

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 22, 2014

TITLE: 2504 Winnebago Street (East Washington Avenue and Milwaukee Street) – PD(GDP-SIP) for the Union Corners Development. 6<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (32837)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 22, 2014

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Cliff Goodhart, Lauren Cnare, Melissa Huggins and Tom DeChant.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of January 22, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for the development of Union Corners located at 2504 Winnebago Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Joe Schwenker and Michael Brush, both representing Gorman & Company. Registered and speaking in opposition were Brad Hinkfuss, Ken Fitzsimmons, Bill Rogers and John Steines. Registered neither in support nor opposition was Indira Ceylan.

Schwenker gave a brief history of Gorman’s search for a site for the UW Clinic, the timeline and TIF requests. The current concept for the entire site with the 2-story clinic building anchoring the corner, a usable entrance on East Washington Avenue, ground level retail, 4-stories of apartments above that and a possible grocery store. The RFP envisioned a 5,000 square foot restaurant but have not received any interest. The backside of the site is Winnebago Street with the RFP requirements stating the round-about stay in place. It hampered their ability to plan the site but they did come up with 2-3 story townhouses, with two 4-story residential buildings on the backside as possible senior housing. The clinic is rather far along in the planning stages, therefore the developer would like the Urban Design Commission to take a look at the plans. Brush gave a more detailed presentation of the clinic building. The main entrance is south facing with a drop-off area. In programming the departments, the building became less long. They tried to accentuate the corners to make the corner appear much bigger than it is. All the exam rooms are internal to the building with the corridors along the outside using spandrel glass.

John Steines spoke in opposition. The neighborhood is concerned about the fact that the plans and discussions have always called for the majority of the density on East Washington Avenue and scaled back; this reverses that concept. Being an urban infill site, this development needs a parking structure. The City has invested \$6 Million into this and we’re not getting a parking structure. There is a lack of sensitivity to the neighborhood in throwing the four-stories so close to the adjacent houses. There are also safety concerns with a massive surface parking area. The neighborhood was comfortable with the McGrath plans that showed 6-stories on this site. There is a sense that if this is the design the neighborhood will end up with, they’d rather see an empty lot.

Bill Rogers spoke in opposition as the owner of Malt House Tavern. Transient housing with too much parking would be good for his business but not good for the neighborhood. The previous plan has excellent walkability, the parking lots were divided by greenspace. This new plan looks like you're dumping East Towne Mall right in our neighborhood; it just doesn't seem like a livable option. It's a car-centric thing that this has been changed to and people in the neighborhood deserve better than this.

Brad Hinkfuss spoke in opposition. There was a lot of neighborhood input during the RFP process; for 2013 there has been very little, absolutely none with any of the neighborhood associations, certainly not with the one in which this resides. They would certainly welcome an opportunity to work with the developers. A lot of the input that went into the 2012 plan reflects something that people were far more comfortable with. If you look at that in comparison with the current plan and ask yourself whether or not you'd like that in your neighborhood or across the street from you, you realize that there are some enormous differences between the two. This one looks a lot more like what you would see in a suburban development. There is a radical difference there. A lot of us are very actively involved in trying to undo some of the things that were done on Winnebago Street in ways that are better for the business district, that improve walkability, reduce the expanse of impermeable pavement and excessive parking.

Ken Fitzsimmons spoke in opposition as a neighboring property owner. All of the sudden what was a fabulous design that the neighborhood had much input on, has turned into this with a sea of parking and four-story apartment buildings. Realizing that market conditions can change, but the intent of this plan feels so drastically different than the previous plan, and the fact that the neighborhood had so much time to look at the first plan and so little time to look at this current iteration is a large point of distress.

Ald. Marsha Rummel spoke about feeling blindsided. Understanding the need for the clinic building to move along, this plan came out without any preparation. The bigger principles at work are the ideas that the neighborhood gave and fed into the RFP, the sense that East Washington Avenue is where the height is and it works its way down to the back of the site, it's been reversed now, so ironically the tallest part of the site is interior and the shortest is at the corner, which is the gateway piece. The older plan had some kind of phased potential retail, a sensibility to it that is gone. The sense of place is gone.

General comments on the overall plan noted that many valuable features were missing:

- Union Commons.
- Green roofs.
- Single-family walk-ups.
- Woonerf design.
- Public patio.
- First story restaurant at Sixth Street.
- Underground parking with grocery.
- Public garden behind restaurant.
- Public community gardens.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Is anyone from UW Health here tonight? I want to harken back to our experience on Park Street with UW Health, and say I know you're a big giant in this City, but you're got facilities planning and management, Gary Brown who knows how to get things done, this is the same problem. It's "we're going to do what we want to do and that's it." Last time they picked an inexperienced developer and

tried to have him ram things through, it was painful. This time they picked an experienced developer and it's the exact same thing. What I would say to you is go back to your client and tell them to get a clue, really. This is a really important site for this City and to this neighborhood, and just because UW wants to stick a clinic here doesn't mean they get to go around the process. There's absolutely no way that we're going to be able to approve a GDP going forward just on what UW Health wants. I'm still smarting from that experience on Park Street, it was the most painful process and I can't tell you how many meetings we had to have. And if they don't remember that and they don't have the respect to come to this meeting, I don't know what to tell you. You guys know better. I don't think there's anything else we can add here that you haven't already heard.

- UW Clinic needs to work with the neighborhood.
- The plan is seriously disappointing. Going in the wrong direction.
- This is not a GDP we would approve on this basis (clinic driven design).
- There's no connectivity and no sense of place. The emphasis on the clinic ignores all that and the GDP has to answer those questions before you can get progress on the plan. And the clinic will need an SIP.
  - Our challenge is we're guaranteeing \$6 Million worth of increment, the grocery store is going to theoretically pay \$18 per square foot triple net, our TI's are fairly limited, the value of that building is going to be fairly substantial, so we have to balance paying off \$6 Million versus creating a design.

I think what I heard is that you have the ability to go up.

- The RFP said nothing higher than five. If we were to go up we're talking structured parking, and unlike The Constellation where they're getting \$2 per square foot for a 450 square foot studio, we did our market studies and we can't generate the rent to get structured parking, and our purchase and sale agreement with the City says "nope, we're not giving you any more money."

### **ACTION:**

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

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 4 and 5.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 2504 Winnebago Street**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	4	6	-	-	-	4	4	4
	5	5	-	-	-	5	5	5

General Comments:

- Big step backward from initial Gorman site plan. Too much surface parking!
- Doubling of surface parking is not well integrated into overall design.