

AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: March 9, 2022

TITLE: 139 W Wilson Street - New Residential Building in UMX Zoning, 4th Ald. Dist. (70108)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Jessica Vaughn, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: March 9, 2022

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 9, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new residential building located at 139 W Wilson Street in UMX zoning. Registered and speaking in support was John Seamon, representing SEA Design. Registered and speaking in opposition was Daniel Evans.

Seamon presented plans for an affordable residential building with smaller than typical residential units. The first floor shows the primary entrance with a recessed articulated façade, a fitness center, car share parking for three vehicles, and bike parking. Floors 2-16 house the units with shared laundry on each floor. The 16th floor has amenity space, a remote work center and community lounge facing the lake. The north façade entry includes a 52-foot tall recessed art installation wall, perhaps interchangeable on a periodic basis, with the design intent to develop a dynamic canvas based on color and pattern. The proposed paint color and texture shift over time based on sun and light; he is working on video attempts to show that visual transformation. They propose using a different material altogether in a larger format cement type product with a customized profile and color for a visual dynamic quilt pattern throughout.

Daniel Evans spoke in opposition, noting the statement of purpose of the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines to foster development that is high quality and enhance downtown neighborhoods is not met. This is a major site in downtown Madison with significant views along the lake corridor. Does the proposed building enhance the unique characteristics of this neighborhood? It lacks detail on how it compares to its surroundings. Fire Code considerations should be taken seriously, including fire safety and proximity to adjoining buildings. There is no real parking at this site; handicapped parking for 335 units would need 8 handicapped stalls, those need to be factored in. Under the Zoning Code for street facing façades, ground story window openings should comprise a minimum 50% of the façade area; this proposal does not.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I got super excited when I first saw this, I love purple. Curious to see how this would play out. As you develop this has to have a 3D rendering to show us exactly how these materials work together, especially so many striations and punches. This could be a very dynamic and cool building if it's done correctly, or it could be a huge failure if it's done incorrectly. The pedestrian experience, opening up some of that lower level, as much push and pull as you can, and using some of those tectonic gestures to give interest to what could easily become a dorm looking building. Glad to see something not like everything else before us, something with some color and excitement that could be a very landmark or iconic building. The location lends for that, I'm excited to see the progression of this. But definitely look at how you can bring some interest to your massing and how that complements the material choice.
- The ground story glazing strikes me, it doesn't do anything to activate the street. The wallpaks face out, I don't see that illustrated. We need to see where those are, how they're integrated or screened, how they integrate with this unusual façade material. I would definitely want to see the video you mentioned. It can't exceed the Capitol View Preservation Height Limit.
- I understand the material changes color, you mentioned change of texture, is that the striations?
 - The façade moves and is dynamic based on the color shifting qualities of the paint, and shadow associated with the texture.
- I agree, I was excited about a new material and this long skinny slot of a site. I think it's depending too much on that skin, there could be more development of how the punched openings relate to one another, in particular that front facade. It definitely needs more glazing outward to connect to the pedestrian experience. Not sure if this is actually even accurate, right now the wallpak is in one bedroom and seems like it should be in those narrower slots where the forested image is located. First floor has to have more of a presence and a pedestrian connection to the inside. The windows could afford more glazing, it would make the apartments much nicer too.
- You definitely have to stay under that height restriction. Some more thought has to go into the accessibility for parking as well.
- Exciting project. I can get behind purple. You included some detail here about how this panel and wall will be put together, which is nice. Can you speak to this building envelope you're trying to achieve? It's a simple mass relatively speaking, is there another goal you want to speak to from a sustainability perspective?
 - We like the idea of higher and better use for this site, and there is a strong need for more affordable housing downtown. We would maximize the land use density, and create a really efficient design that maximizes the efficiency from a use standpoint but doesn't sacrifice function. To do that we think we need to treat this building as a canvas and bring design to that canvas as opposed to lots of articulation and material change. Using one material that has multiple textures and colors that changes and shifts seems fantastic. It will never appear as the same building ever, really.
- I agree with everything I'm hearing and I'm not looking at being more conservative, this is something that's unusual and I think we like that. Once you put this into context in a 3D model you're going to see that this is not a big long façade that's exposed, it's really that narrow façade that will be a swath of color as a punctuation without being really obtrusive. It's probably a curse and a blessing, this site, it's giving you this beautifully slender building. Along the street and façade on John Nolen Drive could be a fantastic gem there, encourage you to keep going.
- I'm going to challenge you. Affordable housing design is often dumbed-down. That's dated and we don't want to go down that road, this could be integrity of design for affordability as well. There's a way to do it and still have a well-designed project. An elegance can happen with some rhythm and proportions, how they relate to some of the context, you can have a successfully designed building that maximizes usage while being affordable at the same time.

ACTION:

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