

AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: May 20, 2015

TITLE: 510 University Avenue – New 12+ Story Mixed-Use Project, “The Hub at Madison II” with 348 Apartment Units, Approximately 8,740 Square Feet of Retail and 2,992 Square Feet of Flex Space. 4th Ald. Dist. (36901)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: May 20, 2015

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; John Harrington, Dawn O’Kroley, Richard Slayton, Cliff Goodhart and Tom DeChant.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 20, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a new 12+ story mixed-use project located at 510 University Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Brian Munson, representing Core Campus, LLC; Jeff Zelisko and Brad Mullins. The team did receive approval for demolition of the building from the Landmarks Commission at their meeting of May 11, 2015.

The new design reflects much of the input from City staff over the last several months, the adopted plans and the standards for a conditional use and the Downtown Design Guidelines. The team feels all the conditional use standards have been met by this design, most importantly the use and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood. The Downtown Plan talks about the evolving character of this block of Gilman Street. They feel that the architectural changes made will create a building that will fit within the evolving context while also speaking to the context of what is around it today. The building is stepped back on Gorham Street to create a vibrant and exciting streetscape in an area which currently has none, while responding to an active streetscape by putting commercial and residential uses in close proximity. The final piece of the Downtown Design Guidelines which supports this development is the massing section itself, where it recommends considering the evolving context. The project is broken into three different forms so you have vertical articulation of the building, different treatments as you move around the building, while also transitioning so that when other buildings on the block are redeveloped they will fit in with taller structures.

The balcony elements have been lightened up in response to previous comments. Variation in the building’s façades is tied together with a ring around the windows that ties above using a corrugated vertical system. A cast stone product in a complementary color to the brick is also being proposed to tie in with other design elements. Both vision and spandrel glass will be used. Munson stated that some of the comments received in the last minute memo from Planning staff are reflected in these updated plans. In terms of the articulation of the Gilman Street façade, they would like the UDC's feedback on that. The overall design steps back 15-feet above the existing façade going up to the top of the 8th floor, then stepping back an additional 5-feet, with a setback

of 24-feet at the 11th floor. Looking at the Smart Motors façade stepping up, this works well. The four-story element recommendation from staff above the loading dock creates a vertical articulation up and down and rhythm of the street that goes from the 2-story to 4-story elements, as well as addressing some of the vertical articulation. The existing façade is 66-feet wide; the loading dock on the modern side is 33-feet wide. In terms of the variations of roofline, they feel the step backs incorporated on both the Gilman and University sides, as well as the comment about the balcony components really do create a nice, unique building form. In fitting with the Design Guidelines, this is an evolving block, an area intended as a transition from State Street over to the Johnson Bend district; both the changes made to articulate the Gilman façade, as well as the changes in architecture as you move around the building and step across the block really helps create a bridge between the two areas.

Jay Wendt, Principal Planner spoke to the Planning Division memo and how it can frame the conversation on how the Urban Design Commission carries this forward to the Plan Commission. The findings should show why this body feels the Downtown Design Guidelines, the Downtown Plan, height and massing, consideration of setbacks, etc. have all been met. The Downtown Height Map allows for a maximum of 12-stories in this area. The conditional use standards discuss how you achieve that 12-story height with stepbacks. Yes the maximum is 12-stories, but is 12-stories appropriate here, and have they achieved that in an appropriate fashion?

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- What objection would you have to taking that middle portion up another couple of stories and gaining more square footage?
 - One of the comments we got from Landmarks was the concern about more height, and that was expressed in the staff meeting.
- To me it's less the height than proportion. It's only stepping back a few feet.
 - We would be open to that.
 - We're not sure we all agree on that.
 - We prefer it as it is, to be perfectly honest. We like that it brings the mass of the building just a little bit lower. We have taken the building down to 11-stories at the Gilman Street façade.
- I actually like the fact that the vertical divisions get narrower down to almost like a curtain wall look, I think that lightens the top. I see the staff recommendation is to continue that all the way up; I disagree, I think this is a better solution.
- This change in plane is so minor, why didn't this building take that corner and actually feel like a building with at least a 20-foot return?
 - We were really trying to make it play at the street to the existing building. We have had façades where we carried things across, but it seemed like it made the most sense with these proportions that we just let that break be right there. It sets back at least 5-feet.
- If you brought it up as recommended you would have more of a corner.
- I'm having a big problem with this building. I have biked up Gilman, I have walked up Gilman and we're creating an alley there. Gilman doesn't have the width to support Hub I and Hub II on both sides. For the context, it's not a very wide street. Go around to Johnson it works well, and I don't mind the Hub on one side, but not both. It's narrow and dark, very much like an alley.
- The Downtown Plan created all these expectations about height and density and this is a place where they thought it should be. In some ways this project has more step back opening up than most of the plans envisioned for this.
- Some of the comments about the scale of the taller building with the smaller buildings below, and this was the same comment in the discussion about Hub I; this verticality is further emphasized because you have the same windows stacked all day, and there's no playfulness or even subtly with some windows, subtly different to create an overall composition on an elevation, especially the large elevations that are

continuous all the way down to these lower street fronts (Gilman Street façade). If those had some more layering and composition within them they could be more successful. This level of “irregularity” at this scale is actually the one place where you could handle three simple bays that are regular and reinforce that street front, and where you need the playfulness and irregularity is on these large façades.

- That’s where were butting up against Landmarks, where we want that historic treatment extended up.
- It can be, but these windows can be subtly different on one floor, like the project where they curved the brick back, by AnchorBank and the bays started to project, and it’s very elegant.
- This problematic, blank façade is very dark in the renderings. Specifically what is actually glass or spandrel versus the metal?
- I like the proportions of the Gilman Street façade; I think a small top on that would seem strange.
- I’d like to see it both ways.
- On the curve, that massing is very comfortable, even the more acute views when you’re driving through. That massing in the front kind of does break down some of that rigid verticality, and there’s interest as it meets the sky; the other façades don’t necessarily have that because they don’t have those two elements, so if you could meet the sky more gracefully on the other elements (beyond the curve), not necessarily to this level of detail but overall conceptually.
- Your best contribution to the public on this project is the green roof on the two-story piece; that’s going to be appreciated by every high rise surrounding this, so I would encourage you to have the biggest canopy trees and the most amount of greenspace versus pavers that you can.
- With respect to the walls and property line, this project has shown a lot more variety and imagination in treating those openings and even working with the Fire Department for some previously non-compliant solutions in negotiating to have as much vision glass as they possibly could.
- A building this big needs to be a collective decision, not just this Commission. There are some things we like, some things we don’t know about yet. I’d like to see other bodies in the City have a chance to start wrestling with some of these as well. Initial approval will move this on to those Commissions.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (3-2) with Goodhart, DeChant and O’Kroley voting yes; Harrington and Slayton voting no.

The Urban Design Commission finds that the façade has been sufficiently modulated, stepped back and extended to create the vertical intervals that are appropriate. The vertical divisions have been sufficiently articulated using different materials. The loading dock area window surrounds in aluminum (silver) are appropriate. The Commission further finds that variations in the roofline reinforce the modulation and vertical intervals with the issue on how the other elevations meet the sky beyond the curve to be addressed, clarification of “blank façades” use of spandrel glass and metal, provide an alternative for the Gilman Street façade as was discussed that includes variation in window patterning. The motion also noted that the project as designed addressed the provisions of the Urban Mixed-Use (UMX) District in regards to the Downtown Height Map and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

The motion provided specific address of staff's questions and considerations requested in the memo by Katherine Cornwell, Director, on behalf of the Planning Division dated May 19, 2015; and as stated by Chair Wagner, further articulated by Goodhart within the motion as follows:

1. Has the façade been sufficiently modulated, stepped back, and/or extended forward to achieve smaller vertical intervals?
 - a. Staff believes a more successful articulation of the vertical interval above the Smart Motors building would include the 2-story base, followed by a middle of 8-stories and a top of 2 stories. The 4-story top creates an awkward composition and heaviness at the top.
 - Goodhart: With respect to the walls and the property line, I think that this project has shown a lot more variety and imagination in treating those openings and even working with the Fire Department for maybe some non code-complying issues to have as much vision glass as they possibly good. I see Hub I in the background, to me it's so much more successful than this. I want to make sure that in the long views you're showing us it does have that variety and playfulness that I think is lacking.
2. Have vertical divisions been sufficiently articulated using different textures, materials or colors of materials?
 - a. The vertical division above the Smart Motors façade needs work. Beginning at the separation between floors 5 and 6, the building begins to lose the vertical divisions that serve to further articulate facade. These vertical divisions of floors 3-6 should be carried up through floor 8 with the additional stepback occurring above floor 8. Floors 3-12 should be clad in cream brick with other materials limited to the modern interpretation of the pilaster embellishments. The pilaster finial caps and parapet caps should use a material that is consistent or complementary in material and color to the caps on the original Smart Motors building. This treatment will give this façade a more unified, classic appearance.
 - I don't have strong feelings either way. It's appropriate.
 - b. In the loading dock building, the white window surrounds are awkward, drawing too much attention that distracts from an otherwise visually interesting composition. Staff requests that the development team consider an alternate treatment, such as a more extruded surround in a dark metal, like the I-beams ganging the windows in the lower portion that create a more subtle and handsome relief in the façade. For the 3-window portion, consider the use of spandrel glass to create the appearance of a solid vertical window.
 - The material used in that area is acceptable. The silver color is fine.
3. Are there sufficient variations in the rooflines to reinforce the modulation and vertical intervals?
 - a. Height remains a concern given the recommendations in the Downtown Plan and the Downtown Design Guidelines (especially Architecture Design Guideline 1 – Massing). UDC should make very specific findings on why the height, mass and exterior treatment are appropriate, since their review will feed directly into the Plan Commission in a few weeks. Members of the Plan Commission will want specific direction from UDC why the whole project but especially the Gilman Street side is acceptable – why and how it meets the design standards and guidelines. If the UDC can clearly find that the height is acceptable, then staff recommends a configuration of the stories into a 2-story base, 8-story middle and 2-story to improve and appropriately balance the composition, giving deference to the historic façade that will become the base of the structure.

There is quite a bit of variation in the rooflines to reinforce the modulation and vertical intervals. So while height is a concern there is quite a variety with address of comments made.

4. Does the architecture sufficiently consider massing, building components and visual interest per the Downtown Design Guidelines?
 - a. The Fire Department has advised that the building code limits the number and size of wall openings on side and rear façades adjacent certain property lines. These limitations are apparent on the lifeless facades in some of the renderings. Specific resolution of this design issue should be provided prior to approval of the project to ensure that highly visible (blank) façades are sufficiently articulated. The use of vision glass in combination with a palette of materials should be used to address this concern; the use of spandrel or the avoidance of openings on this façade should not be considered.
 - Further detailing was articulated with the motion.

Alternately, staff encourages the applicant to consider a voluntary public art treatment of the blank facades. Though we do not have regulations or a 1% for the Arts program, etc., governing such a treatment option, if the applicant were willing this could be an opportunity to explore a demonstration project with oversight from the Public Art Administrator and the Madison Arts Commission. It could provide a way to brand the building in a hip and culturally significant way that contributes to the Downtown's portfolio of public art. In this way we could turn a challenging architectural/code issue into an asset for the public's enjoyment that helps a private development standout in a context-sensitive manner. Should the applicant be amenable to this option, and UDC finds that it would be an appropriate way to create visual interest, then staff should work with the applicant and the Public Art Administrator to identify a path forward.

- Agrees.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 510 University Avenue

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	5	7	5	-	-	-	-	-

General Comments:

- Too much mass/height on Gilman Street given Hub 1. Gilman is becoming an alley-like street; where is the sense of place?