

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: December 14, 2016

TITLE: 121 North Butler Street – Restoration of Two Existing Buildings, Demolition of Two Buildings and Three Garage Structures, and Development of a New 4-Story Apartment Building with Underground Parking. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ald. Dist. (41849)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: December 14, 2016

ID NUMBER:

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

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of December 14, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of development located at 121 North Butler Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were James McFadden, representing Cliff Fisher; Cliff Fisher, Desirae Fisher, Reese Fisher, Blake Fisher, Stuart Barker, Lupe Montes, Morgan Buege, Jean Fisher and David Wallner.

Multiple modifications have been made since the Commission first saw this project. The building facing Butler Street has been shortened with 72-feet between the two buildings. The Downtown Plan looks specifically at the James Madison neighborhood; there’s a heavy predominance of large multi-family brick residences. Recommendation 104 allows relatively higher density development that conforms to the maximum building height map along North Hamilton, Butler and Gorham Streets; Butler Street was one of the specific streets selected for higher density to the mass and building height. The existing grading will remain in place where there is approximately 8-feet between lot lines. Traffic Engineering has concerns about two-way traffic. The parking will be for residents only, and they will be informed that they are to yield to cars coming in, reinforced with a lit yield sign. This development is aimed at people that do not work for Epic, but who want an affordable, comfortable living space in downtown and do so without roommates; these will be studios, one-bedrooms and one single 3-bedroom unit. This is virtually all brick on all elevations with piers and balconies. It will be clad and engineered to accept solar panels.

Desirae Fisher spoke in support, and presented 79 signatures in favor of the project from the neighborhood.

Lupe Montes spoke in support as a 9-year neighborhood resident. Where the Downtown Plan calls for family size development, that is not going to be a place to raise a family on the Butler side. There’s a big parking structure up the street. The only kids in the neighborhood over the last 9 years are the Fisher kids. It’s not a family type neighborhood. There are structures a couple of doors down with big balconies, so they would blend

in. If you look at the drawings closer you'll see that it does fit the neighborhood, we do need the small apartments that are affordable there. The people who work on or near the Capitol can't afford to live there.

The Secretary noted that a Planning Division staff report was distributed via email, which cites the City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City's Comprehensive Plan and applicable neighborhood development or special area plans (the Urban Design Commission is also charged to make its recommendation on this basis). He cited specifically building proportion, shape and pattern of buildings and yards; redevelopment shall reflect the scale and rhythm of surrounding structures, promote larger family supportive and workforce housing in new developments and provide ample on-site open space. The Planning Division has concerns over whether several of the conditional use standards can be met with this proposal; specific concerns relate to Standard #4 to not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district, adequate utilities, access, drainage, parking supply, internal circulation improvements including, but not limited to, vehicle-pedestrian-bicycle and public transit and other necessary improvements have been or are being provided. And Standard #9, "When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or addition to existing buildings, the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability, compatible with existing or intended character of the area, and a statement of purpose for the zoning district. This structure located in the middle of the block is now proposed to have a depth of 113-feet. While reduced in size, the proposed building continues to extend deep into the site's existing rear yard and is not believed to be consistent with the surrounding development pattern where most existing structures are between 50-75 feet in depth. This would be the first through development within the subject block. While the structure meets Zoning Code-required space between buildings on a through-lot development, the space is not centered upon the rear lot line as is found elsewhere in the subject block. The driveway does not meet the width requirement for a two-way drive; Traffic Engineering has stated that the applicant needs to meet Section 10.08 MGO which has a required minimum of 18-feet for two-way traffic. The applicant's attempt to create a one-way operating entrance between the two existing structures on North Hancock Street will not operate as intended and will create the need for more vehicles to back onto North Hancock right-of-way, which is forbidden by MGO 10.08. The Planning Division is further concerned with the design and desirability of the balconies, which completely project outward from the exterior walls and are not recessed into the long façades. Planning Division recommends that consideration be given to incorporate these into the façade in concert with ways to add modulation to the long building sides.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- If there's only 12-feet between the buildings, you can't make 18, so what's the answer?
  - The answer is it probably won't go through because it doesn't meet the ordinance. That's what it comes down to.
- When I look at objective 4.11 (Downtown Plan), it's to promote larger family supportive or workforce housing in new development. Instead of maybe 52 households on this lot it might be 10. The density is these tiny tiny little units, and the way in and out from the back street is really problematic. The elevation is fine, that kind of reflects the scale and rhythm of the street. But when you look deeper at the mass of the building, how far it goes back, what it does to that existing pattern of backyards, I don't know what the intended character of the area is but it's certainly not compatible with the existing character. The balconies compound the problem and are not present in any examples of other brick apartment buildings. The density of individual studios in my mind is not compatible with this neighborhood.
- I agree with those comments and the staff comments.

- I would like to hear from TE as to what an acceptable solution is if they can't make 18-feet. As one who generally hates hanging balconies, even if they could come in a foot or so, they do provide some open space but I would like to see them better integrated with the architecture.
- Maybe an operating gate for the parking?
- I do have concern about the size of the development, the footprint of the development is drastically different than the remainder of the composition of the block.
- The plans specifically call for more density on that block.
- If the appeal is to create more family housing downtown, are we creating family housing or just a lot of small units?
- We're not creating family housing when we're approving The Constellation or The Galaxie or any of that, that's not family units.
- They do have 1, 2 and 3-bedroom units.
- I find this a different application of the standards for different projects. I'm not very happy with the staff recommendations on this.
- Based on the standards it's a "no," but everything else makes sense.
- Right now it doesn't seem like the intended character for the neighborhood is to have deep buildings filling the back areas.
- I don't think we can say that families won't move here; they won't stay here.
- Has it been looked at to bring the underground parking in from the other street along the side of the building, where the building is 20-feet from the property line? That would be a way to separate the underground parking from North Hancock Street. That starts to get you an 18-foot wide dimension in that space.

### **ACTION:**

On a motion by O'Kroley, seconded by Slayton, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-2) with DeChant and Asad voting no. The motion noted comments made within the Planning staff report that required address.