

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: April 6, 2016

TITLE: 400 West Washington Avenue –
Redevelopment of Six Lots to a Four to
Six-Story Building with 85 Residential
Units in the Downtown Core District. 4th
Ald. Dist. (41976)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: April 6, 2016

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Richard Slayton, Dawn O’Kroy, Sheri Carter, John Harrington, Tom DeChant and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of April 6, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for the redevelopment of six lots to a four-to-six-story building with 85 residential units in the Downtown Core District located at 400 West Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Douglas Paul and Linda Page, both representing Stephen Bus; and Abbie Moilien, representing Ken Saiki Design.

Everything along the street is now residential, with more open spaces and porches for congregating and activating the street. Components within the building haven’t moved very much but they’ve developed more detail in the materiality. Slides of the different elevations were shown. Building material samples were shown and included buff colored limestone, black gray finish, metal trim with some texture. Raised planters have been replaced with soil and ground plantings.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- What’s the average setback from the sidewalk versus where you are?
 - It averages around 12-feet. We’re meeting the average while at some places pulling in a little bit more.
- It’s important that you understand from that perspective looking down West Washington with your back to the Capitol, this face of your building is either going to contribute to that greenspace or it’s going to impede and pinch it. That’s why we keep asking if it’s the porch or the building face. Generally speaking the building face seems to be more important.
- I’d like to see some alternates that look like a less massive stairway system. It just seems like a corporate look where this building is so much more sensitive. I like the impact; it’s a great statement, but it could be softer.
 - We’re trying to create the porch feel, but in a way that serves a lot more residents.

- From a practical standpoint that's a bedroom right there, I don't think I'd be very comfortable having any kind of window treatment that's not opaque.
- That could be a living room, a kitchen, a more public face to this residential unit. And, again, look at the site. This is one of the very few locations in Madison where you have the amenity of being an urban dense site, and you have a terrace and a greenspace in front of your building. That is the most dynamic thing about this two block section of West Washington, and I don't think you've grasped that that's what we're trying to protect and enhance. By your paving more than 50% of your "front yard," I don't know that that is contributing to this attribute to this couple blocks of West Washington Avenue.
- That we're drawing on this aspect of this entire project should be an indication of how we feel about the entire project.
- You need stronger trees in your planting plan. You want it there for structure. Have a more seasonal variety. I would suggest more color and dynamic to it.
- The two-story cap has some tailored detail to it. I appreciate the twist on materials.
- It's important to note that this is 4-stories by right plus two possible bonus stories. It really comes down to demonstrated higher quality, that this building is better with two additional stories than it is with four. That's what staff is really struggling with.
- Criteria A where it says the excess size be compatible with the planned character of the surrounding area, and I believe that's where a lot of discussion was. It was a planned character of the surrounding area that did not have that 6-story element pushing toward the north. I don't see any change.
 - The open space discussion came up during the Downtown Plan, but ultimately that portion was not part of the adopted plan in terms of the open space mid-block, it was not included in the adopted plan.
- The criteria that the excess height allows for demonstrated higher quality and could be achieved without the additions.
- That's what's special about these couple of blocks, the open space and that interaction, and does this yet now meet that or does it not quite meet that.
- If you were not going to put the additional 2 stories on, by right how close could you push the building up to the street?
 - 5-feet.
- By going up, you're able to push it back and therefore everybody benefits from a much wider boulevard that way. Those are the kind of things we can cite when we're making a motion.
 - My approach is to just really bring you something good. I understand there are things to cite and I think we can address those.
- And why do 6-stories better contribute to this block, considering Metropolitan Place, what's existing on the other side and what might come in the future.
- Showing how you're preserving that terrace, the open feel up to the Capitol; Broom Street is one of your keys. You've anchored the building, the two-stories "disappear" and don't read as heavy now. It feels lighter on top, and in my mind that's another key of good design.
- It anchors the corner better. On a corner it makes more sense for the additional stories.
 - The neighborhood committee views this as a gateway project, and they're kind of pushing for this to be more prominent.
- (Parks) For the purposes of the record, there is no "by right" here. There's a zoning map amendment, demolition permits, conditional use approval that's required whether it's a four-story building or a six-story building, and the additional hurdle is the two additional stories, but you're allowed to build up to a 4-story building, provided that all of the standards are met. So the notion that it's a four-story building, it should be clarified that there are standards for up to four and if you want two additional more, standards further still.

ACTION:

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