

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** October 6, 2021

TITLE: 6810 & 6834 Milwaukee Street, 1, 2 & 45
Wind Stone Drive – Amendment to an
Approved Planned Development (PD-
GDP-SIP). 3rd Ald. Dist. (67240)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: October 6, 2021

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Tom DeChant, Shane Bernau, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Russell Knudson and Jessica Klehr.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 6, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **GAVE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** on seven (7) proposed alterations to a previously approved development located at 6810 & 6834 Milwaukee Street, 1, 2 & 45 Wind Stone Drive. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, Andy Wilson and R.J. Pasquesi, all representing KCG Development.

The project has seen a cost overrun of \$5 Million. As an affordable housing project they do not have the ability to raise rents to cover this cost increase. The team has exhausted all other avenues to no avail. They reviewed the design of this community in a way to try to reduce some of these costs while still maintaining the integrity and key design elements, with seven (7) items up for discussion. Munson presented items 1, 3, 5, 6 and 7; Wilson presented items 2 and 4.

1: Secondary entrances. Propose simplifying the roof components and massing, while maintaining access and railings to create a more streamlined entrance.

3: Storefronts. Building #4 will house the human services component in support of this development. This will transition to something more in keeping with the residential expression.

5: Exterior unit lighting. Decorative sconces had been placed in multiple positions around the patios. It is proposed instead to have some lighting in the ceilings of the porches while eliminating some of the sconces along some of the facades. This will provide the same amount of light in a more simplified design.

6: Common patio space. A smaller patio is proposed to be all at one level, not as complex of a construction as the previously tiered one.

7: Landscape plan. They still have foundation plantings throughout to meet the point system but in a simplified delivery. They went from double rows to larger species in a single row, still well designed around the entire building but a different approach.

Wilson then discussed changes to items 2 and 4, noting these are the items staff had the most concerns with.

2: Switchback ramp. The accessible switchback ramp on the north end of Building 4 connecting from the sidewalk to the human services building represents the largest amount of relief in terms of economic savings. It is proposed to replace this with a typical foundation wall, veneer and foundation plantings in character with the rest of the building. The ramp is not a stylistic element and not required by code nor accessibility standards.

4: Private entrances, associated walkways, staircases and retaining walls. This affects all ground floor units on Buildings 1-4, while keeping private entrances on the townhouses of Building 5. It is proposed to remove the private walks to stairs and replace them with foundation materials and plantings. Design alternatives were studied to compensate for removing these walks. Shared walks mean more retaining walls which negates the benefit of cost savings. The most prominent areas are also the most extensive in terms of elevation changes. These are the most expensive private entrances to build, staff supports potential removal of some of these stairs.

Prior to Commission discussion, staff noted that this item was approved as a Planned Development where the Urban Design Commission was an advisory body. Most of the proposed changes are design related, and after submittal of a minor alteration the Planning Division Director can ask for an advisory recommendation. The UDC can recommend approval, approval with conditions, or not recommend approval on each of the items. As noted by the applicant, regarding item #1 individual entries, staff did note that two of the entries also removed windows on street facing entries. Staff does have concerns about the functionality regarding the removal of the ramp and routing that entrance through the building itself as the human services component will serve residents outside the building as well as inside. Regarding item #4, staff believes this is a significant change of the overall character of the building and suggested potentially maintaining all but a few that have the least grade changes, or remove only non-street facing entries. It was also noted that comments from the District Alder were received.

The Commission discussed the following:

- To manage this let's go through items 1-7 individually, with a motion and advisory recommendation for each as the clearest way to let staff know the Commission's direction.

Item #1 regarding secondary entrance modifications:

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **recommended accepting** the proposed alteration. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).

Item #2 regarding removal of the ramp for building 4:

- The switchback ramp, there is the potential for users outside of the complex to get into that space.
- Based on what was approved, has the difference between grade and finished floor actually increased? The elevations aren't shown on the drawings.
 - The grade from approved to now has increased by 16 or 18 inches.
- This is the one that troubles me the most for accessibility. Are folks able to get in easily, what is the process?
 - It will be just like visiting the leasing office during business hours or a pre-planned event, we will have directional signage.

- Once you enter are you going past a lot of living units or is it community space?
 - You would go through the main lobby past the leasing office and hallway with about three units on either side to the north end of the building. The door is visible from the lobby at the end of the hallway.
- Could you move the public parking closer to the building entrance vs. the human services entrance for disabled parking stalls to minimize that path?
 - Yes, the accessible spaces are right at the closest location which is mid-way between the main entrance and the human services entrance. The route in either direction is the same after you get out of your vehicle.
- I don't have issue with the location of the stalls and the entry to the building. It's more about how much you're doubling back inside the building. A double switchback on a ramp is not an ideal situation, I'm not a huge fan of that solution, especially if it's not required.
- I have some concerns about forcing these particular visitors through this residential hall, and exposing the residents of that hall to these public visitors. I see this change as a detriment, I'd like to see it stay in.
- Could the human services and management office locations be swapped?
 - Operationally when we are switching to property management mode we'd still want that at the central location near the front entrance.
- It is possible we could find another location within the building but having it on the end makes sense especially if other Commissioners have a sense of not wanting to mix visitors with residents

On a motion by Knudson, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **recommended denying** approval of Item #2. The motion passed on a roll call vote of (5-2) with Knudson, Braun-Oddo, Harper, Asad and DeChant voting yes; Bernau and Klehr voting no.

Discussion on the motion was as follows:

- Keep the switchback ramp as shown and approved. It is very clear for visitors where it is, not forcing them back through this far entrance to another part of the building.
- If you do not value engineer this this project does it not continue because you can't afford it?
 - We are committed to this deal but hoping we can get some savings here. We don't want it to all come out of our pockets.
- I still wish the answer was the other way around. I'm a huge proponent of affordable housing but not if it looks cheap and minus all accent finishes. When you start to strip elements of design that make it nice you go to that realm of a shelter.
- This particular item is more about function than aesthetics.
- This is advisory, we're trying to make judgments on these and prioritize them. I don't like the ADA entrance circuitous through the building, it's not fair to tenants and users. We see a higher incidence of needing a ramp in these situations and I feel strongly that this would impact more people than a typical residential building. This is going to be used more than I think it wouldn't be.
- This is hard because we're not balancing the budget here. That's a bear of a ramp, is it better to go up a shorter ramp and be inside? That ramp is taking up so much room, wonder about snow and ice, maintenance.

Item #3 regarding storefront alterations to building 4:

- It seems like there's room for compromise here. Something a little more concise and designed with cost savings in getting to something that advertises as an office destination as opposed to just looking like a residential entrance, which could be confusing.

- Is there a plan to sign this clearly to express what it is vs. entry into the apartments?
 - Yes there will be signage likely at the parking and on the building at the entrance level.
- In light of that I'm not concerned as much about the windows. It's more of an aesthetic thing, as long as it's clearly signed.
- Is it proposed to remove the decorative sconces for this entrance as well?
 - Because this is a public entrance we would keep those decorative sconces here.
- There does seem to be an opportunity for at least a side light instead of that disconnected window that might be a similar cost. Are there concerns about privacy or the receptionist sitting there with a need for a view outside or to see visitors coming?
 - There is a need for visibility to see out. An alternative to the single window separated from the door would be a storefront door with a single side light incorporated to give the same amount of glass, which would still address visibility, security and the light we're seeking.
- The motion could be qualified as an advisory motion to increase the opening width to accommodate a side light.

On a motion Braun-Oddo, seconded by DeChant, the Commission **recommended accepting** this alteration with the caveat that instead of a punched window there is a 12-18 inch sidelight incorporated with the door, while confirming sconces are also part of this entranceway. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

Item #4 regarding the removal of street-facing entries:

- Private entrances, this is a big impact and staff had concerns, these are more significant design alterations proposed that change the concept of the proposal in many ways. The removal of the individual entrances themselves, the grade changes proposed, a terraced approach with retaining walls and a more gradual stepdown, staff's understanding is you're left with a slope. The street front vs. the interior sides treaded differently, is there a way to do perhaps a shared sidewalk connection to the public sidewalk but maintaining those entrances or other options closer to the approved concept?
- Even though the stairs leading up to the entrances is being removed, the door and window treatments are staying the same?
 - Those elements have already been purchased.
- Has a designer weighed in on where priorities may be for a compromised approach for certain elevations?
 - Yes. Given the attention paid to this element and the character it delivers for the project, we propose that this element is a more residential feeling architecturally and Wind Stone Drive is our neighborhood street. The compromise would be to build the unit stairs and private entrances that face Wind Stone Drive on Buildings 4, 2 and 3 and forgo the private entrances off Milwaukee Street, Advantage Drive and the backs of the buildings. Building 4 as you go south, the grade differential between right-of-way and finished floor is exacerbated. We may connect the southernmost two with a shared walk and stairs. Ideally we could get the building an individual staircase for each of those.
- If the applicant willing to add some of those along Wind Stone Drive, that could be a condition of approval as well.
- Can you recap which ones would be left?
 - Buildings 2, 3, 4 and 5 on entrances that directly face Wind Stone Drive.
- The people that park in the parking lot, what is the pedestrian entrance to Buildings 1 and 2?
 - Residents can enter at the ends or at the interior corner of each of the buildings where the lobby is.

- We have underground parking for all of these buildings. Our expectation is most of the residents are going to utilize that, there will be an elevator up to the central corridor of every building.
- By my count it is about 13 or 1/3 of the total units. Sounds like they've suggested their own compromise for this. Having that kind of look and amenity for the tenants was a real plus in this, to remove all of them is a pretty serious detriment. Seems like a pretty reasonable compromise to maintain the more neighborhood feel along Wind Stone Drive.

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **recommended accepting** the change with the 13 units facing Wind Stone Drive to remain as approved with direct entries being maintained. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

Item #5 regarding building lighting:

- This goes to what Rafeeq was speaking about. To look up at balconies and see ceiling lights is a source of glare and not as attractive, and the quality of light is going to be harsh. My personal feeling is this really gives a feeling of cheapness for just swapping out some light fixtures.
- I question that being a huge savings. I'd rather have a less expensive sconce than an overhead light.

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **recommended denying** approval of Item #5. The motion passed on a roll call vote of (7-1) with Asad not voting.

Item #6 regarding patio changes:

- More green space is just as utilized.
- I liked the original design, not sure lawn space is as usable for all the residents of this development and I don't want to make it less nice. They recognize the importance of having the space. I'm in favor of keeping the original approved design.
- Describe how will the rest of the space be finished, just lawn?
 - Yes lawn. It's the same amount of usable patio area it's just consolidated into one patio area in a more economical layout. The remainder of the space will slope down to the parking and a lawn.
- A proposed solution could use more plant material supporting the edges of the space. Maybe this went too far in reducing the planting material that holds that hardscape.
- The proposal is at a disadvantage, to compare them the previous one is nicer, but for the new one I'd also like to have more than just a flat patio. Planters too, benches, not just plantings but keeping different types of spaces to sit.

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **recommended accepting** the proposed alteration with the caveat for more plantings at the edges of the patio. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

Item #7 regarding landscaping alterations:

- I'm skeptical as to how much money is being saved. You've kept the majority of the bigger trees, cut back with some upped numbers of other things, and ended up with something slightly above the City's point formula requirements. It's still in compliance with that, but barely. We've gotten used to seeing with these large multi-building projects, frequently at least 50% more than what is required and we've seen some as much as 2 and even 3 times what was required. Even 500 less perennials in bulk single digit prices, the amount of money saved is such a minimal part of what they say is a \$5 Million deficit, it

seems like you're taking something away that has the ability to still keep up the appearances here to save a pittance. This is the wrong place to look to save money.

- I'm in complete agreement. Acknowledge that with the elimination of some private entries there is reconfiguration of plantings that needs to happen but in no way should we reduce the quantity or quality of planting materials.

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Harper, the Urban Design Commission **recommended denying** approval of Item #7, acknowledging the necessity of reconfiguring plant materials is necessary. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

ACTION:

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **ACCEPTED** all seven (7) sub-motions previously voted on as the Commissions Advisory Opinion. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).