

AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: January 29, 2020
TITLE: 7050 Watts Road – Alteration to a Previously Approved PD(GDP). 1 st Ald. Dist. (57488)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: January 29, 2020	ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 29, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of an alteration to a previously approved PD(GDP) located at 7050 Watts Road. Registered and speaking in support was Daniel Stewart, representing At Home. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Peter Fortlage, representing DEC. The team is seeking to subdivide the lot to create an outlot parcel on an underused portion of overflow parking. They currently do not have many details but would like to have the pieces in place to move forward with subdivision. This is currently a sea of parking which they would like to develop into something useful and improve the surroundings. Right now they do not know building type, size or materials. There are some mature trees in a large landscape area along Watts Road. Because of how far setback those trees are they don't see a feasible way to develop in this area and keep those trees. They can look at moving those trees if it's possible, while mitigating what that visual impact would be. They have looked at the code regulations if this weren't a PD, and what they're proposing are design uses within that code, and they doubled their landscape points. The parking will be lower than Watts Road and will be screened; there will not be a loss of visual screening from Watts Road back to the Walmart parking. They don't show any trees on this plan because it is preliminary, but without knowing what this building will be they do not know what type or size of tree would be planted. The impervious area is going up some with the new building, but the actual pavement area is about the same with an increase of 12 parking spaces. There were different parking layout updates over time.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Sheet C1.01, you're proposing parking to the south of the building. From the south edge of that parking to the road isn't there a drop in elevation?
 - The parking area is lower than the street.
- So from the street it'll look like a berm and somehow the parking is below that?
 - Yes the street level drops down slightly to the parking. We wouldn't be proposing to go back up.
- Do you know what that elevation different will be?
 - We haven't gotten those details yet. Probably four-feet maybe.

- It's almost like a retaining wall.
 - It could potentially been brought up with a retaining wall. Again it's nothing you'll see from the street.
- I'm wondering if that will block all your potential signage and if you're OK with that.
 - What we proposed is a 2-foot hedge screen, if it's 3 or 4 feet that's fine. Unless those are 8-feet then you'd be blocking potential signage but I think we can get a pretty good screen and keep building visibility.
- The intent is to screen cars, but the upper portion of the building would still be visible?
 - Yes, we would still have some trees along the road as well.
- If it's double sided parking and you're driving on Watts, with the grade and the trees, will you still see the building from the street?
 - We've drafted this site plan to show a front door potentially on the side and not facing Watts Road. We'd still want identification there as you drive by. Underneath the trees, over the hedges, the grade drop allows us to get that view corridor with low hedges.
- Does Zoning state that if it's a Watts Road address that the front of the building has to face Watts Road?
- (Firchow) From a zoning standpoint the zoning is site-specific. If it was conventional zoning there would be standards for a street oriented entrance, and that would be staff's preference.
- I think you're going to be required to have more green islands in the parking lot. If you're entering the building on the other side, why do you have so much parking on the opposite side?
 - Because the dark line you see diagonal is the property line, so Walmart owns past on the left side of that. There's an easement, it was a condition that we can't place the building any farther to the west.
- You could make that your front and side building, right?
 - We could look at that. The intent of the door facing east, the drive you see comes from the signalized entrance, which is where the front door wants to be.
- It's so close to that intersection it seems difficult for a left turn. I'm wondering if you want to move that entrance to the right a little bit.
 - I understand your thought process, I think there's a median right there so I don't think a left turn is possible out of that drive. That's wholly on Walmart's property so I don't know that they'd want to do that.
- On C-100, you don't have those little pockets of parking, you have two lanes. You're not considering that anymore?
 - That's correct, there was some feedback; we wanted to present an option that didn't have any disturbance on the Walmart property. We have not had any opposition from them but wanted to have an option if they didn't like what was happening we could pose a solution that wouldn't impact their property at all.
- The big concern is the loss of berm which is part of the PD, and how the applicant is going to mitigate that.
- The 7 parking spots backing into a road on the north side of the building, is that a concern?
 - That is a drive aisle, we wanted to maximize parking close to the building. If it is a major concern we're not opposed to taking it out.
- I agree, that is a major concern. I am concerned with the loss of the buffer. If you are removing that bay of parking on plan south, we don't really know the justification for the number of parking stalls, specifically because there's a sea of parking just across that road.
 - The purpose to create a lot that could be sold. While there will be allowance of shared parking for overflow for this proposed building into the At Home parking field, that would not be an issue as far as the allowance of that. One of concerns is being able to self park on the lot, so

we're trying to provide at least enough parking within their lot. I don't think there is a minimum parking regulation in the zoning code.

- I can sympathize with that but I think the right way to do it is to treat the internal drive as a streetscape and have crosswalks and curb cuts so there are safety measures in place for connectivity. I struggle with not doing that and compensating by removing the buffer.
 - I don't know that even if we tried to take out all this parking, if we would have to have fire access. I don't know that we could do a zero impact, but if this proposed building comes in as a smaller building I don't see why everything couldn't just shift and that difference be added to the landscape buffer in lieu of more parking.
- You're touching on what I said earlier, not to remove the circulation necessarily but just that south bay of parking as a compromise.
- As a reminder this is a request for initial approval of the GDP. If we approve this, this is approved and not bound to move the berm or the parking.
- I understand some of your restraints. The west parking really isn't needed. You need the circulation path but a lot of that parking, is that what you need or just the best use of the space?
 - To provide that goal of a standardized parking ratio to self-park the lot.
- Did you look at rotating the building and put the back parallel to the lot line so you would reduce the amount of wasted space on that side, have that be the back of your building with a corner entry?
 - We did look at that. Our concern was that corner element got so close to Watts Road that it would be opposed. The corner starts clipping it.
- The bottom row needs an island, right?
- I don't think yet there's a comfort level that this adequately addresses the GDP or fits with the previously approved GDP. I'd make a motion to refer.
- Any clarification on that motion?
- Yes, just some other options on the table, what Craig mentioned, maybe rotating the building allows you to keep the same parking with less intrusion on the buffer space. It's not necessarily just the removal of that south parking bay, we need to see options that address a site plan in more drastic measures and protects that greenspace.
- I would point out along those same lines I totally understand what you're going for here, but there's more and more in Madison of a concern for removing, especially mature trees, and it sounds to me like you are committed to making an aesthetically as possible solution to having this much diminished space here, but there's no replacing those trees that took a long time to get to that size. Our citizenry is just not happy when those kinds of things happen, especially in the context of "these are being removed to make more parking next to huge parking spaces there already." People are averse to walking any distance, but to me there's societal issues involved in this too and it rubs myself and a lot of people in Madison the wrong way to see healthy mature trees removed.
- A section cut-through to see the berm go up from Watts and down to the parking would be helpful.

ACTION:

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Harper, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0). The referral requested the following additional information:

- Section cut through of the site.
- Consider reorienting the building.
- We need to see options that address a site plan in more drastic measures and protects greenspace.
- Preserve existing trees.