

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 26, 2022

TITLE: 2165 Linden Avenue – Planned Development (PD), Multi-Family Building. 15th Ald. Dist. (69208)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Jessica Vaughn, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 26, 2022

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 26, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a proposed Planned Development (PD) for a multi-family building. Registered and speaking in support were Kevin Burow, representing Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC; Ed Niles and Tyler Krupp. Registered and speaking in opposition were Susan Detering, Anne Reynolds, Thomas Liebl and Terry Cohn. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Madeline Gotkowitz. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions were Bruce Becker, Barbara Becker, Mary Thompson-Shriver and Timothy Shriver. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Sandra Blakeney, Andrea Maxworthy O’Brien, Rita Hockers, Sandra Anton, Anne Tigan, Michael Johns, Angela Richardson and Susan Bostian Young.

Burow introduced the project site, which is surrounded by residential properties, with a combination of residential and commercial on the entire block. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing church building for the development of a 2-story transitioning to 3-story apartment building, utilizing an existing easement for direct access to basement parking. The building is raised above the sidewalk level by about 3-4-feet to sit at the height of traditional residences, with direct entry to first floor units, and a main entry on the east side of the site with stair and ramp access. The basement contains 42 enclosed parking stalls for 32 units with a stacked scenario for the 2-bedroom units, achieving a 1:1 parking ratio per bedroom. A review of the floor plans show the community and exercise rooms on the first floor, along with a mix of studios, one-bedrooms and two-bedroom units, a mixture of apartments on the second floor, and the third floor stepping back on all exposed façades to reduce the mass along the sidewalk. The creation of townhouse style units will fit in with the neighborhood, and two masonry elements, siding elements and accents help create the two-story elements for each stack of units. While the project was initially proposed as a condominium building at four stories, a large neighborhood group felt it was too large and the architecture was out of character. The development team came back with a 3-story rental townhouse proposal with a decrease in density. The neighborhood liked the architecture but was not happy about the rental vs. owner-occupied. The main feedback received was that the height with a gabled roof was still too tall. This current proposal shows options for a 3-story, flat roof Passive House construction, or a 3-story option stepping down to two.

Ed Niles spoke in support. This is a well thought-out, fantastic project with interesting architecture that integrates well into the surroundings and was developed with significant neighborhood input. There is a massive deficit in housing supply, the 53704 area has seen a huge increase in housing prices; we need to support this type of smart infill development. He would advocate for something larger on this site.

Susan Detering spoke in opposition. She was excited for a condominium development in the neighborhood; the City needs opportunities for creating generational wealth, condos offer an alternative to the average home price in the SASY neighborhood. The design elements are not compatible with the neighborhood. This is an opportunity for land banking and a request for proposals from non-profit developers to set the standard for the investment of citizenry while building density. She would like to see more open space and trees taken into account.

Anne Reynolds spoke in opposition. She lives ½ block from the church, noting this would be a different conversation if this was an innovative project with affordable housing and positive environmental features that benefitted the entire community. This is a standard proposal with a building that covers 74% of the lot, and usable open space within 52% of private porches. If this were built under TR-V1 zoning, the usable open space requirement would be over 5,000 square feet compared to the 3,700 shown. Shade trees and street trees have a significant role, but there are no over-story trees or tall evergreens included in the landscape plan. There is no opportunity to establish shade trees on this site. This proposal does not meet the PD purpose of encouraging development that is sensitive to environmental considerations.

Thomas Liebl spoke in opposition. He lives ½ block from the church and sees this as an inappropriate project trying to wedge itself into the neighborhood. This neighborhood is bounded by arterial streets and railroad corridors which creates development pressure from every side. In no meaningful or statutory way does this qualify as a PD site, it is not a problematic parcel and only borders commercial on one side. This entire proposal should be rejected; revision and resubmittal will not solve its problems. TR-V1 zoning provides the template to ensure this neighborhood is maintained.

Terry Cohn spoke in opposition. She quoted MGO 28.098 related to Planned Development standards to facilitate unique development of land. This should rarely be used, and only for situations where none of the base zoning districts address the project. This proposal does not meet the purpose of the PD, it is not a unique lot, it is a zoning compliant lot and not representative of any stated examples in the ordinance. This will negatively impact the neighborhood by introducing 40+ residents, it is incongruent with other architecture, contributes zero per capita park space, and is a precedent for inappropriate development on residential streets. This will have a negative financial impact on the neighborhood.

Madeline Gotkowitz spoke in opposition. Her home is 26-feet from the church. While she supports redevelopment of the church property, this proposal is not consistent with the scale of existing buildings. She cited the Marling building and houses opposite on E Main Street as a lovely example of new development amidst older residential housing at an appropriate scale. However, E. Main Street is 22% wider than Linden Avenue. Compare this to the narrower setting where the proposed stepback is 6-10 feet. The full three stories would essentially tower over her home. The addition of 32 units will not solve the housing shortage in the neighborhood, but is a move in the right direction. So too would a proposal to build 20-25 units at an appropriate scale. This project will darken the surrounding streets for the purpose of the greed of the church. She challenged the Commission to consider how their decisions will affect her home forever. She bought this property to avoid living in the shadow of large buildings, thinking the zoning would be honored by the City.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I like it a lot. My only concern is the public entries, those don't read as public entries. I like the character of the building, going from a pitched roof system to this massing is appropriate. I think the stepback is appropriate.
- The setback doesn't look adequate enough for the building to have a layered effect. It doesn't read as a townhouse type building but as one building trying to have separate identities that aren't cohesive. It's too much in too small of an area, I would expect to see more entrances along that townhouse façade.
- Too many materials, needs more cohesive repetition.
- I'd like to see some trees in the front. City Row was successful in planting some larger trees right in that easement area, that helps buffer the scale of the building to the neighborhood at large.
- How are you heating and cooling? What will we see as far as mechanical units?
 - We haven't worked that out exactly. The desire is to have a central system, but we can't say for sure what, if anything, would be on the roof.
- This is a very appropriate scale for the neighborhood. The Victorian Italianate detail could be more streamlined by avoiding the historical reference. Agree with the public entry needing more.
- The scale feels right, the streetscape and rhythm with landscape and building articulation is pretty nice. It's an improvement to living across from a parking lot.
- The project is replacing a significant piece of surface parking, and it appears to be handling stormwater, capturing and delaying release of that is a benefit to the community.
- The planting plan actually does have a handful of small scale trees tucked within the pocket of the building: Serviceberry, Dogwood, Muscledwood, absolutely the right scale and type of selection for trees in that space.
- The south driveway headed towards Atwood, are people walking back here, any access point on that south side? Make sure the lighting is right and that it's intuitive and safe.
- The roofline where it hits the sky feels long and continuous. A little bit more in and out on that upper line where you start to read it as one big building would help perception.
- I wasn't a huge fan of the blue and red together, maybe a different color brick would suit my taste better. Better than all beige and neutral though.
- You showed design proposals that went from interesting contemporary, to City Row, to this so called traditional option. We're seeing building technology changes and advancements, and improvements to energy efficiency. Then we see this detailing that emulates design cues from 100 years ago, all these brackets and bays, Craftsman style windows. This building should have an overall cohesive expression. It's a concept album, not a greatest hits album. It is expressed as a design that was built through consensus and it looks that way. There's a lot that can be done to make this a building that belongs in the 21st Century.
- I have concerns about the PD standards that the neighborhood folks mentioned. We do have to consider those standards and I believe the PD standards aren't there just because the underlying zoning inconveniently doesn't fit the proposed design and density of the development. The present zoning calls for about 500 square feet of usable open space per dwelling unit and you're showing about 1/5 of that. It is under our purview to review this project under the PD standards and of all the public comment, the concern for usable open space is the one I share most personally.
- I second the concern about usable open space. I tend to agree that the scale and massing might be appropriate or comfortable for a residential location. I will however question and push back on whether it is appropriate for this particular site and the given space this site affords the project. Do we have an appropriate amount of open space?

- The driveway doesn't appear to be changed to a shared drive, are you able to repurpose the existing drive?
 - Correct, we are utilizing it in its current configuration. In reality it is not very wide, it is a two-way traffic pattern there.
- It is a benefit to this project and site to share that drive.
- We were presented with other building design options but we didn't receive that documentation. I second the comment that some of those other buildings flashed in front of us did have some appeal and I understand there's a working session and consensus building done, but it's unfortunate we got a taste of some other options.
- That church is one of the cooler structures in town and kind of iconic.
- The renderings show the building on Linden Avenue low down at a human scale, but on Division Street the first floor is raised ½ way up the house next to it. It feels really close to the street with a very steep rise, which could use some attention. The pedestrian experience is important.
- What happened to the Passive House idea or standards?
 - We are going ahead, it is not financially positive but we're going ahead anyway because it makes sense.
- Commendation that a pursuit like that achieves some of the PD notions we are all concerned with. You mentioned it's difficult with the proposed design, are you considering changes in terms of articulation to achieve that?
 - The stepback makes it difficult, generally you want it as simple as possible. We are trying to meet the neighborhood architectural and scale desires, and are open to modifying the design to meet that commitment to the neighborhood and Passive House criteria.
- Certainly there are opportunities to achieve a more contemporary design while giving the building some elegance and articulation. We've seen other Passive House buildings before this Commission where the massing was maybe more simple, but not displeasing.
- I'm still stuck on the open space topic. The PD establishes your own requirements, but if we're framing the context of the conversation on the current zoning and those open space requirements, I don't want to send the wrong message. I'm personally not interested in a proposal that's creating more yard space and less density to do it, that's not appropriate for an infill like this. If it meant more porches that would be beneficial. I don't think this project needs a pocket park or at grade open space to make it successful. There are other opportunities for getting outside, to sacrifice density for a token gesture of outdoor space seems inappropriate.
- (Firchow) If this moves forward as a PD there is no minimum open space requirement. In the PD standards there are standards that speak to open space as noted in the staff report. It's a subjective finding that the open space is adequate. Ultimately the Common Council will make that decision based on this Commission's and the Plan Commission's findings.
- It's not up to us to make a determination whether PD is appropriate for this site, but that it meets the PD standards?
- The UDC's role is to review the concept in reference to the objectives; that is what you're advisory on. The Commission could comment on any of those objectives.
- The Passive House subject as it relates to modern building systems and materials, I would challenge the team to do something ecologically friendly, highly efficient and a building for future Madison, start thinking in those terms. A modern building doesn't have to look commercial or cold, or not have any greenspace. Take all those components and make a pedestrian friendly, neighborhood friendly building with a townhouse like feel repetition. Try to marry some of these 21st Century building systems, do the passive thing, and still make it respectful in scale and detail to the neighborhood.
- (Firchow) To clarify, the General Development Plan and Specific Implementation Plan references the same objectives and says that the UDC shall review prior to Plan Commission and make a

recommendation with specific findings. That will be outlined in the staff report if and when this comes for a formal review.

- Under approval standards 28.098(2)(a): a PD shall not be allowed simply for the purpose of increasing density or allowing development. I support density and height but have concerns about rezoning for the purposes of this particular development, given that the geometry and topography of the site could support development under the base zoning. The Plan Commission will make the ultimate decision but I ask my fellow Commissioners to think about that when it returns for a formal recommendation by this Commission. We give the Plan Commission a motion that addresses the increased density and our feeling of whether or not we believe a project could be successful under the base zoning.
- Regarding the historic vs. contemporary feel of the building, the images we saw were very intriguing, it would be great to see some of those design moves applied to this. Now that it's fitting in, we're looking for some modernism to be applied, I don't know that it would actually match the character of the neighborhood, which is fine. If the design team and development team are going back to the drawing board for revisions, maybe getting rid of some of that historic references, bracketing and added fenestrations might help. Hardiboard is not the only siding out there, there are many more contemporary options that are also sustainable. I do like the massing, all sides of the building do not need to look the same. Some of the materiality can enhance this project moving forward.
- Style aside, it lacks a cohesive design statement from back to the front. The third story completely belies the fact it's a big building, vs. the first two stories that have brick, siding, and hardiboard, and something completely different on the back. It's not the back because it's a front face for whoever is living on that side.
- If you pursue a deeper Passive House performance, it's not a very big step to go towards net zero energy. There are roof opportunities for solar panels, making this building generate some of its own energy.
- The parking arrangement in the basement – what is the stacked parking, how does that work?
 - It is single stall only, you can pull a vehicle in, raise it up and park your second vehicle underneath it. We haven't determined the exact manufacturer yet.
- The overall look of the building is a pretty handsome design. I read all of the comments from the neighbors, when it concerns views of the “back” of the building, we need to be realistic about where our sight lines are and where people are viewing these from. These snapshots are one static point in one particular place. I consider this to be a reasonable compromise. I share some of the feelings of neighbors, it is sad that these aren't owner occupied but that's not the UDC's bone to pick. You did a pretty good job making these look like individual units. The particular decorative elements I find fairly understated and would be palatable to most of the average citizenry.
- I would like to see more columnar varieties of trees tucked in to some of these spaces. I also imagine the City will get involved and possibly be putting trees on the median between the sidewalk and the street. Perhaps that would allay some of the concerns.
- It seems they went a long way to minimize the parking and traffic issues, which are a problem in this neighborhood. The ratio is pretty high compared to what we've seen, there shouldn't be much on-street parking involved with these residents. As to concerns about the appropriateness of this type of building here, the look and design is very nice and would be welcomed in a lot of neighborhoods.
- Every time I went by this church building I just thought it looked exactly like the salt barns on the Chicago turnpike.
- They are proposing to keep some Kentucky Coffee trees and Honey Locusts in the terrace on Linden Avenue.
- Because of the rendering I think the trees would block the image we're seeing. I think the tree and shady street will be maintained.

ACTION:

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