

## AGENDA # 7

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** August 7, 2013

**TITLE:** 210 (212) South Brooks Street – Amended PD for “Longfellow School” Adaptive Reuse and New Apartment Complex. 13<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (29811)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

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

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** August 7, 2013

**ID NUMBER:**

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

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of August 7, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of an Amended PD located at 210 (212) South Brooks Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were John Seamon, Jeremy Frommelt and Randall Alexander, representing The Alexander Company. Registered and speaking in opposition were Cynthia Williams, Karen Stevenson and Don MacCrimmon. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions were James Matson and Edward Mason. Registered neither in support nor opposition and available to answer questions was John Perkins. Amy Scanlon, Historic Preservation Planner noted that she had seen the newest iteration of building plans but that the Landmarks Commission had not yet seen them; she could issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Seamon presented changes to the plans, including brick as a now primary material, two levels of parking underneath the building forming an “L” configuration and parking in the courtyard. The shape of the building has changed from multiple peninsulas to two off one bar, increased the number of units in the P2 level from one to four. The courtyard remains as it was with the same amenities, walkway and access points are the same. Material samples were distributed, historic brick and chocolate brick are being proposed. The colonnades have been extended all the way and broken up in the façade, the garage doors will be painted in a more chocolate brown to match the brick, and they have added brick ledges/coursing at multiple points to tie in. From a traditional read standpoint they feel the base is very important. Screens have been added to the east elevation for growing vines, which also helps break up the base of the building. The west elevation also has screens to break up and give articulation to the foundation. The west elevation is very much obscured by the new Meriter daycare center and the outdoor play area fence for the children’s center; they feel confident that the height and articulation is appropriate. Window frames have all been changed to white.

Cynthia Williams spoke in opposition to the project as part of the Greenbush Neighborhood Council. She thinks the materials have improved but the project has moved so quickly that they get new plans without time to react. The larger building behind is where the problem lies, particularly the side facing Chandler Street (garage doors, loading dock, elevator shaft) on a very busy, narrow street. This does not fit into the character of the

neighborhood, and the density in this neighborhood is greater than anything surrounding it and will be problematic.

Karen Stevenson spoke in opposition as a resident of the Greenbush Neighborhood. She appreciates the changes made but her greatest concerns have to do with the design and density. By the calculations this comes out to more than 60 units per acre while across the street is 15 units per acre. This really imposes on the neighborhood and comes up right to the edge in a monolithic appearance.

Edward Mason talked of his concern with the concrete wall that is proposed to be covered in ivy. Ivy is not going to mask that eyesore of a concrete base a good part of the year. It's been touched up but it's still ugly; equal ugliness on the south side. He has general concerns about a building of this sort being packed into this tidy little neighborhood. This is a slap in the face to long-term neighborhood residents. "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

Don MacCrimmon spoke in opposition stating this looks like an institution and is too dense.

Randall Alexander spoke to the GDP that the neighborhood was involved in. The building that was slated for the parking lot adjacent to those schools was considerably bigger than what is currently proposed. They have to have the Federal Parks approval for this project, not just on the historic school but everything they do for new construction. They are trying to satisfy those criteria, as well as the suggestions of the Landmarks Commission, the Urban Design Commission and the neighborhood. The building hasn't changed except for materials and colors since the last time. They think it's appropriate to bring the building up to the street and they have made a lot of changes based on neighborhood input. From a timing standpoint, if they don't make it through the Urban Design process and make their Plan Commission schedule they will miss getting started after going through the entire SIP this season. They've already had large economic setbacks by reducing the size of the building, by going with an all masonry façade and trying to satisfy the community.

Staff noted that the revisions have been reviewed and a maintained concern is the lower level parking; more vertical elements have been encouraged to break up that horizontal, and the fact that the block is a bit raw for such an expansive horizontal plane.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I have a few concerns about how people are going to access the front door on the new building. I'm wondering about ways in which you could treat this differently so you're not walking through a parking lot to your front door, because that's how it feels to me right now.
- These doors are pretty distinctive (red), and I struggle also with the horizontal articulation on the metal paneling, I'm not sure it adds anything.
- From an urban design standpoint, and a neighborhood standpoint, this is absolutely an appropriate density for this neighborhood. This Commission did see a building just down the street that is included in the most recent Greenbush plan. Having struggled with how we were going to handle some of the blank walls, I think some nicer materials than the block. Overall this is a very appropriate building for this site.
- Regarding the parking area, do you have every stall you need? There really isn't a backing in space. If we could get rid of a couple stalls and create...one could be a landscape treatment that would discourage people from cutting through, but it would also allow a place for backing into. If they're all assigned that's a different story.
  - They are assigned. They won't be able to get into here unless they have specific access to the garage, but our parking ratios, part of our transaction is Meriter gets 50 stalls for the daycare and

valet surface during the day, so parking numbers are tight. I think we can come up with a landscape solution in this corner.

- It looks like you have the walkway centered on the door. Maybe it's not centered anymore, that would give it one stall closer to the entry. The closer you can get that walkway to the right the less they'll be tempted to cut through.
- In the event that the stalls on the right aren't often used, maybe you have the chance to do something special with that pavement, cordon it off for events on the weekend, paint it like a basketball court without hoops, and maybe people just won't park there and just use it.
- The base materials, with such a quantity of it at pedestrian level, have you looked at other products instead of the concrete block?
  - In my mind if it's not a contrast it's a real problem.

Contrast is OK, it's just the material.

If you look at what we did with the Broom Street Lofts, its concrete blocks and some glass and a little bit of cedar. The garage entrance is the foundation of the building, it has a different plane than what's above it or alongside of it, so there's an opportunity to change the materials. We felt it should represent what you would have on a foundation and I think natural concrete block as a color tone works really well with this. When you do nice trellises it becomes a nice architectural element. I think it would be a mistake to take this and color it beige, as an example. Landmarks very much wants to see this brick on the building and so does SHIPO.

Maybe poured concrete instead. Once you see the material in all the joints, block is still concrete block.

Is it the material, not so much the color?

For me, it's the perception of something inexpensive.

We looked at poured foundation walls. We like the block because it's a masonry unit, we like the natural gray color palette, but also from an economic standpoint.

- I agree about the concrete block as well. I was concerned about the courtyard and I do appreciate you trying to take as many cars off the street. On the metal panel, I think the building is really nice looking, it could actually stand having one less material, either maybe the metal panel or the concrete block.
- Where the flag is (south elevation) it's a large volume to look very monolithic. Something about that flag being so static and central is very different than the other elevation. Even one cleave to the right it starts to be more playful and pick up the spacing of that entry without mocking.
- I don't think the reds should match.

## **ACTION:**

On a motion by Slayton, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0). The motion required that the applicant bring back building base treatment materials along with the trellis details and relook at sequencing to the main entry and large volume window treatment of the south elevation.

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 5.5, 6 and 7.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 210 (212) South Brooks Street**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	6	6	5	-	-	5	6	6
	7	7	8	6	-	6	8	7
	5	6	5	-	-	5	6	5.5

General Comments:

- Eliminate CMU as an exterior face material.
- Like direction design and materials have gone – base wall still unfriendly to neighborhood.