

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** October 2, 2019

TITLE: 7050 Watts Road – Alteration to a  
Previously Approved PD(GDP). 1<sup>st</sup> Ald.  
Dist. (57488)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: October 2, 2019

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad, Lois Braun-Oddo, Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau and Craig Weisensel.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of October 2, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for an alteration to a previously approved PD(GDP) located at 7050 Watts Road. Appearing on behalf of the project were Peter Fortlage and Daniel Stewart, both representing At Home. Stewart presented plans to subdivide the property and create a new parcel on what is now surface parking. While they currently do not have a tenant or proposed uses, they are working to define the parcel and get it platted and will return for an SIP approval. They shared a proposed layout showing the building height restricted to 24-feet. They would prefer all the parking surrounds the building rather than having to cross the busy drive from Walmart.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I don't think more surface parking is necessary, there's probably opportunities to reconfigure what you have to improve the safety and not swallow up this green swath along Watts Road.
- It appears as though there's a berm along Watts Road; is it a berm or is the site parking lower or higher than Watts? It looks like a good 6-feet or so.
  - I believe there is a built-up berm that separates Watts Road from the parking lot. The parking lot is similar grade to Watts Road.
  - One of the intentions of that landscape area was to screen this massive sea of parking. Some of it would have to be removed to place this new parking area but the building would then function as screening to the parking behind. We're not proposing any landscape restrictions. New trees would have to be planted.
- Normally we like to see new commercial up near the street. It's very heavily residential along that portion of Watts Road so I'm wondering what the right balance between parking in front of the building and building visibility. I presume the front of the building and signage will face Watts Road?
  - It's hard to define that right now because we don't have a true building façade, we're just talking about a box.

- If you're defining where parking is and sell it you need to be able to tell your tenants where the front door will be.
  - We would encourage the service areas to be along the backside which would lend the front door to be on the east or south sides. I don't know that it would need to be the south side because you'd have to make a U-turn to come back in. But I can't speak definitively to that.
- If this building has a Watts Road address the City will require the front door to be facing Watts Road.
- We do have this challenge every time. This kind of development doesn't lend itself to having a front door facing Watts Road when everyone is parking on the other side. Walmart's main entrance is in line with the main drive; is it possible to move the At Home entrance further to the east?
  - There's a signalized intersection there.
- I'm trying to figure out how you could not have the parking in that green easement, how to position the building, maybe the lot could get extended over to that other parking area.
  - With the signal there and At Home's signage being there, that particular location is pretty set in stone.
- I think the one comparable development is on Junction Road with Land's End. They did parking up front along the main road but they did it as a single loaded, that brings the building closer to the street but doesn't leave the front of the building without any parking and keeps the dumpsters in the back.
- What are we being asked to do?
- This is informational so we're trying to set the stage for our expectations and concerns we would have when they come back with a viable project. This would be a GDP.
- I'm struggling with the irony of having all this surface parking lot and wanting to add more of it around this box. It's going to take some creativity to make this work safely, and all these other things we've talked about with the front door, access and making it marketable.
- Maybe an analysis that shows us the existing parking per 1,000 square feet and then when you add your building. That kind of data would be helpful.
- The impervious area is an issue. Stormwater becomes more of a challenge and how you're going to handle that. The residential across the street, how that's going to work.
- This whole area is really weak in terms of landscaping. I don't think anything on this aerial view would come close to passing muster today. We're looking extra hard at any projects to find a way to alleviate all this surface parking with landscaping around it. We'll be holding you to a higher standard than what you might see on the surrounding properties. It's bothersome to see mature trees that took a long time to grow get removed and replaced with little saplings.
- You have an existing drive on the north side, it'll be interesting to see how you can reinforce that landscape island that's pretty weak.

**ACTION:**

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