



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development
Planning Division

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DATE: August 15, 2011
TO: Urban Design Commission
FROM: Bradley J. Murphy, AICP, Director
RE: ID #22565 – Wingra Clinic Project Review and Plan Conformance

At its last meeting on July 20, 2011, the Urban Design Commission referred consideration of a PUD-GDP-SIP application by Chuck Ghidorzi to demolish the former Bancroft Dairy and 8 residential structures to allow construction of a four-story medical office building and parking structure on the west side of S. Park Street and east side of Fish Hatchery Road north of Midland Street. As part of its referral, the Commission asked Planning and Traffic Engineering staff to provide reports to address the issues associated with the proposed “Wingra Clinic” development, including its consistency with the Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report. The proposed clinic development is the first step in a larger redevelopment proposal for the entire dairy property, which extends northward to the “point” formed by the S. Park Street-Fish Hatchery Road intersection owned by Clark Street Development, LLC.

Plan Review

On August 10, 2011, Mr. Ghidorzi submitted two sets of revised plans for the clinic redevelopment for the August 17 UDC hearing intended to respond to earlier Commission comments and to reflect an increased demand for parking to serve the clinic.

The first set of revised plans is entitled “Proposed Site Revisions Draft”. This plan appears to largely follow the site planning approach Mr. Ghidorzi and his team have espoused for the clinic project since May, with the four-story medical office building parallel to and occupying most of the clinic site’s S. Park Street frontage, a three-level, 301-stall parking structure in the southwestern corner flush with the corner of Fish Hatchery Road and Midland Street, and two surface parking lots located west and south of the medical office building. Previously, the parking structure in this scenario was a two-level facility with a level roughly at grade and a deck located above connected by a speed ramp on the eastern end of the structure. The newly proposed three-level deck essentially adds a second deck above grade to the previously proposed structure. The added deck increases the number of structured stalls to 301 from 201, with a total of 366 parking stalls available on the clinic site. According to renderings submitted with the new plans, the exterior appearance of the parking deck from Fish Hatchery and Midland continues to suggest a colored and stamped precast panel system with openings at the ground level and the substantial use of landscaping and green screens on the walls to break up the mass of the structure.

Other changes to the project shown on the “Proposed Site Revisions Draft” include the elimination of the northernmost drive entrance into the site from S. Park Street in favor of a small loading area off of High Street along the northerly wall for ambulance loading, and the removal of 7 surface stalls on the westerly side of High just north of Midland and the incorporation of a revised entrance that relates better to S. Park Street. A three-

to four-story future office building first discussed at the July 20 meeting is conceptually shown occupying the surface parking lot shown west of the clinic and north of the parking structure.

The second set of plans submitted on August 10 is called "Site Plan–City of Madison Concept", which calls for the construction of a 239-stall parking ramp in the southwestern corner of the clinic site as an alternative to the three-level deck described above. The ramped parking structure proposed in the second plan set is based on a conceptual plan prepared by Planning Division staff and discussed with Mr. Ghidorzi and his project team on July 28 and August 4. The ramp proposal calls for a three-level structure with 54 parking stalls at grade and three entrances in roughly the same locations as on the parking deck, though the driveway from Midland Street is shifted slightly to the west to align with Garden Street to the south. The ramps between levels are located along the northern, non-street facing wall, with flat/ level parking surfaces shown along the street-facing walls along Fish Hatchery and Midland. Conceptual renderings of the ramp structure propose a similar architectural approach to the decked structure, though horizontal openings are proposed on the western and southern facades at the second level. The third level will be open to the sky, with a parapet wall shown to screen the vehicles on the top level. The site changes proposed on the first plan set (elimination of northern drive, parking stalls, etc.) are generally carried forward on the second set of plans, as is a future three- to four-story future office building located north of the parking ramp on the site of a surface parking lot.

Conformance with Adopted Plans

Planning staff has met with Mr. Ghidorzi on a number of occasions to discuss the plans for the clinic redevelopment and their conformance with adopted City plans, including the January 2005 South Madison Neighborhood Plan, January 2006 Comprehensive Plan, and March 2006 Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report.

Redevelopment of the proposed Wingra Clinic and adjacent Clark Street Development properties was first discussed in the 2002 Park Street Revitalization: Possibilities to Reality report, with general recommendations included in the South Madison Neighborhood Plan. While acknowledging that major land use and urban design principles for the 65-acre "triangle" formed by S. Park Street, Wingra Drive and Fish Hatchery Road would be addressed in the then forthcoming Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report, the South Madison Neighborhood Plan generally recommended that redevelopment activities in the triangle emphasize business retention and expansion, increased connectivity, street-oriented development with an emphasis on urban building forms, and the placement of parking to the side and rear of buildings.

The subsequent Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report ("BUILD Plan") studied the market potential for redevelopment of the triangle and provided a series of broad planning and urban design recommendations to guide future redevelopment activities. With regard to the proposed Wingra Clinic and Clark Street Development properties, the BUILD Plan recommends redevelopment of the former Bancroft Dairy along S. Park Street with high-density residential or lodging uses with first floor commercial uses, with less specific commercial uses recommended further south along S. Park between the dairy and Copp's grocery store. To the southwest of the dairy, the BUILD Plan recommends that the existing residential uses on both sides of Midland Street between Fish Hatchery Road and High Street be retained as neighborhood-scale housing with opportunities for infill. (The Plan acknowledges that Dean Health Systems owns many of the residences south of the site across Midland and that Dean has expressed a desire to maintain those properties to preserve the potential for future expansion of their facilities located along Fish Hatchery Road.) A concept plan included in the BUILD Plan proposes a parking structure to serve redevelopment of the dairy site along the Fish Hatchery Road frontage approximately midway between S. Park and Midland streets and north of the housing recommended to remain.

Broader recommendations in the BUILD Plan also may apply in the consideration of the proposed Wingra Clinic development. The Plan concludes that opportunities for job creation in health care and biomedical services exist with the plan area. Structured parking is also strongly recommended, though interim use of surface parking was acceptable in limited circumstances. The Plan also encourages development on the triangle to maintain compatibility with the residential neighborhoods located west of Fish Hatchery Road and east of S. Park Street.

These recommendations are generally reflected in the Comprehensive Plan, which recommends the entire triangle for Community Mixed-Use development, with a map note that provides more specific guidance:

“Note 27: Located between Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road, two primary gateways into the City of Madison, these lands are currently developed with a variety of retail, service, employment, institutional and residential uses. Recent City plans for the area recommend increasing residential density, providing workforce housing for the Dean Clinic and other area employers, increasing employment of area businesses and creating a Transit-Oriented Development pattern. Future development within this area should seek to strengthen internal pedestrian connections and also provide improved connections to the existing low-density residential areas located west of Fish Hatchery Road and east of Park Street.”
[Comp. Plan Vol. 2, Page 2-163]

In reviewing the proposed clinic redevelopment, Planning staff believes that the proposal conforms to most but not all of the various land use and urban design recommendations in these adopted plans. Staff believes that the proposed placement of both the four-story Ghidorzi medical office building along most of the S. Park Street frontage and the general development plan for the Clark Street Development parcel to the north, which suggests that a four- to five-story building may be developed in the future on most of its S. Park frontage north of the clinic, generally respond to the urban design recommendations in the South Madison Neighborhood Plan and Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report that emphasize the importance of high-quality urban design along S. Park Street. While certain design details about the clinic need to be addressed as the project moves forward, such as the location and orientation of the clinic entrance, staff feels that the proposed clinic building is generally well designed and will result in a positive addition to the S. Park Street corridor.

The location of the proposed Wingra Clinic parking structure is one area of divergence from the recommendations in the BUILD Plan. The proposed parking structure will be located further south than recommended in the plan, which will result in the elimination of approximately half of the neighborhood-scale housing along Midland Street, which the BUILD Plan recommends remain, and may create a precedent for the housing to the south to be removed. However, the BUILD Plan acknowledges Dean Health System’s plans to retain ownership of these buildings in order to accommodate possible future expansion plans. Given the overall benefits of the clinic project in terms of providing a much needed new clinic and jobs and constructing an important redevelopment project in the Wingra BUILD area, staff is not concerned about the loss of the housing in this area. Staff, however, wants to ensure that the parking structure proposed to replace the housing is well designed and includes adequate space for landscaping along the street frontages. The conformance of the project to the various land use recommendations is something the Plan Commission will carefully consider when it reviews the project. (The Plan Commission is scheduled to review the proposed PUD on September 19, 2011.)

Regardless of the final design of the parking structure, its placement at the corner of Fish Hatchery and Midland will also result in a change in the character of that corner, which is currently low density residential in scale and character. Both the parking deck originally proposed and the parking ramp structure now also being considered will result in significant two-story building masses along both street frontages. Initial renderings of the parking structures suggest that both options would result in long street walls broken up by the use of landscaping elements. When coupled with the surface parking lot to be built north of the structure and the possibility that

additional parking facilities for the redevelopment of the Clark Street Development parcel may be located along Fish Hatchery Road, staff is concerned that much of the two-block stretch between Midland and S. Park streets would be surface or structured parking, at least until the potential future-phase building is constructed west of the clinic. Also, the design and placement of the structure may result in an unwelcoming pedestrian environment as well as a less than ideal transition to the one- and two-story residential uses located to the west.

A positive facet of the newly proposed parking ramp is that the facility under this option will occupy a third less frontage along Fish Hatchery Road than the deck proposal, which may increase the potential for the three- to four-story commercial building west of the clinic to be constructed in the future. This option also helps to address a staff concern about the parking structure creating a deadening affect along Fish Hatchery Road. Staff also feels that the horizontal openings on the ground and second levels of the parking ramp shown on the initial renderings will result in a slightly more open and less massive structure than the deck structure, which features a prominent precast wall between the ground level openings and parapet.

Conclusion

The Planning Division believes that the Plan Commission and Common Council will be able to find that the proposed Wingra Clinic development and future redevelopment of the adjacent Clark Street Development property generally meet the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan, South Madison Neighborhood Plan, and Wingra Market Study and Conceptual Redevelopment Plan Summary Report. While there are aspects of the proposed redevelopment projects that need careful review and further refinement, both the current clinic and future phases of development should result in the transformative projects that the adopted plans recommend for this important gateway area.

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