, those upper band of windows are looking in and out of the dorms. Fifty-bunk shelter areas for guests, divided.
  - It's a pretty wide open space, 4,000 square feet or so for the upper level dorms with the beds laid out in rows with small divider walls between beds, about fifty beds in that space.
- You didn't want them to have any vision out of the building?
  - It's a good question. We're still considering this is one approach with transom windows. Generally the guests are in the dorms overnight and leave during the day. The intent is not to have folks in the dorms during the day, the second floor would be kind of closed with people cleaning and organizing for the next evening. Your point is valid, being able to look out the window, there is some merit to that.
- Has the team looked at that institutional comment and had any initial responses?
  - We have an overall design goal of not having an institutional look, this is a preliminary plan only.
  - We're just starting as a team to talk about building massing, up until now we were very focused on the interior. This is kind of kicking off the exterior portion of the building.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) I had the same kinds of questions, understanding this is a rough draft. We'll be dealing with people in different situations. What are we going to do to beautify it and make it feel like a transformational space? We should consider that throughout the design and do something completely different. Do something that is four sided homeless shelter that is absurd.
  - This neighborhood is kind of starving for something to be proud of. We're doing some work in Reindahl Park but we want this to look nice, provide a service and not give the neighborhood something institutional.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) Glass and light, all the things people need to restore their lives. We can lead this like no other city. This is a test and we should pass it.
  - We spent a lot of time talking with neighbors and outreach, and learning a process called trauma informed design, covering everything from the materials to deescalate folks in a heightened state of fear; mental health issues, materials, color, bringing nature into the building, daylight. What we can do with the building to help facilitate that and help folks with the built environment is all being considered. We can't do everything in that report but we're going to do everything we can.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) I just want to emphasize doing something exceptional.
- The approachability and feel of this building, I'm having a hard time understanding the height of the building and the location of the windows. It seems like a really tall building if those are transom windows. I look forward to more information. As far as doing something exceptional, it looks like it fits with the buildings already on the site and I would debate it shouldn't; those are industrial buildings that aren't very personable. I wonder about the flat walls, if massing could be broken down by walls shifting in and out, making things feel like a personal scale and making different outdoor spaces that aren't just all one way or the other. Just some things I am wondering if you can do to make this more human scale.

- The primary entrance is on Bartillon Drive, we're anticipating some public art in that front corner of the building, we're also working with our colleagues in Streets and WisDOT to develop a multi-use path up Stoughton Road and connect down to the bike path on Anderson Street near Madison College. It's about a 15-minute bike ride from the Beacon downtown to this site along the path. There is good bus access on this site, about ½ mile to a BRT stop and local buses as well. We're definitely looking at multi-modal access, and a few guests do drive.
- Spaces on the outdoor, the sheltered porch on the west side is the main outdoor sitting area but we will be developing a 30' x 30' outdoor pavilion in that square to the north between the former McDonald's building and the shelter building. Site access is tricky, we have to balance security and loitering on the site, allowing people to have some outdoor space. We're anticipating a fence around the site so people don't cut through the site and to have controlled access. We'll present that the next time, the site and landscaping will be more designed.
- The height and scalability is important to think about.
  - Our floor to floor is 14-feet, right now we're about 33-feet to the top of the parapet.
- The word biophilia sunk into my brain. On the south and east elevations you show larger windows, will that be a common space as opposed to the transom windows in the sleeping area? Is there any plan to have a community garden space for residents?
  - Yes, absolutely, we'll take the comments about the transom windows back to our core team and really think about that. I think you will see something quite different when we bring this back. On the first floor those windows will be more traditional view windows with quite a few spaces for both dining room, meeting space, conference space, informal and formal meeting spaces. We've talked to a lot of other shelter operators who say that kind of space is extremely important.
  - We heard from our shelter coordinator that community garden projects aren't typically successful and become problematic. Reindahl Park has community gardens that are walkable, we could rent a few plots there for folks at the shelter to use.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) Is there any way to create security but also integrate people into society? With a fence it's "them" and it's disconnected. A fence that is more like a corral. Has anybody given thought to that?
  - Yes, we've thought about it quite a bit with site design. We don't want a fence that's institutional or keeping/creating a hard barrier, but we need something that provides wayfinding and guidance. We're looking at some natural dirt berms along the western side of the property as both privacy and a visual screen and sound barrier from Stoughton Road. We don't think of the fence as a solid barrier or security fence, it's to strike the bounds of the site and for wayfinding.
  - For pedestrian access, our intent is to develop a path going north-south parallel to Stoughton Road. The pedestrian crossings are Kinsman and Anderson Street on the south, those are not easy crossings but Anderson will get improved even further.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) Has anyone been asking or connecting with the Sheriff to visit a jail, or even stay overnight to see what that feels like? The people we're going to serve have come out of that population. It might help us to make a better informed decision.
  - You're absolutely right. Some of those folks have come from incarceration, all sorts of backgrounds. Safety is one of our guiding principles. Everybody has to be in a safe place and feel safe, otherwise we can't help you get back on your feet. We can definitely follow up with you on any concerns or issues you have.
- (Ald. Latimer Burris) I know it's a radical idea, but I think it's a good idea. It would make a difference. I am going to share something that I normally wouldn't. I was working as a lawyer. I went to the Sheriff's and there was a warrant for my arrest because I didn't file the paperwork with the courts. I spent a total of six hours in jail, it was enough for 16 lifetimes. It was nothing like what I thought. You want no memory of it...it was very informing for me and the whole system and anything we design.

The Commission discussed the following:

- The answer is design justice, designing with the users in mind, not for the users; those things will answer the design consideration we are asked to talk about. The composition and proportions, the blank walls and solid massings. When you hear back from users you'll see a simple adjustment of a window size will clear up the institutional feel, or placement of windows will help the blank walls. There are number of things as designers and architects to do to help promote this project in a better design. A lot of times developments geared towards certain underserved populations, homeless or affordable or elderly, they tend to get a lot less design in their projects. As an architect I don't want you to go down that road. Where we are is an okay base but we need to get to a point where this project does not look like what it is. When we look at the massing and the crown and the base, there's some work to be done to bring those better together. Some of that deals with how you articulate those façades, push and pull the materials, those will help define those pieces as well as break up these very long, repetitive façades.
- Understanding this is preliminary design, the parapet wall is expressed as a different material, like screening material for HVAC. That's a little awkward, if the building becomes one form with maybe simple cladding without drawing attention to that parapet would be nice. It's a very efficient form to house as many people as you can, it's rectilinear, I don't know if the project would be improved if you had a lot of these push and pull that we see with multi-family buildings. If it is going to be a single mass with some of these appendages, embracing an aesthetic that is appropriate to this area, which is kind of utilitarian warehouse but could be much nicer. At first I was thinking each of those little windows was a separate dorm room, but you could have much larger windows there. Opening that up a lot, potentially mimicking an infill warehouse in an industrial area with big openings and the bottom part is kalwall for translucency. I don't know if you intend to have any operable windows, there is opportunity for clerestory as the operable portion. The area with the garage doors is a nice opportunity for a green roof along there, especially since it is facing Stoughton Road, it would help make it a little less institutional looking. There is lots of opportunity for green roofs. That biophilia is really important. Some of what makes it look institutional, those big columns at the entry, making those more modern looking would help soften that rectilinear form.
- Maybe you really want to express those vertical and horizontal planes. If you're able to do brick, if this was a really chic European youth hostel they wouldn't mind dark brick with a brightly colored canopy porch. It could have some industrial forms with other design elements that make it pop and make it something really special. Every certain number of windows could come down and be floor to ceiling for a nice, cool repetitive rhythm of different openings. I wouldn't encourage you to add a lot of different materials to try to make it look like a big house; be funky, go bold and make it stand out so the people who are living there don't feel like they are going into a warehouse. Both a parapet wall and an eyebrow will be difficult to pull off, you might want to do one or the other. Or just bring the parapet wall in tight to screen rooftop mechanicals and do a horizontal eyebrow. Those two elements can get a little tricky.
- It's an inspiring conversation with some really exciting opportunities. I would encourage you to think about where people are entering, where they're coming from, where it has that visibility and firsthand experience, and invest in those. Maybe you can't afford to do art everywhere, or a colorful flourish on everything, but to really invest in some creative gesture where it matters most. Where propose will be using it, touching, seeing it. From the street view from Stoughton Road, if that view will open up in the future, my initial thought was that the long covered patio, the low wall could be a really cool place for something creative or colorful expression. But if it stays screened from Stoughton Road, maybe not. The conversation doesn't match with what we're seeing so far, but next time.

## Action

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