

## AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** June 2, 2010

TITLE: 1501-1507 Wright Street/3502-3534  
Straubel Street – PRD. 17<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist.  
(16321)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: June 2, 2010

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Marsha Rummel, Mark Smith, Dawn O’Kroley, Todd Barnett, Bruce Woods, Richard Slayton, Ron Luskin and Jay Ferm.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of June 2, 2010, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of modifications to an existing Planned Residential Development (P.R.D.) owned and operated by the CDA that provides for accessibility of residential units and full interior upgrades located at 1501-1507 Wright Street/3502-3534 Straubel Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Jim Gersich, architect; Mark A. Olinger, Director, Department of Planning and Community & Economic Development; and Kate Stalker, representing the CDA. Gersich provided a video of a walking tour of the site, buildings and plantings at the Truax housing facility. Plans provide that boulders will be removed and replaced to facilitate easy maintenance of plantings. Gersich reviewed the suggestions and comments from the Commission’s previous consideration of the project. Gersich presented three different ideas for color palettes, allowing for color substitutions to lighten the palette. He noted that the plans as modified show the brick on the rear’s new construction is the closest match to the brick currently on the site, which is no longer manufactured. He noted that the building’s front entry fins have changed dramatically to address concerns architecturally. He stated there is a lot of potential for color varieties with these palettes, offering different color schemes for different buildings. Stalker discussed the landscape plan, stating the CDA does not have a lot of money to use for landscaping. She stated they needed plants that are available commercially, available in large quantities for lower prices, and easy to maintain. The plant list may be a little boring, but it is boring for a reason; they are “the best of the best” of what can be easily maintained. The landscape plan is more realistic; it acknowledges that the CDA cannot keep up with perennials that need mulching and trees that need pruning. No two buildings match perfectly but there are similarities between pairs of buildings, and the landscape plan attempts to be thoughtful as to how much sun these buildings will get once the trees reach their mature height and canopy. Olinger discussed the desire to add color to the site with the landscaping as proposed. Parking was discussed as needing to be more internal to the site to avoid use by MATC students. Bike racks are double sided and hold about 14 bicycles will be provided in the back. There are a total of 4 bike racks at the backs of the buildings, which are meant to be convenient to get into the buildings. Windows have been added at the back at elevator lobbies and on the stair landings. Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Consider introducing a sidewalk for people to walk the straightest route. It was pointed out that that lot is leased to the Madison Community Center and not within their area.

- In regards to the landscape plan, it's important that we treat all applicants the same, regardless of the budget.
- If the boulder walls are considered a disaster, why are they being incorporated into this landscape plan? Don't have an issue with changing grade or providing privacy on the site, but the aesthetics are being changed. Reluctant to support a detail that we just heard is a failure. Reusing on site certainly makes sense but maybe they could be used in a decorative way.
- Prefer using more color as opposed to just the beiges. Like Scheme 2. Variety is good. Gersich stated Schemes 2 and 3 have been very well received at Allied Drive.
- Project has really come a long way and I think you've done a nice job, congratulations to the team.
- It looks good.
- The bike parking – the rack selected is a good rack, but I'm not sure they are in the right location. We ask for bike parking to be at the major building entrances. Someone who is a regular visitor here isn't going to know there is bike parking in the back. You need to provide something near the major entrances where the visitors will be coming. Stalker stated the visitors will be coming in through the back with an intercom provided on the backsides.
- The wayfinding still isn't clear.
- It's a very tight situation back here; what is the balance between parking and landscaping?
- I'm disappointed that the front entrance isn't a front entrance.
- It was noted that absolutely none of the units would be handicapped accessible if we relocated the entrance to the front.
- If you would keep the front entrance as a functional visitor entrance you would have plenty of space for bike racks there and that would solve the problem of availability of bike parking.
- The buildings as they currently look have a certain charm and elegance to them. I think you've exaggerated the verticality. I don't think that the new scheme is as elegant as the current scheme. Something is being lost in the simple elegance of the current scheme.
- In regards to the landscape plan Stalker stated that Harrington had previously commented that if the Commission understood the parameters they would have been more understanding about the selections. Discussion was as follows:
  - My preference would be to reduce the amount of planting areas that are susceptible to weeds and go with more trees. The number of shrubs you have here will do well.
  - Cut back on the amount of beds and use major pieces. Things like Prairie rose is as durable and ultimately looks better poorly maintained than a spirea would.
  - Perennials like grasses are durable. Weeds are going to grow everywhere.
  - Agree with Richard, you have a lot of perennials in there and you're going to get weeds. I would rather see you cut back on some of the beds and deal with larger pieces of shrubbery and especially some more shade trees.
  - Stalker added that everyone wants to keep this project from looking too much like public housing, but when you cut back that's exactly what it ends up looking like. There are very few situations that allow for something substantive.
  - Concern with Astilbe. Use more hostas as they will take care of themselves and keep some of the weeds out. Need more groundcover that will be more self-maintaining and keep weeds out. Stalker stated the perennials listed are already on the site, so it was another way to keep and reuse materials.
- Relative to the materials/color palette, the application of color is random; there is no plane change with architecture of buildings identical. Introduce subtle differences; approach where the color is applied differently. Scheme #2 would be my choice over Scheme #1. Instead of applying EIFS on Scheme #3 as it shows, apply it differently. Suggest that the application of red EIFS versus brown EIFS to treat front

elevation coloration to create asymmetry. Look at color difference as applied in Scheme #2 versus Scheme #3.

- Luskin asked about the applicant's reaction to the comments they've been provided. Stalker stated the comments have been in different directions and she can't answer that. To a certain extent they are highly restrained in what they can do.
- Olinger stated the existing Pines are actually really nice. They are not overrun with weeds and look pretty good. His desire is to have everyone involved in the project be able to look back at it with pride.
- Stalker stated most of the perennials are located in the back courtyard areas to give it a more homey feel. Her hope is that someone in each building will express some interest in learning about landscaping and help maintain things.
- Scheme #2 and #3 are totally acceptable. The changes you've made are night and day, particularly the windows.
- Suggest single post/loop style (hitching post) style bike rack near front entries.
- If this comes back, suggest that gutters and downspouts be shown on the plans and be integrated with the landscape. Gersich stated the water will be directed underground to stormwater.
  - Disappointed about pushing all the water to the storm system, really concerning; seems like we're going the wrong direction.
  - Gersich noted that the front of the buildings are too close and icing becomes an issue and a one time a cistern was cut from the budget.
  - Consider what can be done onsite with the water.
  - Street sides are a problem with backside raising grades are a concern.
  - It was noted that there has to be a way to provide for onsite use; even 50% of it, like the possibility of rain barrels for tenants to use on the back perennials.
  - The stormwater is a concern. I think that needs to be restudied.
- Like the color of the verticals the way they work now.
- Make plantings more of an art form with taller, bigger pieces. Look at how you could balance those things. The rain water problem is kind of a concern.
- I see the big improvements. Happier with verticality in front. Agree that colors are a little bland.
- Do not use potentilla. Do not use spirea or ribes. There are other natural remedies for weeds. Use less perennials. There are other ways to handle weeds.

## **ACTION:**

On a motion by Ferm, seconded by Rummel, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this project. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1) with Luskin voting no. The motion provided for the following:

- Address all of the comments relative to the landscape plantings.
- At least two bike parking stalls at each main entrance (each doorway).
- Study making the front entrances functional to visitors (each doorway); including use of buzzers at both the front and rear.
- Provide modifications to the building elevations in regards to the materials/color palette as stated with Options 2 and 3 as favored.
- Come back with stormwater plan that includes onsite infiltration and use.

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, 6, 6, 6 and 6.5.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 1501-1507 Wright Street/3502-3534 Straubel Street**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	5	6	5	-	-	4	6	6
	-	6	-	-	-	6	-	6
	7	7	6	6	-	6	7	6.5
	6	6	6	-	-	6	6.5	6
	5	5	4	-	-	5	5	5

General Comments:

- Visitor bike parking needs to be convenient to each main entrance. Stormwater needs to be largely captured and infiltrated. Street entrances need to be functional.
- Architectural design has greatly improved. Look at simplifying landscape plan with architectural plantings.
- Stormwater issue is very troubling.
- A great improvement to a popular project. Good work everyone.