

AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: December 15, 2021
TITLE: 504-524 W. Johnson Street/312 N. Bassett Street/505-527 Conklin Place - New Residential Development in UMX District. 4th Ald. Dist. (67242)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: December 15, 2021	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Tom DeChant, Lois Braun-Oddo, Craig Weisensel, Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad, and Jessica Klehr.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of December 15, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a new residential development located at 504-524 W. Johnson Street, 312 N. Bassett Street and 505-527 Conklin Place. Registered and speaking in support was Neil Reardon, representing ESG Architecture and Design. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Mitch Korte, representing Subtext Development.

Plans show the walk-up units along W. Johnson Street, with the lobby at the corner of W. Johnson and Bassett Streets, interior bike parking in the central area, with a ramp going down to two levels of parking, and a back area unenclosed garage for deliveries and other functions to be kept off the street. There are unit terraces and common spaces at curved edge. Level 12 is half residential and half common space with a rooftop amenity area. With respect to building height they are not seeking any additional variances for the upper roof amenity space.

The Commission discussed the following:

- There's not much to that mass as a first impression coming around that curve. Thought to materials, corner highlights? There's a lot of metal panel, character in the window and layouts, it's the design of the massing as you come around.
 - There are changes to the metal panel and articulated movement of the smaller windows which have been lightened in color. We're now proposing a panel that adds depth to the windows which was a comment before. We have changed to a lighter gray metal panel in the elevator core, celebrating the curve of the level 1 massing. We've kept the large living room windows at the corner. The brick on the corner should sing on its own. The metal panel looks different in varying lights.
- You put a lot of detail in the elevator core, which is beautiful, but as you come around I'm concerned that this elevation doesn't have much design, whether that's right or wrong. By the time you get around and celebrate that curve, the pop of the building is missed.

- I agree, the right is more successful than the left side. You see the change in materials, how it's announced. It's not bad, it's so similar in pattern but you may want more articulation, material change or plane change on that tower. I like the improvements but it needs a little bit more refinement in material selection.
- Question the units that open off W. Johnson Street along the curve. That's so very different from the towers around it, it's the only curved part. A curvaceous element all through the project may be stronger while adding more of a connection with the towers.
- What is the daylight into those curved units? They look spacious.
- I made that point last time, the lobby space should be there and bring the walk-up units to Bassett Street where you have a wider sidewalk and less traffic.
- This is like a highway, that special element reads to me as 'here's the entrance to the building.' It doesn't seem to fit just individual entry points. Wondering if that curved element should continue around and embrace as a base towards Bassett Street. Give serious thought to taking those walk-ups, moving them around the corner to Bassett Street and making the main entrance if not centered, at least adjacent as part of that curve that comes around. It feels flat and inappropriate to have apartments right there.
- Strongly confirm and reiterate the comments on the imbalance between the two towers. It needs more, it is too blank.
- When I say the left tower needs more articulation it does not mean equal to the right. Don't go all out and do as much as on the other tower.
- I hear the comments about the middle curve, I definitely agree. Are we giving feedback on that or just the exterior massing, plan changes too?
- We are looking at how it works as a piece of urban design, for residents, considering what we know about the curve and the traffic there. What says "residence" and what says "this is where the lobby should be?" Why would you not put the entrance to two towers right in the middle vs. around the corner? Any of us who have obeyed the speed limit around that corner knows it's not the best place for the front door to your house. That is an urban design issue, how the building addresses the street.
- The UDC's review on this project is advisory, with findings based on the design standards for Downtown Design Guidelines and in the code.
 - We don't want cars stopping there as they turn the corner and we feel that would happen if the lobby was located there.
- Could be translucent to amenity space. The curve becomes the feature where the entrance to the building could still be in the corner of Bassett and W. Johnson Streets. It makes sense to have that as the 'hub' of those two towers, continue that element around to Bassett Street to the actual doors.
- The effect the dark paneling has on the streetscape and as you're walking by, I would be supportive of reconsidering so much dark color.
- The planting plans are lovely.
- Above the pie shaped section was a response to comments Shane made, he advocated for a deeper system for perennials rather than a routine application of sedum. They obviously took his advice, I'm disappointed he's not here to see and comment on it. It's a substantial amount of the footprint of the second floor area, the way it's done in a crazy quilt pattern is unusual but I'm not averse to it. Sedums take care of themselves, these require regular work done on them. The one on the roof is interesting, it's more free flowing drifts. These are assets to birds and butterflies and a beautiful way to help absorb rain water.
- Regarding the curve, appreciate the protection with substantial terrace and beds in-bound in those residences. Agree with other comments about the darkness of the building, appreciate they are reflective to a certain extent.

ACTION:

On a motion by Weisensel, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).

The motion provided for the following:

- More subtle design elements added to the western tower as you come around the southwest approach for pedestrian/vehicle experience, in the form of articulation or material changes.
- Recommend looking at the first floor layout as far as the entrance and residential dwelling units.
- Recommend possible alternatives to place the dwelling units on Bassett Street and move the main entrance to the more public side, noting that we don't see any changes needed for vehicular movements.