

## AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** September 25, 2013

**TITLE:** 722 Williamson Street – PD for  
Construction of a New Mixed-Use  
Development Containing 220 Apartments,  
6,000 Square Feet of Commercial Space.  
6<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (31651)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** September 25, 2013

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Melissa Huggins, John Harrington, Henry Lufler, Richard Slayton, Lauren Cnare and Cliff Goodhart.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of September 25, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a PD for construction of a new mixed-use development located at 722 Williamson Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Jim Bower, Tom Bergamini and Glenn Roby, all representing Baldwin Development Group. Registered and speaking neither in support nor opposition were Bruce Woods, representing the Marquette Neighborhood Association-Preservation & Development Committee, and Gary Tipler. Roby presented the plans for the two parcels with site encumbrances. Access points off of Williamson Street; one access is for a separate section of parking that serves the adjacent commercial use, and through an easement, access allowable onto Livingston Street; that same easement states that they allow the same development to access through Williamson Street. There are two 60-foot modules of parking that have the footprint for structured parking. A tower will sit atop the structured parking (one level of parking below grade, three levels of parking above grade and seven levels of multi-family above grade for a total of ten stories) technically fronting Williamson Street off the Capital City Bike Trail. This development will capitalize on having the bike path directly out the door to the building. A shadow study for the entire block has been done.

Bruce Woods spoke on behalf of the Marquette Neighborhood Association-Preservation & Development Committee. The negative aspects of the plan include that it does not meet several standards set by the Williamson Street BUILD II Committee Plan developed ten years ago; this is the first challenge of that plan. The plan allows five stories plus two bonus stories along the bike path, but there is too much massing along the bike path corridor. This development would exacerbate parking problems in the neighborhood as it does not provide adequate parking for tenants, additional traffic moving into an uncontrolled intersection will be a problem (Blount Street), the proposed design is not so exceptional that it warrants a 10-story building, it should provide more affordable housing, green roofs may not be sustainable and may require irrigation, concern that lower income families will be priced out of the neighborhood, the bike corridor is currently planted with prairie that was planted by volunteers and the building will produce too much shade to sustain that prairie, and the lack of sunlight will permit icing on the bike path during the winter, which is addressed in the East Rail Corridor Plan. At 10-stories this building would be significantly taller than any other building on Williamson Street and

the vicinity. Positive aspects of the plan include meeting the need for housing in the central area, the design fits well with the Williamson Street façade, there are very good green elements of the plan, the neighborhood should accept additional density here, should develop here rather than additional sprawl, terraces and stepbacks open up the design. There is concern with terraces overhanging the sidewalk.

Ald. Rummel noted that this is a site prime for development as it is a surface parking lot. The basic challenge of this site is circulation and how to fit all the necessary parking into this site. There is concern about 7-stories and how this does not fit with the BUILD Plan. Wagner noted that the BUILD Plan showed this area as having higher structures on Williamson Street compared to the rest of the street; nothing in the neighborhood plans speak to anything being this tall. The developer responded that their approach along Williamson Street was to take cues from the adjacent industrial building to have an articulation in the façade, window openings and use of materials that is supposed to be not reliant on electric light. The façade on the bike path is an issue, it only has a wall of a parking structure. At some point this is kind of turning our back to one of the streets that you're catering to. The right-of-way is there, but at some abstract level it's a "hot potato."

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- You've done a really nice job at this level. The issue is it starts to really fall apart the higher you get. My visceral reaction to that tower is Third Avenue and 96<sup>th</sup> Street in New York City. Some huge massive towers with not a lot going on. Part of the problem is that you've done such a nice job on Williamson Street, the ability to translate that kind of delicate response to the street can't translate back up into that larger structure. We are going to experience that larger structure coming down the bike path, people are going to see that from a long way away. If in fact you are able to have this kind of height, you need to think of it as two different buildings and separate it out. I also worry a bit about how are all those people going to get in and out and how many elevators will you have, where will those elevator banks go? You've got some real challenges. You're going to really have to take the architectural language and what you've done at Williamson Street and come up with something similar with those taller structures to convince us and the neighborhood. It's a real struggle to determine what is "exceptional design."
  - The tower element is different from what you see on Williamson Street because they really are two different buildings. I'm not really sure that we would be successful to translate the scale and interaction level that you get with a 4-story building on Williamson Street to something that is 10-stories.
- Make this portion of the building (higher element behind Williamson Street stepback) a tower, make this 10-feet. Keep the background piece lower and that starts to break it up a little bit.
- It seems as though you're bowing to the vehicular traffic rather than pedestrian. This driveway drops completely so the pedestrian has to go up and down; have a shorter apron here so the pedestrian has the same elevation through there and the vehicle knows that it's entering a pedestrian space, rather than the pedestrian giving way to the vehicle.
- There's an urban vocabulary on how you place those trees.
- I would like to know how many people are working in that block, what are the parking needs of all of those other buildings, and parking needs of your tenants and residents and how those all fit with the parking that's going to remain on the block in your proposal.
  - That's been the primary development challenge of this block. Essentially we are building replacement parking at the numbers that are currently there at 172 parking stalls for these three buildings. Because we are displacing parking from John Marten's property two floors of parking are for the commercial uses. Additionally there are two trays of parking for the residents, equal to the commercial parking.

Parking is going to be a huge impact on the area and there needs to be enough public documentation, not only in your concepts and designs, but out there for the public and neighborhood to weigh, as to how it's going to work.

- The development requirement is that we have to rebuild replacement parking, then there's the financial aspect of that. We are expecting to request TIF. The commercial parking use doesn't carry its weight, adding this element has added significant cost to the project. The third piece is we have a pretty significant brown field issue on the side; 2-feet of petroleum product in a certain part of the area and then other fields so we're somewhere between \$1-2 Million clean up to get that tray of parking underground.

It may be worth something for the City to invest in the whole block parking solution, but it may not be this parking solution.

- Neighborhood plans, City plans and master plans were done with some thought. I know a lot of these are advisory to some point, but you're going way beyond what that advisory was. To me that means you have to be extremely, extremely exceptional, so what you come back with has to wow the socks off of me.
- The bike path is highly important. One of the most dangerous things is black ice on bike paths when the buildings shade the path too much. We've got to figure out a way to accommodate and take care of that issue. Think about how to work with that bike path. That path is a major corridor.

### **ACTION:**

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 5 and 7.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 722 Williamson Street**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	-	5/6	-	-	-	5	6	5
	7	6	-	6	-	7	7	7

General Comments:

- Elevation along bike path should be treated as though it's a street.