

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: July 1, 2020

TITLE: 126 Langdon Street – New Development
of The Hub II. 2nd Ald. Dist. (57757)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: July 1, 2020

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Tom DeChant, Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, , Craig Weisensel, Rafeeq Asad, Syed Abbas and Shane Bernau.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 1, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED NOT APPROVIN** a new development located at 126 Langdon Street. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, representing Vandewalle; Jeff Zelisko, representing Antunovich Associates; and Rodney King, representing Core Spaces. *(A full list of registrants is available on [Legistar](#))*

The Chair discussed the referral from Plan Commission to comment on the front façade and site circulation, massing and rhythm and how it relates to other buildings in nearby vicinity. The UDC is tasked with reviewing and provide feedback on site circulation to accommodate all the ways people will use the building, specifically the loading zone, mopeds and how delivery and drop-off would work. The requested two bonus stories are not a primary concern and the Plan Commission did not ask for further comment on that conditional use request.

Munson presented updated plans, noting the team took a step back and reimagined the front facade taking comments on rhythm, material choices and articulation into account. The smaller more residential proportions speaks to that character. They have integrated moped parking and extension of the Langdon walkway around the building; a circular drive in front was studied but not implemented in order to maintain this front character of a landscape approach to the building. This revised project will be an excellent addition to the neighborhood, material and design choices have been made to reflect input from the Plan Commission and neighbors. Zielisko discussed the architecture where they have added a more residential character with the use of brick, broke down the masses so the character of massing from one to the next starts to make sense and you can see the details. The massing becomes similar to the surrounding buildings. The streetscape ties in to Langdon which is so important. Fascia elements are carried throughout the building, the hip roof reinforces the residential character, wraps around the building and defines a character element while providing more of a buffer from the roof terrace. They showed how massing, character and quality of the building feels commensurate with what’s around it; it’s starting to feel like a building that belongs on this street. King remarked that it is notable that Plan Commission determined that Condition #14 was met. They heard about breaking up the building, adding stepbacks on fifth floor and changing building materials while looking at it in the overall context of the

neighborhood. They have same identical height and width. The mass is dictated by the site, which is one of the largest in the neighborhood. They are preserving the 142 building as it contributes to the overall nature of the neighborhood. If they cannot fully develop this site the UDC would be encouraging the demolition of a contributing building. They are complying with underlying zoning and the Comprehensive Plan. As far as building circulation, King noted they added a sidewalk around the site that shows their willingness to accommodate reasonable requests.

Matthew Mitnik spoke in opposition. He circulated a petition that has garnered 2,160 signatures in opposition to this project, created as a result of students who live in this neighborhood. He asked the Commission to listen to students and residents who live in the neighborhood rather than people who don't live in the Madison jurisdiction. This was referred back to the UDC for a reason. MGO 28.13(6) discusses compatibility with the existing area; the original architecture was much better, tonight looks like a factory more than student housing. The development team created a form letter for submission by supporters, there are too many concerns with the massing, no environmental impact report, massing impacts to Lake Mendota and traffic. 300 more residents without adequate parking makes it worse. They have yet to hear from Core Spaces, they should talk to the people impacted who live in this neighborhood.

Dave Branson spoke in support as the Executive Director of the Building Trades Council of Southwestern Wisconsin. This project will create and maintain jobs for contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. COVID-19 has been an issue, this will provide local jobs help the local economy. This project complies with Zoning and the Downtown Plan.

Jim Yehle spoke in support as President and CEO of JH Findorff. They employ over 900 essential workers. He is grateful to the leadership of the City to allow infrastructure construction to continue. This project is important for Madison for many reasons. Core Spaces' design reflects the feedback given and will be better than the empty lot. The economic impact of employment is huge. The track record of Core Spaces is a proven successful partner with the City; they share the values of the City and Findorff as an employer.

James McFadden spoke in opposition to a building that is wider, taller and bulkier than its neighbors. He shared slides showing massing comparisons. Buildings on East Washington Avenue were able to step down to their neighbors, this building is simply too tall at 5 stories along Langdon Street. The recess is still insufficient. It is a large mass next to relatively dainty buildings. The building as proposed dwarfs the extraordinary architectural of the neighborhood. A big building is appropriate but it needs to step down from 5 stories to 3 ideally, or four at the most and needs to be setback further.

Amol Goyal spoke in opposition as Vice President of Campus Area Neighborhood Association. The central arguments is architecture and softness of character. This sits on the borer of the historic Mansion Hill neighborhood, the residential establishments occupied by Greek life have a very historic connection to Langdon Street, entailing that developments need to fit in with those as they stand rather than bringing a new unwelcome precedents instead. The Hub I and the James are prominent and visible to residential. But look at their website, as well as the student experience, there are dozens of vacancies. Creating such an establishment of such a significant size will not necessarily improve on the historic appeal and character, or appeal to students. Moped parking is an issue, how does this improve the rhythm and circulation needs of the community? It absolutely doesn't. The majority of the things they were proposing in the beginning are very much the same as it is today.

Barb Garrity in opposition as a neighbor at 120 Langdon Street next door and member of the steering committee. In the renderings it's clear the one stand out fact is that 126 is so out of line with the surrounding buildings. All one can see is that it is massive with much smaller buildings all around it. It does not fit into this neighborhood. This is a unique situation of being able to call 9 stories 7. The circulation, loading zone, ride

share, deliveries – Langdon Street wasn't not designed to handle this new world. There are only 16 on-street parking spaces and no public parking lot. It's already overwhelmed with a long list of vehicles and runners and is has the highest pedestrian traffic rate in the City. There is a constant circulation stream of cars looking for parking spaces. She had five cars parked in her private driveway to deliver to other residences. This will create even or traffic problems than they already have. With 300 more units and only 20 parking spots their problems will only get worse. The August 15th move-in move-out will be a bigger nightmare. There are currently six cars parked illegally in the fire lane right now.

David Buss in support as the general manager of the Graduate Hotel on Langdon Street. The Hub I on State Street has been a fantastic partner of their hotel. Parents of these students often stay there, this will enhance the area and drive more revenue to businesses in this immediate area.

Ryan Cohen in support as a resident of the Langdon community. He is very excited about this Core Spaces project and what it brings to the Langdon community. Langdon would benefit from new student housing. The proposed design and aesthetic fits in and will add a new sense of refinement to the neighborhood. Core Spaces has taken into account student feedback.

Cole Roecker in opposition as a student in the Langdon neighborhood. The current form presents myriad of issues. There is a lack of awareness and ignorance to the area's surrounding history and culture, the building doesn't fit or belong when compared to its neighboring architecture, and takes advantage of City of Madison's conditional use process. History can only be preserved.

Paul Christensen spoke in support. This is an exciting project, it's obvious the culture Core Spaces has, that's unity, they listen to people and then they deliver on what they say. We have to start changing the way we think in this world to come together. The presentation they showed was artwork, on bringing the surrounding buildings together as one is special and we need more of that here in Madison. What this will do for student housing and our economy, this is a group of people willing to invest in Madison. Gives us something bright to look forward to.

Jake McCarthy spoke in support as a former UW student and a member of the Langdon community. The building is going to fit in great in the area, give students an opportunity to live in an area that is for the most part Greek life. It's a desired area for student housing in general. These updates are better than what is there now.

Kristin Bonifas spoke in support. She lived next to this lot for two years and had wished something would be there. There are no apartment complexes on Langdon, if there had been a luxury option she would have jumped on it. Core Spaces focuses on amenities for students that will call this home. This fits the architecture and design of the Langdon neighborhood. If Hub II is approved it will be built with the students and University in mind.

Matt Nyheim read for Max: shared worries about the design of the building and how it fit in with the area. Having engaged with Core Spaces he can honestly say how he is excited to see this building on Landon Street in the future. It would fit in well.

Mitch Lopez spoke in support as a resident of Langdon Street who walks past that abandoned lot. It's gross and disgusting. All the other buildings are really pretty. This perfectly matches and brings out the beauty of Madison.

Avi Kapur spoke in opposition and sees a fundamental problem. This is violation after violation of the City's standards and will ruin this area. She understands the need for affordable housing but this will make it harder.

Students just want a roof over their heads that they can afford. As much as she'd like to see housing creating jobs, this isn't in the best interest of Madison. Listen to residents and not the developer who is making money.

Ken Mehlberg spoke in opposition. The building should be scaled back as the Downtown Plan defines this as medium density; this proposal is 68% over the approved maximum density and is unacceptable. It's larger than any compatible development nearby and would set precedent at 2 ½ times the size of the previous building. It could be reduced and still be successful. Don't allow this City to be exposed to a nightmare manager.

Mark Lasek spoke in support and will be living on Langdon. The increased traffic mentioned, Langdon is the least busy street in Madison. It's not relevant as the majority of students don't have cars. This will fit in well in terms of design, practicality and purpose.

Bob Klebba spoke in opposition offering to answer questions about the steering committee report. The UDC voted to not grant excess height. Core Spaces' reluctance to work with city government has been well documented (Flagstaff, Arizona); they are threatening to tear down a historic building if they don't get their way. The façade does not match the rhythm of the street. Regarding #14 3.3(c) pages 8, 10 and 11 you can see how much this does not fit into the neighborhood. With respect to deliveries and ride share, the driveway is designed for trash removal and is not designed for that purpose. A building design that accommodates a horseshoe driveway with a defined entrance and exit is needed. Planning has not addressed site circulation. Traffic has not been asked to weigh in on this proposal.

Christopher Archuleta spoke in opposition noting a divisive campus culture. Students are better off with less expensive housing options. People of color are being disenfranchised, this pushes poorer students farther away from campus. There's luxurious apartments in the area already. This shouldn't have to be explained, but people profiting from this know. The haste on the part of the developers in not releasing the environmental impact report is unacceptable.

120 in support
1,285 opposed
4 neither nor

The Commission discussed the following:

- Plan Commission asked us to look into circulation. Please explain the pick-up and drop-off options and how that will work with your design.
 - There are two components: the northwest corner loading area is identified as temporary loading zones for deliveries. There are two spaces there for quick drop-offs. Those are available in time for garbage take out during the week at selected times. There is a defined need for loading zones on this street, not just for this project. We would support designation of one of the spots along the frontage for a loading zone for use by the general public. We did ask Traffic Engineering to consult based on feedback from others. We would encourage the City to identify the location of loading zones in the neighborhood to serve the existing needs of the neighborhood.
 - The existing access drive has been widened to accommodate two-way traffic where it currently only accommodates one-way traffic. It also makes a fire lane for use by other properties.
- What about move in and move out, where will they park their cars?
 - It will be staged, they'll have appointments, it won't occur over just one day.
- Have you looked into a circular drive to not overwhelm the other residents?

- We did look at that, we presented a sketch to Planning staff for discussion. That's devoting the front yard to vehicular parking, we felt the landscaping being proposed and character of the front of the building in context with surrounding buildings was of benefit. We can accommodate that.
- Sydney Prusak of the Planning Division noted that the codified Langdon Street setbacks preserve that for big trees and grass areas. There is an overall planning policy that front setbacks don't become additional driveways. Having a space for cars and the codified setback area goes against our planning policies and plans for this area.
- Can you talk to the moped parking, what flexibility means and how many spots are there?
 - We have dedicated moped parking in 1 area with 4 spaces identified as flex spaces. It would be based on permits requested by residents.
- Overall the design is very well done and meets what Plan Commission was asking for. One other item: I'm asking for the requestors to show additional data. With this being a dense urban site, the first level ground plan and vehicular traffic flow, it's very simplistic. With that many residents, how do you justify the pathways you've put for residents, guests, bicycles, vehicles, delivery vehicles, waste deliveries, you should know based on the size of your dumpsters. You should have listed out on one page showing it. Was there an actual traffic study done to justify this or is this more best practices?
 - The waste and refuse pick-up is something that can be controlled and scheduled in predictable times so the front loading is available for use. We reduced parking stalls with a preference towards bikes and pedestrians. Residents are not eligible for on-street parking passes. We have great access to the campus, community and transit. We don't think it's an appropriate location to attract full market-rate with parking. The pedestrian access point is embracing Langdon Street and making that the main pedestrian access. We don't have accesses along Langdon Alley.
 - This building is actually less dense than the previous building on the site. It can accommodate this type of density.
- Did you do a study of actual flows of how people come and go? It doesn't show mopeds, bicycles, it's very simplistic. Plan Commission is asking us to look at that.
 - This is based off of best practices with the focus of this being on pedestrians and bicycles. We discussed at length deliveries and why we proposed the two stalls for delivery. We welcome further conversations with the City to address that.
- I still don't understand the bike parking situation. There's only 15 spots shown in the plan. Students will bring bikes into their apartments, they're tiny, where would they put them? Where are all these bikes and mopeds going? Where do visitor mopeds go?
 - Bike parking is in level below parking level, we have 114 enclosed spaces on that level. In addition we have bike parking in the units, we provide hooks in the entry area sized to accommodate that. We are way in excess of the requirements, this meets and exceeds zoning requirements.
 - Data from the Hub I and the James showed only 10% of students move cars each day.
- Moped parking for visitors is where?
 - They would use on-street stalls for the mopeds.
- It doesn't sound like there's much available on the street for cars or mopeds.
 - We're encouraging this more toward pedestrian and bike access.
- Sounds like a missed opportunity. There is a big problem with mopeds and not to incorporate a space is problematic. They don't want to go down and park in their moped parking inside. I feel like there could be an opportunity for more visitor moped parking and convenience parking.
 - Parking is counter intuitive. The more you provide the more traffic you generate. From an urban planning principle, the resident would have to park in the designated spot.
- Or they spill out into other properties.

- There's a lot of green space next to the building and in the renderings the traffic is right up against the building. Is there greenspace next to the building?
 - Yes and within those elements.
- I don't get the change. We saw this project a number of times and when we finally got to something we approved we're going to back to something that...They asked for recommendations on things that changed the entire façade to a weaker design. I haven't heard any comments about the façade.
- We worked with the applicant on the design pretty hard. And what came back to us is different.
 - The changes are based on the conversation at Plan Commission. There was a general request to take another look at the front and the character components, material choices, residential look. They encouraged us to look at a different front of the building, from that detailing we responded to the commentary we received at Plan Commission as it relates to the Langdon Street façade.
- Is that the job of the Plan Commission or the UDC? We approved a project about the envelope and how it fits into the context. Now it's back in a totally different form.
- (Secretary) UDC is advisory to provide a recommendation based on what is in front of you tonight.
- Height and mass aren't on the table, its design. Did it take a step forward or back, in addition to the site circulation discussions we're having.
- Everything we finally agreed on is gone. I don't know if we make recommendations to the Plan Commission, but I don't like this current façade. I don't really have a problem with the circulation that was discussed. This is a step back, they could have worked on rhythms without completely starting over.
 - We are perfectly willing to go back to the other façade, we were responding to the Plan Commission and the neighborhood. We're looking for very specific direction on how to move forward with this project.
- We make an advisory recommendation.
- (Ald. Heck) The key thing Plan Commission was asking was concerning the façade and massing. A number of Commission members were concerned about the size of the front of the building in comparison to the rest of the neighborhood and adjacent buildings. It wasn't only about design from an aesthetic point of view, they were not happy with the more contemporary design. In my mind it was more about is the size of the front appropriate, should there be larger stepbacks, should there be other treatments related to the massing that make the building it in better. Some of it is just a matter of size for some Plan Commissioners. They were hoping UDC could provide some input on that. Your discussion was valuable.
- When we approve a project for final or initial, we approve the massing, right?
- (Secretary) The advisory recommendation to Plan Commission was to not approve.
- It was more the view from the lake than the street, regardless that's the recommendation we gave. They went ahead and decided that was not the big issue, the issue was the massing and rhythm as Ald. Heck has reminded us, in addition to circulation. We need to look at those in comparison to some previous versions and make our advisory recommendation.
 - UDC did say a building greater than 9 units was appropriate. The second was outdoor recreation, the rooftop amenity terrace, UDC did approve that as well. Third was specifically related to the bonus height at the rear, which UDC did vote to not approve. From there we went to Plan Commission for discussion at which time Cantrell made a motion, seconded by Ald. Lemmer that conditional use standards were met for all three, then a conversation about who is the approving body. Cantrell requested that front facade and circulation be referred back to UDC for discussion.
- (Prusak): This is advisory, they didn't cite a specific standard. They just simply requested feedback on the front façade and the overall site circulation. This is a unique situation but their referral was very specific that you make a finding on those recommendations.

- I am fine with either façade. Was there ever an exploration of having vehicular circulation pass through the parking area? Enter one entrance and exit out in the loading area?
 - We really couldn't exit through that because we're below grade there. We'd have to go out a drive that's not part of our property.
- That was the question I was going to bring up – why there wasn't a drive through the middle of the building. I can accept the explanation but it's partly comprised of what's existing here now. As far as what we're asked to address, the changes to the front façade are somewhat piecemeal, a slight improvement over what was there, but we're being asked to weigh in on something we had already come to an agreement on. I'm not appreciative of the Plan Commission for throwing back something to us that obviously we had already weighed in on and dispensing with what was our main concern that we didn't feel the two stories were warranted. Circulation problems are apparent, I can see where that's the sort of stuff that makes a project like this an unwelcome neighbor as much as the sheer size. I'm disappointed that more effort wasn't taken to deal with that aspect of it.
- I was not in love with the last version either but it was simpler. It was modern and I understand neighborhood push back. It comes across now as somewhat heavy, the issue is the amount of brick. If this goes forward with this primary design it could be lightened, maybe the fifth floor of the western component.

ACTION:

On a motion by Abbas, seconded by Bernau, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED NOT APPROVING** this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0). The motion noted that the current building design iteration is not recommended. The previous building exterior design had acceptable rhythm and massing. The motion further noted concerns regarding circulation, asking the developer to provide better guest and occupancy bicycle, moped and vehicle parking as well as better design to accommodate their pick-up and drop-off.

Discussion on the motion:

- (Prusak) Your motion to Plan Commission is to approve this project with those recommendations?
- No just a recommendation to consider. The façade is not the big issue but circulation is. It's hard for me to approve this project as it is. Move this motion to not approve on the basis of circulation. There is a lot of complication with this project, I hear the testimony, but looking at the whole design and how much density there is, they are trying to put too much into this without enough parking infrastructure; bicycles, mopeds, pedestrians. The Metro station is pretty far so everybody here has to ride a bike or use some sort of transportation system. As it is now it doesn't solve the issue. If you're bringing such a high density you need a solution for handling that much traffic.
- I'd like to amend your recommendation not to approve. We should be more straightforward with our direction back to Plan Commission. A lot of us have seen what it takes to do a traffic study, we need to be more avert and say information was incomplete, justification for traffic flows was incomplete. This isn't a traffic study it's a basic flow. While the team did talk to some of the issues, they clearly didn't show us a justification for why their site layout works. I don't think we have enough information to review it.
- I do think though that having experience and paying rent but not living there, I do know a lot of the kids don't use their cars. We should be clear automobile traffic isn't the big issue, its bikes, mopeds and loading/unloading. We should be clear on our position of this wrap around driveway and whether that solves any problems or just becomes a place to park in the front setback. If we are recommending denial on site circulation, what the failings are.
- Prusak read standard #9.

Munson spoke to the circular drive and requested direct feedback in ways to address the circulation. They are just trying to balance all competing interests.

- If we can agree a lot of cars aren't coming and going, do we have any comment on the site plan, concrete recommendations we say would improve things?
- The façade was more desirable in my view in March, it was a lighter looking building. Aesthetics are a tricky thing. The building has so many occupants and I know they don't have cars but all the deliveries, Lyft and Uber, they're ordering food, that adds a lot of congestion and temporarily parked cars in a vehicular-challenged street. I would like to see a better solution to the temporary moped parking. I don't know what that solution is to provide a place for cars. Those are the biggest challenges in my mind: the bikes, vehicles coming for a temporary stop for this building that will be increased dramatically with 3 occupants.
 - In address of mopeds we have a sidewalk alongside the building where we could identify some moped parking stalls for guest use. In terms of off-street vehicular parking, it's a limited issue in an urban site with constraints. There are limited ways of incorporating additional parking without it being in the front setback, which Planning has flagged as an issue.
- There are a number of buildings downtown that have dedicated loading spots. We could ask Parking Utility and Traffic Engineering to dedicate stalls for drop-off and pick-ups. But that's certainly not without precedent.
- I would recommend going back to the previous façade, it was much more cohesive, lighter, a better composition. In terms of circulation you're not going to have acres to park in an area like this. The majority of the traffic is pedestrian and bicycle. We're not going to get the parking we think it should have, that's just not realistic.
- It does look like 3 committees and a developer designed this. We have a motion and it was seconded. The motion is to recommend not approving the project for site circulation.
- What about compatibility of this façade with surrounding neighborhood?
- The third iteration in March was the façade we liked. The rhythm of that was compatible and not trying to replicate anything historic, but there was a nod to materials and potentially breaking it up. It had a lightness to it with the fourth floor being stepped back on the west end.
- The previous façade worked better. It worked better within the fabric of the context. This one is so heavy.
- There is consensus that the previous design had acceptable rhythm, massing and that the current iteration would not be recommended by the group because it meets those requirements less.
- Keeping in scale with the adjacent buildings. The curtain wall would be more appropriate at the James or other buildings they've done. If we could go back to the February 3rd iteration. I still will voice my concerns about the additional vehicular (delivery, Lyft) type vehicles.
- All the types of vehicular and bicycles and pedestrians and how they move around a tight site.
- Students will walk where they will and I appreciate that safer route around the building being provided, but they will end up walking up that drive.
- When the request goes back to Plan Commission it would help to show how bikes might cut through that sidewalk and share that in a very narrow corridor vs. going down the street. Showing all those circulations will help so people can feel more comfortable with your design. Showing permanent and temporary parking for mopeds.