

## AGENDA # 7

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION      **PRESENTED:** January 28, 2015

TITLE: 1200-1212 East Washington Avenue –  
Four-Story Mixed-Use, Multi-Family  
Residential Development and Renovation  
of an Existing Building in UDD No. 8, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Ald. Dist. (36899)      **REFERRED:**  
**REREFERRED:**  
**REPORTED BACK:**

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

DATED: January 28, 2015      **ID NUMBER:**

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

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of January 28, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a four-story mixed-use, multi-family residential development and renovation of an existing building in UDD No. 8 located at 1200-1212 East Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Joseph Lee and Lance McGrath, representing McGrath Property Group. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Rebecca Cunningham and Scott Leisan. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions was John Feith. Registered neither in support nor opposition were Patrick Heck, representing the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association-Development Committee; Karen Banaszak and Jeff Reinke.

McGrath gave a brief overview of the site and project. There are five total parcels involved in this site that has high groundwater. There are currently two small car repair businesses on the corner, a Quonset hut at 1212 East Washington Avenue with an all asphalt parking lot. Their first option would be a three-story building that would be totally compliant with the Zoning Code and UDD No. 8, and that would require demolition of everything on-site. The second option is to save the front portion of the Quonset hut building and in doing that, shuffle the square footage and turn it into a four-story building. This could create a very interesting streetscape along this busy road. Renderings and shadow studies have been shared with the neighborhood, and in their opinion the difference between the 3 and 4 stories is pretty minimal. You could argue the 4-story is less invasive because the portion of the building that would sit here on the 3-story would cast a shadow back in this direction that the four-story building won’t. They have 78-feet of separation from the back wall of their building to the back wall of two 4-units behind them on Mifflin Street and their building is 38-feet from the property line, which is 18-feet further back than code would allow.

Lee discussed the project in more architectural detail. They will be bringing the building form up closer to East Washington Avenue at 15-feet where it’s required. The entrance to the underground parking is off of Few Street. On the fourth floor they stepback an additional 10-feet to maintain that 45-degree building stepback that is desired. They have been meeting with the neighborhood on the position of this project. Because of water table issues and underground parking, the first floor would be about 4 ½’ above grade. They are proposing

commercial retail uses on the first floor of the mixed-use building. The majority of the elevations will be masonry, with fiber cement proposed on the balcony insets only. A split HVAC system is proposed. There are two billboards on either side of the proposed project that expire at the end of April.

John Feith spoke as a neighbor, stating that a 3-story building is welcome but a 4-story building would set precedence and create a wall behind approximately 15 single-family homes and apartments. This part of East Washington Avenue is surrounded by single-family homes and it is important to maintain a 3-story height limit.

Patrick Heck spoke as the development chair for the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association. The steering committee has issued a report that the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Council has not yet considered and there will be a special meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup>. The most important thing to consider is the context of the neighborhood: single-family homes, apartment buildings and the larger buildings going up on East Washington Avenue.

Rebecca Cunningham spoke of her concerns of the height and privacy. She wonders what would happen to her view of the sky if a 4-story building is erected.

Karen Banaszak spoke about this stable neighborhood of people that doesn't see a lot of rental turnover. Stability is in this neighborhood and she wonders if this project is going to bring transients to the neighborhood. She is concerned about the large size of the building and how much the rent will be, and if this will encourage more renters than homeowners. This project will also increase the amount of traffic in this neighborhood, they do not have the infrastructure to support that.

Scott Leisnan spoke to his concerns about construction noise and how this will affect his work with musicians in his home. He also feels the scale of the buildings is too much for the neighborhood. Traffic flow is a major concern as it is already congested; he already sometimes has to sit in his driveway for 10 minutes in order to back-out onto East Washington Avenue. The off-street parking in this area is already at maximum capacity and it is very difficult to find a place to park.

Jeff Reinke spoke to the Tenney-Lapham plan that calls for 3-stories on these parcels, with 41-60 units. Congestion, parking, traffic are already issues in this neighborhood; this will make it worse. This project is not in scale with this residential neighborhood. It should condominiums or other owner-occupied units.

The Secretary noted that the project does not comply with UDD No. 8. At the time of the East Washington Avenue Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan, they had prescribed greater densities while at the same time the Tenney-Lapham Plan was just evolving for approval so consistency with that plan was mandated; the densities were intentionally brought down to mesh with this lower density area within this part of the corridor. Higher densities are towards the Capitol and going north, not on this side. The design has some issues with the Zoning Code as far as trying to get rid of those walls at the street. The district prescribes that they have an engagement between the front side and the street as far as pedestrian entries, so the raised plaza presents an issue. In addition to that, there isn't enough detail on the width of the sidewalk and terrace to know whether or not this development meets the requirements for canopy trees on the terrace versus on their property, both of which are required. Mixed-use is supported here, but if this is first and is not consistent with the neighborhood plan, which drove the district requirements for density, then both have to be looked at. There has to be a collaborative process that looks at whether or not the previous plans are still viable, or does something different need to be worked on.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- For a whole conversation about these plans that are so tightly wound together, how does that work?
  - The neighborhood and the Alder have to have that discussion with Planning. It would be an ordinance amendment for this project only.
  - (Ald. Zellers) That has come up for the 700-800 Blocks before. Where we are now, there's not a consensus or viewpoint in the neighborhood that going to 4 or 4 ½ stories is appropriate. There are more conversation in the works in terms of the steering committee but we don't know what that will result in.
- Given the site restraints because of the water table, you couldn't even do 3-stories?
- (Ald. Zellers) If you look at UDD No. 8, the height comes out to be 39-feet. My question of Planning staff and Zoning has been, "is that a hard maximum at 39-feet?" I want to get a better idea but it appears that it's 39-feet, which could then be a problem.
  - It's defined in the plan, story height.
- As the planner that sits on this Commission I worry that we have hamstrung the marketplace here in a very dynamic corridor. We've talked before about making plans, not being ready for private sector when they're ready to go, and then now we have an instance where we may have put restrictions on a very blighted site that make it not economically viable for the development community to do anything. And given where we are with our TIF policy, we're dampening the dynamic of this corridor in terms of its redevelopment.
- Even if we didn't have the story height issue, the interface with the street is a problem. We've been trying to get rid of these, even with water table issues, there's no articulation of this façade whatsoever. It's basically separating the building from the street; even the commercial, there's not a plaza for an outdoor eating area that's big enough to be accessible. Those kinds of things like having direct relation to the corner, those are design presets which can be met, but they're not here.
- No one can go high enough to accommodate the parking below because of the water table issue.
- Again this is different because this is next to this neighborhood, that's why. The acceptance of "rising up" is based on a premise that you're working with 10-stories plus.
- Part of my concern is that as Capitol East is developing, we're not doing a feedback loop of what do we like as it's developing, what are the problems, what considerations do we need to make as we actually experience it? We don't do that kind of stuff, we just take a project and say "oh, here's a project." We need much more integrated planning effort and feedback on what we do. That's one of the faults when these kinds of things come along.
- I hear discussions about the character of the neighborhood, concerns about parking, on-street parking, site circulation. Those are density related, not height related necessarily. If you had three times as many 3-bedrooms in the same building and you had quite a few less apartments, that's a family that lives there, you have less cars. That's to me what I'm hearing of the concerns, not so much of the building casting shadows. So the conversation really needs to cover what density means, not just equate it to number of stories.
- Density can be relatively low depending on the unit composition. Maybe that's one of the trade-offs.
  - That is a strong interest in the neighborhood, to have more families and people who will stay.
- I think there's concern that it's not just number of bedrooms.
- I'm not comfortable with the shift from pure brick to pure fiber cement as you go around the back. If you are needing to be judicious in your use of brick, find a way to integrate the fiber cement into the design overall instead of having this shift in materiality that you cover up with color. That's a disservice to the design.
  - It's actually a district requirement, "all visible sides of the building shall be designed with details that complement the front façade." In other words, four sided architecture.

- Public ownership of the street, both East Washington and Few, when the public is on the street the building should be able to be penetrated, clear glass at the corner. I would suggest losing some parking stalls at that corner to get that commercial space down to grade. It's very awkward for the public walking down East Washington Avenue. I would solidify those first floor balconies and make it feel as though they're just projecting into the public space, rather than having this kind of interaction.
- I'd like some information about how we're doing, because the concept of a boulevard with the double trees both in the public space and private space is one of the key design pieces of that plan for this corridor. Are we doing any of that?
  - We did it with the Constellation and the Galaxie.
- That's the kind of feedback loop we need to have, to know that we're taking steps to achieve that design goal.
- That's why I asked for more dimensional details on the roof and terrace because there is a requirement for terrace trees but I don't have enough information to know whether or not it meets that. That raised platform basically is a violation of it.
- I would make that sidewalk wider.
  - There's a requirement that makes adjustments for sidewalk terrace widths for on-site improvements if it's not wide enough.
- I would make that sidewalk wider and make it interactive with the plantings.
- The Elm tree might be worth keeping. You could make this much more interesting and making it a place for people to actually meet outside.
- The courtyard with all the planters just seems like a maze to keep people away from each other. Make that outdoor space more usable. And the biggest concern is to work out the issues with the neighbors, the traffic issues.
- Demolish the metal building to be preserved to allow for more new development consistent with UDD No. 8 and the Tenney-Lapham Plan.

### **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 rating for this project is 6.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 1200-1212 East Washington Avenue**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	5	6	-	5	-	6	8	6
	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-

General Comments:

- Work on development density issues, fortress appearance at street level, courtyard.
- Height issue must be resolved.
- Interesting project but same unique issues.