

Joint Campus Area Committee

November 7, 2018

Discussion of Agenda Item #1, Rezoning 222 N. Charter Street to Planned Development GDP-SIP

Randy Bruce, Knothe & Bruce Architects, and Alan Fish, WhiteFish Partners, presented on behalf of the developer, Jim Stopples:

- Fish described the location of the project and gave an overview of the plans: the proposed project is a 12 story furnished apartment building geared towards students.
- Bruce described the site context and surrounding area and stated that there would be a bike path integrated in the project that would help connect the Southwest Commuter Path northwest to Orchard Street.
- Fish discussed the project in context of the neighborhood plan, stating that the project was unable to accommodate the stepback requirements contained in the Regent Street-South Campus Neighborhood Plan (RSSC Plan) due to smallness of the site, but that the project does meet the Plan's recommendation regarding concentrating higher density student housing buildings towards campus.
- Bruce described the project:
 - o There will be a stepback three feet after the first floor.
 - o A 14 foot easement for a bike path runs under the building, adjacent to the railroad tracks.
 - o There is one floor of underground bike storage/parking that has close to 100 stalls for bikes.
 - o A short term loading/unloading stall is provided for deliveries.
 - o The building is pedestrian-oriented – there is no car parking.
 - o The first floor will be a commons area.
 - o There is a 12th floor roof terrace that is stepped back from the front façade.
 - o The project has a four-story cast stone base with brick veneer above.
- Fish stated that project went through the approval process once before and was placed on file. The project is being resubmitted because the developer feels the project fits the RSSC goal of having more student housing north of Regent Street.
- Fish said that the Vilas neighborhood voted to support the project, that Ald. Artnsen supports the project, and that Ald. Wood supports the project.
- Staff (Zellers) outlined the Committee's responsibilities under the ordinance that established the JCAC (Sec. 33.32(5)).
- Staff (Firchow) explained the approval process for the project and explained that the current project is the same as the previous project that was proposed on the site and placed on file by the Plan Commission and City Council earlier in the year. Firchow stated that the previous staff review found some points of compliance with the RSSC Plan, but on balance the massing and scale of the project was too far out of compliance with the plan's design standards for staff to recommend approval.
- Czyszczak-Lyne said she was concerned about the erosion of the stepbacks that are included in the RSSC Plan – she does not want to establish a canyon similar to University Avenue at Gorham Street.

- Kaysen expressed concern about the bike path crossing of Charter Street and visibility as the path emerges from underneath the building. She asked whether the rest of the path would be completed as the project is completed.
- Fish said that the City Engineer stated completion of the development project would lead to the path moving up the priority list for construction. Fish said that the columns are skinny to enhance visibility and that there are no doors opening to path from the building.
- Warman asked about the difference between the setback in the RSSC plan and what is being requested for the project.
- Bruce said the RSSC Plan calls for 10 feet up to the 3rd floor and an additional 15 feet above the 3rd floor. The project proposes a three foot setback going up four floors and a four foot setback after.
- Carlson asked for additional context regarding the surrounding area – what are the heights of surrounding buildings?
- Fish said that a newer building across the railroad tracks to the south has about a one foot setback. Bruce said the proposed project is the same height as a building across University Avenue to the north.
- Perkins asked about overall height vs. the Computer Sciences building.
- Bruce said building is taller than the Computer Sciences building, but is not sure of the exact difference.
- Perkins asked how bikes will get out of the basement and how moped traffic would be managed to ensure it does not use the new path.
- Bruce said there will be a bike channel by the stairs to allow people to walk bikes up to street level on an internal stair.
- Perkins encouraged a low barrier between the path and the bike door to the basement to prevent conflicts.
- Brown said the newer building to the south is 6 stories and was built prior to adoption of the RSSC plan. Many of the taller buildings in area have stepbacks and setbacks; the proposed project does not. Brown stated he had testified at a previous Plan Commission meeting with some objections – the project has no commercial component, which is needed under the PD district; there are concerns with move in/move out – there will still be an impact even if the building is furnished because there is not enough space for loading/unloading. The building has a high floor area ratio (FAR) – higher than most downtown projects. Brown is concerned about a bike path going under building and resulting visibility issues, especially approaching the sidewalk and street – bicyclists won't be able to see pedestrians or cars.
- Carlson asked about UW property ownership in the area.
- Brown said UW owns all surrounding property.
- Bruce said that the FAR is slightly less than City View Apartments close to Dotty Dumpling's, which is a similar project to what is being proposed and is a project that fits in well with its surroundings.
- Brown said he believes setbacks and stepbacks are important to allow sunlight to reach pedestrians.
- Kinderman asked about zoning and compliance with PD requirements.
- Staff (Firchow) said rezoning request is to PD, which allows developers to propose height, stepback, setback, etc. requirements – PD is a flexible zoning district. Firchow clarified that the

stepbacks and setbacks referenced in this discussion are the recommendations of the approved RSSC plan. They are not Zoning requirements. PD zoning does reference compliance with neighborhood plans as a consideration when reviewing PD proposals.

- Czynszak-Lyne asked about the architectural treatment between the bike path and the property line, expressing concern about pillars and bikers running in to pillars and about whether there is sufficient space to manage snow in the winter.
- Bruce summarized bike path layout – the path has a two foot shoulder on either side with a 10 foot main paved path.
- Fish stated that TE requested 14 feet of free space.
- Perkins asked about moped circulation – the project will need to make it easy for moped users to get to the street without using the sidewalk.
- Bruce said mopeds would go to the north of the building and a curb cut leading to the street will be installed, though that is not currently shown on the plan.
- Frantz asked about whether the property was in the Campus Master Plan.
- Brown stated it is not covered by CI zoning because UW doesn't own it.
- Frantz asked about whether PD requires mixed-use development.
- Staff (Firchow) stated that the PD zoning encourages, but doesn't require, mixed-use. Several PDs have been approved that have not been mixed-use. The Council could approve a stand-alone residential building under PD zoning.
- Brown stated that the PD ordinance has language that the district should not be used simply to increase residential density and that the proposed development is in conflict with that language.
- Bruce said the increase in density is to achieve the RSSC goal of providing higher density student housing close to campus.
- Firchow read the PD zoning language (subsection (2)) with regard to standards for PD approval.
- McKay asked about how the project manages trash and recyclables.
- Bruce stated that the trash room is on the North Side of the building – trash and recycling trucks would park on Charter and wheel out trash/recycling from building to be loaded on Charter Street. The project will look to work with the City's Traffic Engineering Division to designate a short-term loading zone on Charter Street.
- Jim Stopple, the project developer, said that other projects have been built with trash handled via on-street loading and that move-in times can be scattered/programmed to defray congestion. The project will place student-oriented units close to classes and cut down on vehicle/moped traffic.
- Kinderman said that he feels it's likely the nearby UW lot would be used for move in/move out.
- Orrantia stated a concern about affordability and congestion in the area – Johnson is very busy, move-in/move out will be a problem, and there is insufficient space for deliveries/ loading/ unloading.
- Stopple said a project across from Union South with limited loading space has had a very smooth move-in/move out process. The project will provide a benefit with a new bike path connection, but the project is so close to campus that most residents may just walk to class. Regarding affordability, rents are anticipated at about \$2,000 per month for a 2BR/2Bath. Split amongst four people, that is about \$500/month per person.
- Perkins asked about what "neighborhood" the area is in in the Campus Master Plan.

- Brown stated it is in South Campus neighborhood in the Master Plan. While the Plan calls for urban style development in the area, it also calls for open space for stormwater management and greenspace, which the proposed project does not provide.
- Aaron Williams (UW Campus Planning staff) stated that the Master Plan calls for a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of about three. There are no existing buildings in the area that are above six. The proposed project calls for a FAR of eight.
- Stopple stated he bought the property in 2004, and that he bought it from a property owner that tried to sell it to UW and UW wasn't interested. Stopple said he has offered the property to the UW three times with no success.
- Brown stated that UW has tried to purchase the property but the property owner has not been satisfied with the appraised value that UW must use when making an offer to purchase.

Czynszak-Lyne moved to not recommend approval of the change of zoning to the Plan Commission. The motion was seconded by Kennedy.

- Kennedy stated that UW is trying to operate differently from many other universities in working with the community, which included working to come to consensus on the Campus Master Plan and the design elements that are contained within the Plan. The proposed project falls well outside those Master Plan design standards, which were developed with community and City input.
- Carlson noted the development team presented to the Vilas Neighborhood on October 24th. The Neighborhood voted to support the project 5-0. While he was not at that meeting, Carlson stated that he will be following that guidance when it comes time to vote.
- Frantz stated the Village has a good working relationship with the City and there appears to be differences of opinion in the appropriateness of the project and that this will be a difficult vote to make.
- Wells stated that Committee should come up with solutions rather than just saying 'no.'
- Brown stated that the project has gone through a review process already. The Urban Design Commission approved the project, but the Plan Commission and City Council voted to place the project on file because it did not meet RSSC requirements. Nothing has changed on the project since then. Without changing the design, should the outcome be different?
- Frantz asked about City staff's thoughts on the resubmitted project.
- Staff (Firchow) stated that that staff has the same concerns as they did when project was originally proposed. The previous staff report recommended the project not be approved, and the resubmitted project is unchanged since that time.
- Berger asked about the amount of square footage that was outside of the setbacks/stepbacks standards in the RSSC Plan.
- Staff (Firchow) said approximately 50%.
- Berger stated that there are competing interests in many plans – very seldom does something meet all objectives in the plan. Berger stated she will abstain from voting, as she serves on the Plan Commission and the project will be going back to the Commission.
- McKay stated zoning regulations exist for a reason – to put the right density on the right site. It is difficult to achieve the density requested by the proposed project without going outside the standards established in adopted plans, and there is not a compelling enough case that has been

made to approve the project in the face of the standards that have been adopted in existing plans for the area. The reality is that the site cannot support the density being requested, even though the RSSC plan encourages more student housing close to campus.

- Czyszak-Lyne asked for a vote.
- Firchow noted prior to the vote that the Commissioners should not make their vote based on the affordability of the units - there is no City mechanism to dictate rental rates/affordability. Firchow also noted that the City cannot reject a project from a land use perspective based on the desire of another entity to acquire the property in the future.

(See minutes for vote)