



Office of the Common Council

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April 9, 2019

Re: Agenda item #5 - 929 E. Washington Avenue - New Development of a Commercial/Office Mixed-Use Building Located in UDD No. 8.

Greetings Urban Design Commissioners:

I have a meeting at 5:00 p.m. but plan to stop by in the hopes you will take agenda item #5 out of order.

I have been working on the redevelopment of Capitol East District for many years. We have seen the north side take off with new housing, a grocery store, and a refreshed Breese Stevens Field. In the last two years, the south side of E. Washington Avenue has started to catch up. It is harder to build commercial than residential, but we have finally seen the construction of office uses on the last Don Miller parcel. I am thrilled with the reuse of the historic Kleuter warehouse on the 900 block of E. Washington Avenue as Hotel Indigo and its recent designation on the National Register of Historic Places.

As some of you know, I was involved in a succession of planning processes for the rail corridor, as either a neighborhood association leader or alder, starting with the East Rail Corridor Plan Advisory Committee and culminating in the E. Washington BUILD - Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan and UDD #8. We discussed every block in depth and the context from downtown to the Yahara River. We said the corridor was surrounded on two sides by vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. We established goals for each section of the corridor and created the bulk and massing guidelines that are now codified in UDD #8. One of the key principles for the north side was the concept of the 45-degree step down from E. Washington Avenue to Mifflin Street. As Mifflin Street is getting built out, I think we can agree the transition to a more pedestrian scale works well.

For me, one of the key principles for E. Main Street is the concept that E. Main Street should literally become the "Main Street" of the employment district.

In the Capitol Gateway corridor Plan we said, "PRIMARY STREETS AND PARKWAYS The streets and parkways are the public rooms of the Corridor. It is important to acknowledge and in some ways preserve the existing character and land use patterns in these public rooms. The public spaces of East Mifflin Street and East Washington Avenue will be preserved as well as improved, while East Main Street will be re-introduced to the community as a more prominent and important street in the Corridor (See Figure 28)." (See p. 22.)

Last fall, I asked the Plan Commission to delay the demolition of 924 E. Main Street until an actual plan to redevelop the rest of the block is presented, and they agreed. While there is a lot to like about the redevelopment of the Mautz block, the future of E. Main Street is still uncertain.

As proposed by the development team, Phase 1 will construct an 11-story office building on E. Washington Avenue, amend the previously approved parking plan and demolish 924 E. Main Street. Phase 2 will fill in E. Main Street – construct a new building on the surface parking lot, add another building to fill in the greenspace, and add a building on E. Washington Avenue where the Madison Credit Union is now located. However, there is no guarantee if/when this would happen. With the proposed demolition of 924 E. Main Street and previous approval to demo 910 E. Main Street, I am concerned that Phase 1, as implemented, does not meet the goals for E. Main Street found in the recommendations of the Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan. If 924 E. Main Street is demolished, most of the block will be surface parking or open space for an unknown period of years. Since the majority of new construction will be commercial, it will take more time to construct each building than it would if the majority were residential uses.

In the Staff Report to the Plan Commission, it was noted that the Landmarks Commission "recommended to the Plan Commission that the building [924 E Main St] has historic value related to the vernacular context of Madison's built environment as the work of a known architect, but that the building itself is not historically, architecturally or culturally significant. The preservation file for the building indicates that it was constructed as the National Biscuit Company Warehouse and was designed by Edward Tough and built by George Cnare and Sons."

While 924 E. Main Street is not a grand architectural specimen like the Kleuter warehouse, it is part of the significant cluster of historic brick industrial buildings that make up the character of this former industrial corridor. The corner of Brearly Street and E. Main Street contains many of these character-defining buildings. While I would prefer retaining and reusing the building to honor the building and our history, I would support preserving the façade in this case. I believe the façade should be retained to create a sense of place, and it will provide a place for people to congregate that is a pedestrian scale.

I was disappointed the planning staff report was silent on the treatment of E. Main Street. The E. Washington Avenue BUILD – Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan adopted standards and guidelines for E. Main Street:

"E MAIN STREET Blair to Ingersoll Streets - This is a working street dominated by utilities, industrial functions, and parking lots while being the entry and access to many small and established businesses. However, the Corridor should become more pedestrian friendly as a strong link to downtown and retain its cluster of historic industrial brick buildings. East Main Street façades should include pedestrian entries, but large, intensive parking and loading areas should be concealed with access directed to the north-south side streets, where possible." (See p. 23.)

In addition, there are specific recommendations for urban design goals and values for the section of the corridor:

"SPECIFIC URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS Segment 2 #1 Preservation of industrial era historic structures." (See p. 25.)

(www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Capitol_Gateway_Corridor_Plan.pdf)

At their March 25 meeting, I asked the Plan Commission to incorporate the façade of 924 E. Main Street into the development proposal and delete conditional use standard #11, "Recommend that any

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existing façades not be salvaged, as it will impact and limit the design possibilities to develop the site.” I also supported a condition be added requiring bird-friendly and glare-resistant glass be incorporated into the building. I appreciate your additional recommendations on this topic because it is a concern to many.

Plan Commissioners were sympathetic to my requests but could not remove your recommendation regarding the façade.

I request you consider removing your recommendation to not retain the historic façade and allow for its reuse. As part of the referral, Plan Commission members requested Heather Bailey, the Preservation Planner, review the proposed treatment of the façade. I am sure you have seen her comments to the applicants “... I think that your proposal is a sensitive and creative approach to honoring the history of the building and the site. While this is not a historic preservation project, it is a heritage project that will have a sustainability element by incorporating some of the building materials previously located on the site. Your plan to deconstruct, number the masonry units, and then store them in a warehouse (where they would be protected from the elements) for future installation is a technique I have seen used in similar successful projects.”

Please help us design not just a block of modern buildings but also a street with a sense of its own history and uphold the commitment we adopted in the BUILD plan to incorporate the preservation of industrial era structures along with new buildings to create a place that reflects our heritage.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marsha Rummel", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marsha Rummel
Aldersperson, Sixth District

enc: Page 22, E. Washington Avenue BUILD-Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan
 Page 23, E. Washington Avenue BUILD-Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan
 Page 25, E. Washington Avenue BUILD-Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Together with the bulk standards, the design guidelines included in this Plan (to be further refined in the Urban Design District #8 standards) help ensure that development is sensitive to the “context” of the surrounding area. The context includes the land uses, sizes and types of structures, public open spaces, and transportation facilities, among other elements, that developers must take into account when planning their projects. For purposes of identifying the existing context, guidelines are provided for the primary streets (East Washington Avenue, East Main Street and East Mifflin Street) and the Yahara River Parkway. In addition, the Corridor has been segmented into five distinct areas with each having a unique set of recommendations.

PRIMARY STREETS AND PARKWAYS

The streets and parkways are the public rooms of the Corridor. It is important to acknowledge and in some ways preserve the existing character and land use patterns in these public rooms. The public spaces of East Mifflin Street and East Washington Avenue will be preserved as well as improved, while East Main Street will be re-introduced to the community as a more prominent and important street in the Corridor (See Figure 28).

EAST WASHINGTON AVENUE

The character of East Washington Avenue should be formal and uniform in signage, streetscape, building orientation, setbacks, and street level facade heights, as defined by the recommended bulk standards; yet at the same time, present an interesting, vibrant character with variety, activity and urban amenities (See Figure 29). The scale and amount of building face block enclosure should vary along the Avenue along with the experience. The streetscape, however, should always frame the Capitol view.

Beyond aesthetic improvements, East Washington Avenue should be the showcase of Wisconsin as Madison’s front door to employment and industry. The Avenue is a major thoroughfare that should remain auto-oriented, yet also provide connections for pedestrian and transit use and areas for outdoor gathering and activity. Key intersections at Paterson, Brearly, and Ingersoll Streets should have active urban open spaces where pedestrians and transit riders provide an active presence to the streets.



STREETS AND PARKWAY
EAST WASHINGTON AVENUE
CAPITOL GATEWAY CORRIDOR

Figure 28



Figure 29: East Washington Avenue Character

In order to achieve a consistent and cohesive appearance along East Washington Avenue, as well as a diverse and interesting Avenue environment, some urban design elements should be consistent and others should vary.

Unifying Elements

- Uniform setbacks
- Limited palette of building materials
- Consistent Streetscape design and amenities
- Focused view of the Capitol
- Lower street level facade heights
- Gateway features
- Signage types and locations

Elements Adding Variety

- Architectural styles
- Overall building heights (within defined limits)
- Areas of different focus (i.e., river orientation, neighborhood orientation)
- Areas of different scale (i.e., neighborhood scale, Corridor center scale, park orientation)

EAST MAIN STREET

Blair to Ingersoll Streets - This is a working street dominated by utilities, industrial functions, and parking lots while being the entry and access to many small and established businesses. However, the Corridor should become more pedestrian friendly as a strong link to downtown and retain its cluster of historic industrial brick buildings. East Main Street facades should include pedestrian entries, but large, intensive parking and loading areas should be concealed with access directed to the north-south side streets, where possible.

Dickinson Street to the Yahara River - This segment has a mix of vacant buildings, industrial businesses, parking lots, and new residential development. While the area is currently underutilized it should be revitalized as an active street with pedestrian improvements and on-street parking serving both the new residential on the south and the reuse of historic buildings on the north. Although non-residential uses are recommended for the north side of the street, larger buildings and more intensive development should be concentrated along the East Washington Avenue frontage and step down toward the East Main Street frontage.

Yahara River to North First Street - This segment has, and should continue to have, a residential character. Traffic should be kept to low volumes and low speed; development/redevelopment on the north side should be concentrated toward East Washington Avenue and away from the existing homes on the south side of East Main Street.

EAST MIFFLIN STREET

Blair to Ingersoll Streets - This segment is characterized by: commercial and light industrial uses; a number of public spaces including Breese Stevens Field, Reynolds Field, and Lapham School; and two block faces of residential uses. Future plans for this area should include a better defined streetscape at a walkable, pedestrian scale with on-street parking. The area should remain mixed use with employment, residential and public uses connected by the existing community spaces.

Ingersoll to Dickinson Streets - This is primarily a single-family residential area with tree-lined streets. This area should remain a residential area with on-street parking and be protected against traffic effects from development along East Washington Avenue.

YAHARA RIVER & THORNTON STREET

The Yahara River frontage and Thornton Street corridor currently contains uses that do not relate to the river or the riverfront. This corridor should become an active, recreation and pedestrian area, characterized by new residential and mixed-use/retail development along the Parkway. New development should be cohesive with the new Yahara River bridge pathways and underpass and should tie into the riverfront. New development should provide adequate setbacks and maintain a low-scale frontage on Thornton to provide solar access along the Parkway. All structures fronting on Burr Jones and the river should have transparent and articulated facades with visible activity and functions that interact with the riverfront.

SPECIFIC URBAN DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

EAST WASHINGTON AVENUE CAPITOL GATEWAY CORRIDOR

February 2006

