

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 11, 2013

TITLE: 105-113 South Mills Street – Demolition and Construction of a New 4-Story, 74-Unit Apartment Complex. 13th Ald. Dist. (30983)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 11, 2013

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 11, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of demolition and construction located at 105-113 South Mills Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Steve Kieckhafer and John Holz, representing Gallina Companies; and Kevin Snitchler, representing Meriter Hospital. Appearing in support and available to answer questions were Craig Enzenroth and Joe Gallina. Registered and speaking in opposition were Katherine Loving, Don MacCrimmon and Prudence Barber. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Cecilia Stephenson, Karen Gussert and Barbara MacCrimmon. Appearing neither in support nor opposition and available to answer questions was John Perkins. This project is part of the initial Meriter PUD that was submitted and approved for a 74-unit apartment complex with underground parking. They are also applying for demolition permits for five homes along Mills/Mound Streets. In address of the Commission’s previous comments Holz presented modifications to the project, which include using just the green siding and maintaining the elongated brick. The cast stone in lintel and sill areas was shown. The glass will be clear. The balconies are pre-finished aluminum in a shell color. The building is broken into two main pieces with a large setback at St. James Court allows the building to read in smaller units. The building grabs those elements of vernacular architecture seen in the neighborhood. They redesigned the bays in a less traditional appearance; in some cases it’s a double wide bay and in some cases it’s narrower. The entry piece has changed to more of a plaza with a paving pattern that really lets you know this is the entry. Additionally they looked at how parking is working and studied how an overhang might work to cover up some of the parking while providing an amenity to the units above. They felt it would cause major privacy issues for those units from above as well as laterally. They looked at changing the brackets but felt they are appropriate in scale but they did add more detail to them. An outdoor community room is proposed. The roof hasn’t changed because of the height it would add to the roofline.

Katherine Loving spoke to her design concerns, including addressing the “big box” design in the midst of a residential neighborhood. Meriter did an excellent job of planning the daycare facility to blend in with the surrounding properties, but this doesn’t fit in with the character of the neighborhood. Going down Mills Street you are aware that you are in a residential neighborhood, but you’re not really aware that one block over is a hospital complex.

Don MacCrimmon spoke in opposition stating the project doesn't look anything like the neighborhood but more like Meriter Hospital. It would be nice if it looked like the rest of the neighborhood. The corner posts emphasize the verticality of the building while it should emphasize the horizontal which is more pleasant and more in keeping with the neighborhood. The contrast between white elements and brick is too much of a contrast.

Kevin Snitchler spoke in support on behalf of Meriter Hospital. They like the architecture and think it's a great urban infill project. They are also pleased with The Gallina Company; they are going to own it for the long-term and are more likely to take care of it and maintain it.

Prudence Barber wondered what the effect of big buildings like this will have in a residential neighborhood with smaller houses. She noted that the new homes being built on St. James Court will fit in with the neighborhood because of their architecture. She wondered if any street trees would remain, if this kind of building would be friendly to the existing neighborhood and how it will relate to the neighborhood. With 74-units she is troubled with where these residents will park.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The loading zone – you've got people walking in and out where you've also have the loading zone?
 - That will be the location for moving in and out. There will be bollards there so it is designed to be an uncommon activity.
- Is that where a UPS delivery will occur?
 - Yes the bollards would be removable. This is the required size of the delivery area, smaller vehicles would be able to park on the east side of the building to load and unload.
- I can't really tell what the front door looks like. For an apartment building you want a bit of a grand entrance at the street and I don't see any elevations in the submittal. What is the front door?
 - It's a storefront aluminum system. It's a glassy entrance and the doors slide.
- I'm really struggling with this design. I understand the context of that neighborhood and have been involved in many plans for this neighborhood. I struggle with the brackets, I see that as an element for a single-family home not an apartment building. I think your columns and the pitched roof all together create a sense of height and mass that is overwhelming even in the renderings. I know very well the co-housing and I can understand the desire to mimic the elements you see in that neighborhood, but a much better architectural expression is to find something that complements it in this particular urban form, which is an apartment building. The elements of this building should be inherent to that form, not to the single-family form. I would strongly recommend that you find ways to simplify both the roofline and the columns. Find other ways through materials to provide that variation in the façade. There are ways for the new to complement the old.
- The removal of trees hurts this. Some of the architecture is problematic too but the loss of those trees is a big one. Part of the parking needs to be rethought. This small island looks like it's not even our standard size. I would eliminate those two parallel parking stalls. You need to figure out a way to get some trees in here besides just the street trees to help bring that building context into the neighborhood.
- There are some mislabelings on the plan, there are plants that aren't labeled and quantities that aren't correct, that has to be taken care of. The Dogwoods, I can't see them surviving on the west side of that building and they're pretty wide spreading trees so I'm not sure that's the kind of tree you want in there.
- The stone mulch in the islands needs to be gone, you need to use wood mulch. Around the buildings it's fine.
- If the building is going to be this larger scale than the surrounding buildings, another piece you're doing that almost makes it less comfortable to walk against is bringing these solid brick planters out towards the sidewalk, that makes another step of uncomfortableness as a pedestrian walking by. I would look to

do something different there and if they are walk-up units that could be entered directly it would be more friendly to the street.

- The renderings don't show the existing street trees. There are columnar trees but I would look into more because all of that will help bring it down to a more human scale as you walk by this. If this were a ranch home I think the plantings would fit. The plantings look insignificant in a building this large. Go with more columnar trees, more vase shaped plantings, the taller the better but stay away from the Norway Maple spires.
- I encourage you to splurge a bit on the entry.
- I'd encourage you to work more with the neighborhood; they've gone great things in there.
- I would really like to see the loading/unloading in the back; that's a busy street with 74-units. If that's truly student housing that's 74 trucks all at once and that's too much for the neighborhood.
- Can you speak to the comment about the white against brown colors?
 - I think the creamy white is complementary and appropriate in color to the brick. We're evoking the vernacular of the neighborhood, not only across the street with the dimension of the lapboard siding, the whitish colors of trim throughout the neighborhood are shown in our images. It wasn't our intent to copy or mimic but to grab the residential quality, the articulation, the sense of this size unit, this modular, this railing.
- You've got this wonderful Italian name but I feel like I'm looking at a Colonial building. The history of this neighborhood is very deep, it's a very important neighborhood to the history of Madison. If you're going to have a great name you should have a great building to reflect that name.
- I found the State Historical Society's property inventory and looked at some older 20th Century apartment buildings. You see pretty clean rooflines, and while some of them are not great buildings, they celebrate the entrance, they have some restraint.
- I'm struggling with the baseline, it seems diminished rather than enhanced. We can have a historical aspect to this, just not this particular interpretation.

ACTION:

On a motion by Harrington, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0).

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 and 6.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 105-113 South Mills Street

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

General Comments:

- Needs a “lighter” historical reference that’s appropriate to an apartment structure.
- Spire Oak is a good selection. Use additional large scale plants/trees (columnar, but not Sentry Norway Maple).
- Please simplify building top. Brackets are over-sized and look cluttered. Splurge on entry at Mills.
- Inappropriate for context.