

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 17, 2014

TITLE: 202 East Washington Avenue –
Redevelopment of the “Pahl Tire” Site for
a 10-Story, 146-150 Room “AC Hotel by
Marriott” in UDD No. 4. 2nd Ald. Dist.
(33109)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 17, 2014

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 17, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** for a 10-story hotel located at 202 East Washington Avenue in UDD No. 4. Appearing on behalf of the project were Josh Wilcox, AJ Robitschek, representing the North Central Group; and Jeff Lenz. Registered in support but not wishing to speak were Eric Fleming, Brad Mullins and Andrew Inman. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Abbie Moilien and Nathan Wautier, representing North Central Group; Mary Beth Growney Selene and Bridget Growney, representing Ryan Signs, Inc. Registered and speaking in opposition were William Gates, Anne Stoelting and Marilyn Martin. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Franny Ingebritson, Louise Smoczynski and Sharon Stumbras. Registered neither in support nor opposition was Guy V. Martin.

Wilcox presented the updated plans and designs. The building footprint has been modified at the back corner. A gate has been added in the backyard area for exiting only. The generator has been brought closer to the lot line to create outdoor seating looking towards the Lamp House, and the landscaping has been expanded with the overall objective of blending the two properties through the backyards. The ceramic panel has been extended down to wrap the corner to provide more continuity and give it a more modern take. The middle (fulcrum element) and top elements have remained mostly the same. They have added glass on the corner on East Washington Avenue and squared it up, as well as recessed the stairwell component so it integrates better with that corner. As they transition to the backside of the building, the façade has been simplified and they played with the massing by adding windows, reduced the amount of metal on that façade and brought the stone up an extra level. Building materials have changed slightly with lighter stone at the base, the all gray metal has been replaced with a more bronze shade to add more warmth and class to the project. Roughly 50% of the roof structure will be either a blue roof or a green roof; they haven’t committed to either but they have committed to stormwater control. The overall lighting concept remains the same. Signage remains the same also. The Secretary noted that the corner two-sided “AC” sign is basically a wall sign on both street frontages, therefore the canopy sign on the Webster Street frontage provides for two signable areas, which is something that would require a Comprehensive Design Review. The valet stand also has a sign which constitutes itself as a portable

sign and therefore has to be placed on private property. Between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 Noon, the building has some impact on the light on the Lamp House. The primary view shows that at 11:00 a.m. the shadow is onto the roof of the Lamp House about 5-feet further than what would have been approved as part of the Lamp House study; by Noon they are past that.

William Gates spoke in opposition. He remains concerned that any shade on the Lamp House is detrimental. The traffic and parking issues remain a big issue, specifically pushing parking out into the adjacent neighborhood and daytime deliveries.

Anne Stoelting spoke in opposition. She reminded the Commission of the environment this unique hotel is being placed in. She touched on the photos she had submitted showing traffic problems during the Taste of Madison. This hotel will increase already congested, complicated and unsafe traffic and parking. This will not just magically integrate with the neighborhood because of an operations plan.

Marilyn Martin spoke in opposition. She commended the AC plan and the attention paid to the Lamp House study. The plan also calls for the preservation of the historic character of the block. She believes the AC plan sounds reasonable in theory but would not work in practice. She doesn't see how a valet could maneuver in the highly congested traffic this corner sees. Eliminating on-street parking on Mifflin and Webster could ease this situation somewhat, but that will negatively affect residents who live and work downtown and do not have garage parking. It would also diminish the City's revenue from the parking meters. She stressed that Traffic Engineering should solve the parking problems now rather than take a "wait and see" approach.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The standards for excess height are not met. The biggest thing for me is the standards say the excess height "is compatible with the existing or planned character of the surrounding area," and I cannot find that to be the case.
- I also think these shadow studies are not great.

A motion was made by O'Kroley, seconded by Harrington, to **REFER** based on a finding that the "exceptional design" standards for additional height were not addressed.

Discussion was as follows:

- I struggle with this exceptional design standard, I really feel like that needs to be examined by Planning staff because it's not a reasonable way to make decisions at the Commission level. Quite frankly it was a way to make people comfortable with height, when we should be comfortable with height here. The idea that we're going to put a tall building here and have it be compatible is just not possible, so we either want an urban environment or we don't, and if we want an urban environment we need to stop pretending with this exceptional design and say 10-stories is appropriate. This "exceptional design" is undefinable, I think it's nonsense. I request that as we look at the Comprehensive Plan and as we come up on the time to review the Downtown Plan, that we seriously consider taking out language that we put in as a way to get these through the approval process.
- I was a huge supporter of the Downtown Plan element "plus two on everything" and saying we can't predict things. So when the plan was made 8 seemed comfortable for who knows what develops directly adjacent, 10-stories may be perfectly compatible, but based on what we approved directly adjacent less than one month ago, and based on what we approved for the backside of the block, the Lamp House, this is not a tall block so I don't think the plus two is appropriate on that block.

- I just feel like there is such a difference between this common corner and anything else that you would do on that block. If you take that in the context of East Washington and the Capitol Square and the US Bank across from there, and frankly condos right down the street, it is appropriate. This is a quasi-public use, hotels have an important presence in the urban environment and I think it's appropriate at this corner to have height.
- I'm somewhat in between this discussion because I do think potentially 10-stories is OK on this site, and basically the City Council adopting the plans have said it's potentially OK. It leaves it open to this, I admit, difficult standard of what's exceptional design and that's the kind of thing that lands on our table here. In thinking about the AnchorBank project further down on our agenda, that I can tell, that is an exceptional design. When I look at this, it's not quite the same "wow" so it's a more difficult thing to weigh the "exceptional design." The question is are the improvements enough to get it to that judgment area where you can make that decision. That's where it comes down to why we have boards and commissions.
- I struggle with the exceptional design. It's gotten much better. I agree we're either urban or we're not. I think putting the glass on the corner helped a lot, I'm a little concerned about lighting at night on the surface, but the height in and of itself does not disturb me.
- Is there a courtesy van? And where does it park?
 - Yes, it'll either be in the ramp or it'll circulate.
- It won't be in the queuing area? The reason I ask is that on West Washington we have a courtesy van destroying the view on West Washington all the time. This is hardly the big issue but it is an issue, as long as it's picking people up but not parked, it's too congested to park there.
 - Per the Traffic report it's not allowed to be parked there.

The motion to refer failed on a vote of (3-4) with O'Kroley, Harrington and Goodhart voting yes, Huggins, DeChant, Slayton voting no, with Chair Wagner voting no to break the tie.

- I think there's a lot of issues with this project still to be worked on, I think they've done as much work here as they can. The Plan Commission is the next place that these things will be worked out.

ACTION:

On a motion by Huggins, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-3) with Huggins, DeChant and Slayton voting yes, O'Kroley, Harrington and Goodhart voting no, with Chair Wagner breaking the tie.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 202 East Washington Avenue

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

General Comments:

- We need to define urban! Height is inappropriate given what else has been approved for this area.