

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

June 1, 2022



Agenda Item #: 3

Project Title: 121 E. Wilson Street - New Mixed-Use Residential/Commercial Building with Below Grade Parking in UMX Zoning. 4th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: [71621](#)

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Rafeeq Asad, Shane Bernau, Jessica Klehr, Tom DeChant, Russell Knudson and Christian Harper.

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of June 1, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use building located at 121 E. Wilson Street. Registered and speaking in support were Dan Kennelly, representing Quad Capital Partners; Andrew Laufenberg, Doug Hursh and Brian Reed. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Zach Skarzynski, representing Quad Capital Partners.

The proposal involves the demolition of the existing Lake Terrace office building to construct a 14-story building with residential and commercial spaces, under-building vehicle and bicycle parking accessed via a ramp between this site and the Marina Condominiums, and an open air promenade through the center on the ground floor for an outdoor connection through the building to a terrace overlooking Lake Monona. The building will have amenities on the 14th floor including a co-working space, terrace and a swimming pool. The residential entry and lobby are located on the western side fronting E. Wilson Street, and an existing shared loading easement maintains those uses on the southwestern portion of the site. The second floor is split into two volumes with a glass enclosed corridor to link the two. Floors 3-13 show approximately 28 apartment units per floor, with the top floor stepping back along E. Wilson Street and the lakeside to create common and private terraces. The building is in compliance with the Capitol View Preservation Height Limit; all attempts will be made to locate any rooftop equipment over the service entrance areas to hold back from the edges and reduce any visual impacts. Stormwater will be handled through a combination of green roofs and underground storage in the southern corner of the site. The proposed U-shaped building helps to create that courtyard while breaking up the massing, with two retail areas flanking the promenade. The goal is to create a strong human scale experience while still reading as an iconic form along the skyline. The two-story base element is comprised of brick and metal panels, both highly articulated, becoming larger in scale as you move up the building. The courtyard space would be brick with punched openings to relate more to the residential experience. The site angles so the building steps into three main components with more glass on the lake side, and smaller punched openings with light brick material faces the other buildings on those closer façades. The recessed metal panels are proposed to be lit in a subtle way to provide interest at night.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Is there less gradation on the lake side elevation?
 - The idea is to take advantage of the lake views for all those units. We didn't want to start closing up those views, while on the Wilson Street façade, we consider it more the 'city' side. It is also in response to the bird glass ordinance.

- I really like this, I can't see anything wrong with the concept. My only initial concern was how it feels to be on that John Nolen Drive patio with that much traffic going by, but maybe it's far enough above. This is a really good project, I like everything about it. The gradation, the enhancement with the lights at night. Good job, keep going.
- Very striking and exciting project, great use of this property. I had a similar question about the changing pattern of this Wilson façade. Understanding the lake view is a key amenity, I feel that this design is providing quite good access to that view, with or without this choice of elements. I would nudge the team toward applying it consistently around the building. The views to the lake are important but so is the view of this building from John Nolen Drive.
- The larger opaque elements being at the human level, is that notion of human scale important to these larger elements being lower?
 - The human scale is more as a pedestrian experiencing the building at the ground level where we have textured brick. There's a bit more detailing on those first two floors to respond to people being at that level.
- It's so wonderful to have such nice renderings and such a nice detailed Informational Presentation. My reaction to this design was to flip the building upside down. I read those larger opaque elements lower; the glass at the top gives me an elitist feeling.
- Why not place the lighting elements at the top pointed down?
 - Having lights up high you end up seeing the fixture and getting the glare of the fixture. Uplighting is so much nicer on buildings. It's almost like candle light with the gradation, this idea of a glowing edge with the recessed metal panels.
- Is there an opportunity for visual barrier between the dog run and John Nolen Drive? Consider the advantages or possibilities of some plantings as almost an acoustical barrier for that patio experience, balanced with views to the lake.
 - We do have a little wall at the dog run so it's not just exposed to John Nolen.
- The gradation going upward is more appropriate. The daytime rendering starts looking a little flat, maybe more texture on the inset metal panels would help. The gradation going up is more successful with the light. Be careful with your glass facing the lake, all of those blinds/curtains get pulled down and really changes that experience. You'll want high performance glass there.
- Maybe a mullion instead of recessed panels on the lake side, it looks too random now.
- Your renderings are very nice, I enjoy seeing a building that looks like what it will when built.
- What a project, it's really fun to be able to engage in a design conversation on projects like this one. On the Wilson side, I love the overall concept and prioritized activation of that streetscape. Some push and pull in the building massing, the way it enlivens that side would definitely not happen if the full building mass was brought out to the sidewalk. The concept of drawing people through this space, giving the public access is awesome, a huge amenity to the community. Love the lighting of the inset panels, the candle effect, would love to see that develop.
- The lake side is more flat and less interesting. The importance of these buildings flanking the civic spine, part of the beauty of that view is this diversity of buildings. I see what is almost like three buildings mashed into one, all at the same plane without that depth. I'm not advocating that these should have a separate identity, what if it was less of a 'U' and more of an 'H'? Not to take away from the courtyard but to give it a bit of space between.
 - This is the harder façade to design. We have looked at different forms, and like the idea of some additional shadow and breaking up of the façade, but this is the way to get the most units with lake views that are unobstructed. We tried to break it up with the balconies and stepped them as much as we can in order to get the number of units we need.
- The intent of the comment is still there for you to consider.
- Staff comments pointed out the mechanical overrun issue and Capitol View Height Preservation limit. I would fully support elimination of that overrun. If anywhere in the downtown and cityscape it was important to minimize any overrun, this would be that kind of project. I stand behind some of the staff comments regarding that upper floor.

- There are going to be some Marina condo residents with new views who may struggle with that change. The materials facing those is a light brick so it will throw any light around. Are any of the windows operable?
 - Yes.
- The fenestration where you have metal panels, there's so much interest in the windows and panels it gets lost in the punched windows. Is that curved under the windows in the masonry?
 - Yes, we're showing a curved brick element in a curved metal element.
- Costs are always a consideration, but on details like that go bigger so we can really see that shadow, it might help it look less flat too.
- Curious how confident you are about that brown color.
 - It's supposed to be bronze. We wanted something that contrasted the silver Marina on one side and the light brick of the State Administration building on the other side. A metal that blends more with the glass, because the glass is always dark during the day.
- Many of the rooflines in Madison are flat already, if you do end up with an overrun, I'd encourage a design feature, something slightly different that adds to the skyline.
- Very exciting project, lots of wonderful elements. Is there an opportunity of coordinating this project with the Monona waterfront design challenge? That big blank wall is going to be a backdrop.
- (Secretary) That is something I'd have to look into.
- I share the idea of an 'H' shape along John Nolen Drive. They will read as one big building form John Nolen Drive and the water. Anything to increase the push/pull or articulation, making the sawtooth more dramatic, raising the height of one component.
 - We're keenly aware of the Monona waterfront project, as that process evolves we will certainly be in touch with the City. Hopefully it will work out that we can coordinate somehow.
- I read these as glass balconies, I hope you stick with them. The glass balcony is so elegant.
 - We're still studying that, we're in a cost phase and will probably look at some different options for that.

Action

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