

City of Madison, Wisconsin

**REPORT OF:** URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** September 16, 2015

**TITLE:** 2107-2249 Sherman Avenue – Advisory Recommendation at Planning Staff’s Request for a New Mixed-Use Development Containing 60 Market-Rate Apartments and Approximately 6,700 Square Feet of Commercial/Retail Space, in addition to a 6,667 Square Foot Commercial/Retail Pad Site to be Developed in the Future. 12<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (39566)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** September 16, 2015

**ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Tom DeChant, Dawn O’Kroley, Michael Rosenblum, Richard Slayton and Sheri Carter.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of September 16, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **GAVE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission on a new mixed-use development located at 2107-2249 Sherman Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Kirk Keller and Jeff Lee, representing McKenzie Place, LLC; Suzanne Vincent and John Fish. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Dolores Kester, James Thayer-Hart, Nancy Thayer-Hart, Annie Johnson and Jennifer Argelander.

The site is two lots, with the smaller set for future development, and in the interim would be used as a passive recreation area for residents of the building with canopy trees to define the urban edge. Long-term it would be a two-story commercial building with less than 7,000 square feet of buildable space. The building has been reduced in overall length by about 12-feet. Keller pointed out a stronger statement of a flat iron piece at the corner of Sherman and Fordem Avenues, simplification and less activity within the palette of building materials, and the interior view and how they are engaging the building in the central area. The material palette includes utility sized brick in two main colors with red accent, with metal panels used as accent pieces. The underside of the balconies will have soffits on them.

Dolores Kester spoke in opposition, referencing an email she sent shortly before this meeting. The Sherman Neighborhood Association has discussed the project. The neighborhood will be affected by the traffic and the design. The neighborhood did not take a formal position. Despite the fact that there was one meeting about this project in June, many people confused it with the EEPY planning process and it did not include all the materials added since June. Since that time it’s apparent that many neighbors have a number of design concerns about this project. The façade is far from inconspicuous, it will stand out visually to neighbors and passers-by.

There is no setback along Sherman Avenue, the proposed height has been controversial in how it blocks views and sunlight to neighbors, not to mention conditional use standards and zoning variances. Because this building impinges on peoples' interests in these ways, they are concerned about it and they have had no dialogue per se with Mr. Fish. Other concerns include complicated vehicle access because the design for parking from the underground egress from the building comes right onto a difficult street (Sherman Avenue), people coming out of the great lakes area (right across the street) will have a lot of trouble getting out onto North Sherman depending where that egress is. Sixty apartments would need in the neighborhood of 100 spaces; they're not here, there's no street parking, Maple Bluff has no street parking, North Sherman has no street parking, where will the parking be? That has not been addressed. What about snow in the winter and ice on the sidewalks from tall buildings? These design elements are mentioned to you to say that they are still unresolved and the developer has had no dialogue with the neighbors about them. She encouraged the Commission to postpone their decision for one month to permit Mr. Fish and project designers to have a dialogue with the people in the neighborhood who are concerned. Maybe compromises are possible. The neighborhood overall sees this as a positive development but it needs tweaks, and you're not going to get those tweaks unless you hear from the neighbors.

James Thayer-Hart spoke in opposition. His concerns include the shadow the building will produce over Sherman Avenue. There will be no sunlight early in the day, and the afternoon will be shaded by the trees. This will cause problems if there is a significant snowfall because of the zero setback. It will cause frost on the street and sidewalks in the morning. What trees are going to be able to be planted in that area? Commission member Harrington brought up concerns at the last meeting regarding the planting areas and he shares those concerns. The building is 40% higher than current zoning, if it were shorter it would be less of an impact.

Nancy Thayer-Hart spoke in opposition. This is a square peg in a round hole. Changing the color or design doesn't change that. It's totally out of proportion and scale for that property and the existing structures around it. This is twice the height of the clock shop, which is an iconic building in this area. It's five times higher than the building directly to the east, out of balance with the largely residential single-family homes in the surrounding area. By the City's own rules it should be 3 stories or less, not 5 stories or more. There is no reason for the greater density, it's not required or warranted for this particular area. In comparison to this house in the neighborhood built in 1892, one of the buildings that's being torn down to put up something so out of balance and scale to its surrounding area, that building wasn't built until 1947 and it's now being torn down because it was allowed to become derelict. The single-family homes in the area have been maintained.

Annie Johnson spoke in opposition. The City's own website talks about how neighborhoods are the building blocks of our City. Part of good urban design includes the neighborhood. Mr. Fish's idea doesn't fit in with our neighborhood. It's not a bad design, it just doesn't belong where he wants to put it. Her house is 1 ½ stories, the house across the street is 2-stories; it is newly built but you wouldn't know from looking at the two that there is 70 years difference. None of the surrounding businesses scream out their location, they are tastefully done and fit in with the neighborhood. The neighborhood is zoned for single-family homes and light retail. Nowhere in this design has the neighborhood been taken into consideration. As a neighborhood, something like this could really destroy it.

Jennifer Argelander spoke in opposition. A neighborhood meeting on June 29<sup>th</sup> included about 60 neighborhood residents, and the plans have now gotten taller. Everybody at that meeting said the building was already too tall, causes too much traffic, doesn't contain enough parking, and we were dismissed. Nobody is on-board with this, this is an urban design, it needs to be something more like the family center that was put in. We like the idea of something there, this is just too much for the neighborhood.

Heather Stouder of the Planning Division asked the Commission to focus on design issues, noting land use issues will be determined at the Plan Commission level. There have been dramatic changes to the corner element, changes to the pass-thru are pretty effective and visually reads better, and the simplification of materials is successful. One of the remaining issues is the treatment along Fordem Avenue and what the long-term and short-term look at what that Fordem Avenue frontage can be.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- What is the permitted height?
  - It's 3-stories by rights, up to 5-stories by conditional use.
- The design and height exceeding current zoning does and does not appropriately transition between higher-intensity uses (Fordem Avenue) and adjacent lower-density residential (Sherman).
- Retail or office use fronting primary streets in lieu of parking (on both Sherman and Fordem) relies on a minimal screen wall and the idea of future proposed development.
- Is the parking for the Fordem Avenue outlot connected to this parking?
  - Yes, it would flow through.
  - We really don't know for sure what exactly this outlot will be.
- The lack of any setback on the Sherman Avenue side down to the third story scale, with the exception of the piece on the corner, I think is something that is still lacking from the original design you had brought to bring down the scale of this building.
  - It's setback about 7-feet from the back on the Sherman side.
- Relocate the drive at Fordem Avenue further south to be more central and to deemphasize the "pass-thru" traffic and provide more direct access to other surface parking and under-building parking.
- I want to thank you for responding to the comments. Every time you've been here it's been an improvement. It's a project that I am comfortable recommending to the Plan Commission. I do hope you keep a darker window mullion than the residential elements.
- You should provide a shadow study so the neighbors have that to reference.
- A modular brick would be more appropriate to the residential context.

### **ACTION:**

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Rosenblum, the Urban Design Commission **GAVE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission to approve the design as presented, noting the questions and comments raised by the Urban Design Commission. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-2-1) with O'Kroley and Slayton voting no, and Carter abstaining.

The advisory recommendation includes the following:

- Relocate the drive at Fordem Avenue further south to be more central and to deemphasize the "pass-thru" traffic and provide more direct access to other surface parking and under-building parking.
- Keep a darker window mullion than the residential elements.
- You should provide a shadow study so the neighbors have that to reference.
- A modular brick would be more appropriate to the residential context.