

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 5/14/18

TITLE: 118-126 State - Advisory
Recommendation for development
adjacent to Landmark, 4th Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Amy Scanlon, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 5/23/18

ID NUMBER: 51562

Members present were: Stuart Levitan, Chair; Anna V. Andrzejewski, Vice Chair; David WJ McLean, Richard Arnesen, Marsha A. Rummel, and Katie Kaliszewski. Excused was Lon Hill.

SUMMARY:

Jeff Vercauteren, registering in support and wishing to speak.
Kraig Kalashian, registering in support and wishing to speak.
Eric Nordeen, registering in support and available to answer questions
Matt Prescott, registering in support and available to answer questions.
Tim Harrington, registering in support and wishing to speak.
Grant Frautschi, registering in support and wishing to speak.
Franny Ingebritson, registering in opposition and wishing to speak.
Jeff Ripp, registering neither in support nor in opposition, and wishing to speak.

Staff stated that this hotel project was previously brought before the Commission last fall, though it was a different project then, so her staff report only addresses the new proposal.

Levitan informed the Commission that they would be providing an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission regarding the development adjacent to a landmark, the Lamb Building. He then read from the relevant zoning code, ordinance 28.144.

Vercauteren noted that they have acquired additional properties at 124 and 126 State Street since they last appeared before the Commission and have tried to address previous concerns about the Carroll Street façade and its relationship to the landmark in their new proposal. They incorporated the new sites in order to utilize the additional frontage on State Street to work in a three story façade and carry the building around to the Carroll Street frontage.

Kalashian pointed out that after acquiring the additional sites, they are now seeking to reuse two existing buildings at 118 and 126 State Street, and had to examine new ways to unify the block. They looked to use the size of existing windows as a common denominator to carry throughout.

Kalashian stated that the buildings at each end, 114 and 126 State Street, are roughly three stories high, which inspired them to use a three-story line on State Street. He noted that they purposefully used uniform materials such as masonry brick and limestone in varying sizes. He also mentioned that the scale used in the new proposal is more in sync with the pedestrian level.

Kalashian said that they tried to use the same rhythm and architecture on the State and Carroll Street sides of the building because the two elevations are not visible at the same time, and they want people to understand that it is the same building as they move around the block. He noted that on Carroll Street, the building is set back after the third floor and begins to have different detailing than the base. He also pointed out that despite adding the additional properties, they have not increased the square footage of the building substantially in order to maintain scale.

Levitan pointed out the concerns noted in the staff report regarding the unified design and presentation, and how it reads as one large building that overwhelms the landmark. Vercauteren noted feedback from the Urban Design Commission that they like the look of the Tenney and Churchill buildings with two window bays, one on each side, with a center entrance, so they incorporated that design into their revised plans.

Arnesen asked why the building steps back so far on State Street, but not on Carroll Street. Kalashian stated that the allowable height for new construction on State Street is four stories, so the impression is that it is a four story building and one can't really see the tower from the street view. He also noted that the primary reason for the setbacks on State Street is to respect the lot lines of the previous buildings and then articulating them so that 118 and 126 State can stand prominently.

Arnesen asked if the three-story building at 126 State Street would also have a step back. Kalashian stated that there will be a fourth story that they intend to step back. Arnesen asked how many feet it would be, and Kalashian estimated that it will be five feet.

Harrington stated that he served on the steering committee for this project, and he is excited by the new plans for the 100 block of State Street, which he can see from his apartment. He expressed concern for the increasing number of vacant properties on upper State, and described its current state as an eyesore.

Harrington mentioned his sense that many things that people living in the neighborhood need are not available, and this redevelopment would make an urban lifestyle easier for people, so they would not need to drive anywhere to get what they need. He described the new life this project would restore around all three sides of the block, which are currently unappealing architecturally, unlighted, and often unsafe; he stated that he is sure this project would change that for the better.

Harrington noted that he walked around the State Street side of the building after reading concerns of its mass, and felt that its components are in scale with the Lamb Building and others on the block. He ended by saying that a majority of people on the steering committee are supportive and excited about this project.

Kaliszewski asked Harrington what this building would provide him and other downtown residents that is not already available. Harrington responded that there is a shortage of restaurants, and described the proposed rooftop patio on this development that he feels will be an appealing gathering place. He also mentioned that the hotel will add a unique, exciting place for his visitors to stay.

Frautschi indicated that he has been following this project for two years, and has been pleased with the adaptations made, including bringing the scale down to three and four stories on the State Street level, which is more complementary to the Lamb Building. He also noted that having a hotel on State Street will be beneficial to residents and business owners in the neighborhood.

Frautschi pointed out that historic buildings and landmarks are often supported by the businesses within and nearby those spaces, so one must support these businesses to support historic preservation. He detailed the difficulties of maintaining a landmark property, including working with floor plans, floor heights, and energy efficiency.

Frautschi described the importance of bringing in tax revenue and improving the fabric and walkability of State Street. He noted safety concerns and continuing issues at the top of State, and stated that bringing in new development and good programming will help to solve those problems.

Frautschi went on to state that the drawings on paper don't truly capture the scale on State Street, and it's easier to understand the scale when walking on the street itself where trees soften what is seen.

Frautschi ended by saying that good business strengthens State Street and encourages people to come to Madison. He noted again that having a quality building next to a landmark strengthens the landmark; business owners will make more money and can invest more in the landmark. He stated that progress is important, and he has no doubt that landmarks can live alongside modern buildings, and he hopes the Commission will support this project.

Ingebritson responded to Harrington's comment that the majority of people on the steering committee support this project, and pointed out that many people on the committee have concerns about the height of the building on Carroll Street.

Ripp stated that he does not dispute Ingebritson's comment, and noted that almost half of the concerns about the project were regarding building height. He went on to say that he likes the project, but feels that 124 State Street needs to be scrutinized. He stated that when he asked questions about the façade and what was underneath, he was told that it was nothing special and needed to be torn down.

Ripp indicated that since the developers acquired two additional properties, now they have an expanded width, and still want height as well. He noted again that almost half of the questions at the steering committee meetings were related to height issues. He mentioned that some argued that the Hub building down the street is also tall, but Ripp noted that the elevation is not the same there as it is at the top of State, and there should not be any comparison unless you look at the view of the whole area of the new hotel.

Ripp emphasized that he likes the project and thinks it is great infill, but wants to stress the height of the buildings and the fact that developers want to keep the height even though they now have greater width. He again voiced concern about the property at 124 State Street and finding out what is really there that could be harmonized with what is being maintained. He noted that he is pleased that the façades at 118 and 126 State Street are being preserved.

Ripp asked the Commission to scrutinize the merits of the project in terms of what we will lose and what we will gain, and how much of what we will gain will obstruct the view of the downtown area. He pointed out that arguments about tourism and bringing in business are peripheral to the real concerns about the merit of the building itself, what it is going to look like, and how structurally pleasing and historically significant it will be. He noted that the 100 block of State Street is very old, and is also one of the most attacked blocks.

Levitan reminded the Commission that the only issue before them is to provide an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission as to whether the proposed development is so large or visually intrusive as to adversely affect the historic character and integrity of the adjoining landmark, the Lamb Building. He pointed out that the Commission did approve an earlier iteration of the project.

Rummel asked how many floors were on the State Street frontage in the previously approved plans. Kalashian stated that there were four floors before, and there is now a mix of three and four floors. Levitan indicated that the height on the base of the State Street frontage hasn't changed, but the uniformity has.

Kalashian pointed out that in the previous iteration, the center section came all the way out to the lot line and the part adjacent to 118 was stepped back. This has remained the case, and now 126 is staying as is and then steps back to match the right side.

Rummel asked if the whole building changed in height. Kalashian stated that it went down seven feet from the previous plan. Vercauteren noted that the building was at 118 feet and is now at 111 feet. Arnesen asked what the absolute height is at this location, and Vercauteren stated that it is four stories higher than where they are.

Levitan asked staff to explain why this iteration is inferior to the earlier version. Staff stated that in the previous version, there is a distinctly separate architecture above 118 that relates to the new building at 122 and the street rhythm feels comfortable, but in new plans there is a uniformity in using one material and one architecture that makes it feel like one large building. She noted that it isn't giving any relief to the buildings that are being retained; 118 and 126 State look as though they are being taken over by the larger building, and the five foot step back is very minimal.

Rummel pointed out that the height of the building is in excess of the adopted plan, so that is something that the Common Council will have to deal with. She then asked if staff would be less concerned about the height being visually intrusive if different materials were used in the central section, as in the previous iteration. Staff confirmed this to be true.

Arnesen stated that he understands concerns about the monolithic materials, but in general, the forms on State Street are better than in the previous plan.

Kalashian noted that after acquiring the two additional sites, they decided to use uniform material in order to create harmony rather than competition amongst the different façades. Rummel asked staff if they could tweak that to address her concerns, aside from the overall mass. Staff responded that she wants to throw out big ideas and concerns, and then the architects working on the project are responsible for the design.

Staff noted that there are benefits to the current proposed design, such as the articulation at the street elevation, but she still has a difficult time with the uniform appearance of the rest of the building. She indicated that she was surprised to see that 118 and 126 State Street still have mass on top of them in the new plans, and she had expected to see the building pulled into the middle. She stated that based on their authority, the Commission is now responding to the plans before them, and she doesn't feel like it is the right thing yet.

Kaliszewski agreed and pointed out that the use of limestone with the cream brick really hits her in the face, and while she understands the reasoning for the uniform design, the new development comes up to the street and is hulking over the historic buildings. There was further discussion regarding step backs.

Andrzejewski asked if it would feel less bulky if the appearance was more varied and broken up. Staff said yes, if the material quality or scale were varied, that would help. Arnesen agreed. Andrzejewski said that if the new building next to the Lamb Building were varied in material or appearance, it would have a clean, distinct effect, as materials and rhythm can affect its visual intrusion. Levitan pointed out that the design objective the architect stated they are pursuing is what people are finding questionable, and are asking to reintroduce variety where the architects chose uniformity.

Kalashian noted that the building is unique because it has three frontages, so the design needs to translate to all three streets in order to create a uniform building.

Levitan turned discussion to the Carroll Street frontage of the building, and pointed out that the Commission did not like this frontage in previous designs. He also noted that the entire Carroll Street frontage is adjacent to the landmark.

Kaliszewski asked if this was the entrance to the hotel. Vercauteren stated that it is one of the entrances and is also the drop off area for the valet.

Staff noted that in this proposed design, they created a datum line at the third floor and a step back for the remaining six stories, but the step back is so minimal that it still feels like an 8+ story building adjacent to the landmark because of the uniform materials.

Andrzejewski asked if they had considered using a different material because the uniformity makes the building seem big. Kalashian said that they had considered other materials, but again pointed out the importance of unifying all three sides of the building. He noted that on State Street, there are different colors of brick on each

façade, and a canvas of five or six competing colors is too much. He mentioned that perhaps they could change the upper floors above the third floor because those aren't as visible from State Street. Arnesen suggested using different materials, as the current material is very heavy. Kalashian agreed that above the third floor, they could potentially look into different materials, but it would still likely be masonry punched openings.

Arnesen asked if a step back after the third story is feasible, suggesting five feet. Staff mentioned ten feet, which Arnesen thought would be difficult. Kalashian stated that in the context of the hotel guest room plan, they would lose a significant number of guest rooms. He noted that their square footage hasn't significantly increased by adding the two additional sites because they have included so many step backs to try create a better rhythm.

Arnesen asked about adding an additional floor in order to step it back further and still get the same number of rooms if they aren't at the Capitol view limit yet. Nordeen pointed out that there is a resistance to height right now, so while it would solve that issue, it is a tough approach.

Rummel asked where people would drive up for parking. Kalashian stated that parking is off-site, so they would drive up for valet parking on the Carroll Street side of the building, which is a dead end. Rummel noted that they will be using City streets to perform a business function, and Nordeen stated that Traffic Engineering brought up the same concerns.

Levitan asked if any Commissioners wanted to make a case for the State Street frontage complying with the ordinance. Arnesen pointed out that the Commission had previously approved a version of the plans, and that with some reservations, the revised plans are an improvement to what was approved previously.

Levitan asked staff what the previous recommendations were for the plans that were approved. Staff stated that on the State Street side, it was not so large or visually intrusive, and on the Carroll Street side, it was large and visually intrusive.

Arnesen stated that he thinks the revised plans are an improvement, though he does agree with the comments about materials, which would help to improve the forms and articulation.

Levitan asked if anyone wanted to make a case for the State Street façade being so large and visually intrusive that it negatively affects the Lamb Building. Kaliszewski said yes, for almost all of the same reasons Arnesen just mentioned, though changing the materials would be a great improvement.

Andrzejewski asked about the mass above 118. Arnesen clarified if she meant further step backs, and Andrzejewski confirmed. Kaliszewski stated that she agreed. Andrzejewski said that 118 State doesn't read right to her, and contributes to the hulking.

Arnesen pointed out that there appears to be enough room for the third and fourth floor above 118 State to be stepped back. Kaliszewski agreed. Andrzejewski stated that it would help to give the Lamb Building, which is the primary concern, a little breathing room. Kaliszewski agreed and mentioned that stepping it back even a little would help with the rhythm.

Levitan indicated that he is counting more speakers concerned about the size and visual intrusiveness than speakers who feel it is not a problem, and asked the development team if they would prefer that the Commission pursue a vote or if they would like a chance to regroup and consider some modifications. Vercauteren stated that they would like time to incorporate the feedback they have received and to return in a few weeks.

Arnesen described the step backs they would like to see above 118 State on the third and fourth floors. Andrzejewski mentioned considering different materials.

On the Carroll Street frontage, Arnesen suggested a larger step back, and that five to six feet would help to make it less intrusive. Andrzejewski noted that everyone understands the goal of having a unified building, but when it is one material, it becomes intrusive. Arnesen stated that it can be unified without being monolithic.

Andrzejewski stated that there are aspects of the design that she likes, especially how they have respected the three story mass, and she doesn't want that to get lost in this discussion. Kaliszewski pointed out that the development team listened to the Commission's comments last time. Rummel stated her belief that the Carroll Street design is more successful than earlier iterations.

Rummel asked what 124 State Street looks like under its current façade. Nordeen stated that he isn't certain, but it reads in a flat plane, which means there is no projection with cornice hidden behind it. He noted that it's hard to imagine there is anything worth retaining underneath.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Rummel and seconded by Kaliszewski to refer the item to a future meeting. The motion passed by voice vote.