

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: March 22, 2017

TITLE: 4601 Frey Street – 12-Story, 275,542
Square Foot Mixed-Use Building
Containing 178 Guest Room Hotel and
Office Tenant. 11th Ald. Dist. (45165)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: March 22, 2017

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Richard Slayton, Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Dawn O’Kroley, Rafeeq Asad, Tom DeChant, John Harrington and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 22, 2017, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a new mixed-use building containing a 178 guest room hotel and office tenant located at 4601 Frey Street. Appearing on behalf of the project was Josh Wilcox, representing Raymond Management Company. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Barry Perkel and Bill White, representing Raymond Management Company. Registered and speaking in opposition were Roger Fritz, representing Weston Place Condominium Owner’s Association; and Catherine Buege. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Alder Tim Gruber, District 11.

Wilcox presented changes to the project, including the primary corner detail and entry points, masonry detailing, the office mass size of spandrel glass reduced in thickness, upper wedge modified window groupings and jointing lines, along the west and south façade they have carried the same rhythm integrated cement board panels instead of EIFS in the same color as the lower level glass, pushed back the layer of louvers and reduced the amount, added row of trees, and accentuated pedestrian access points along Frey Street.

Roger Fritz spoke in opposition of the project. Catherine Buigey spoke in favor of the project, but expressed concerns about safety in terms of traffic, the steepness of the street and ice/slippery/salt.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I question the success of the rooftop trees along the louvers.
- Consideration should be given to something more interesting like an arbor and vine maybe; more natural.
- The objective was to give the area a softer look, more ins and outs, more openings to provide greater depth, a line of trees still provides a line. There is concern for the success of whatever is planted, an arbor with vines, broken up with trees may be another approach. It is all about having a better aesthetic for Weston Place.

- The idea of just having trees around this building is very important because of the height. But I'm not sure how well they're going to grow there. I am concerned about the shading on Frey Street.
- Why are you not doing underground parking?
 - Geotech concerns, outcroppings that come up through area that would require blasting and scraping to go deeper. There's also the realities of split uses between the office users and the hotel users and the confusion for the guests. We're trying to simplify those for the best guest experience.
- (Alder Gruber) The applicant has made good efforts to engage neighbors and the neighborhood. They envisioned the tower part of the building being narrow to make the least amount of block of those views. The trees on top of roof is a great idea, but I'm likewise concerned that they're able to thrive there. The staff report brought up the pedestrian entrances, we need to provide for them as well as auto access to and from the building. The idea of a canopy over the pedestrian entrance makes sense. On Sawyer Avenue, along the front porch is a nice addition to the building, it presents a wall; maybe there's a way to soften the wall, although I understand it's a place for stormwater detention. Traffic Engineering staff has expressed that historically there's not crash history on this street. There was one this winter having to do with the hill and ice; they have expressed that the most crash history is at University Avenue and Hilldale Way, and that exists whether there's a hotel here or not.
- An overriding concern from residents was safety when it's icy and the shadow along Frey Street. What is there to remedy the situation on icy days? Right-in/right-out only situation? Is there any discussion with Traffic to reduce the problems?
- (Alder Gruber) They haven't mentioned anything specific like that. I have had some discussions with the Streets Division, they will not be added to salt routes, and we already have a problem with too much salt in our well drinking water. Streets staff will sand and they will come out based on complaints or requests. They have said they don't want private entities (hotel operators) out there applying salt, that's against the City's policy. We need to be careful about restricting access just in the winter. We don't want to direct all the traffic in just one way or another.
- I would suggest that there is going to be a problem and remedy should be thought out before it becomes problematic. Traffic Engineering needs to get involved.
- The entrance in your rendering, you have these brick areas that define where pedestrians go into the building; if you look at the rendering going up from Frey Street you have red brick and then at the entrance it's interrupted by concrete. It almost makes the hierarchy for the car rather than the pedestrian; I would rather have you infill at the sidewalk so when cars come they see that it's a pedestrian area. The corner element of the stairs going up to the elevated plaza, they feel too small and not monumental enough. Maybe a single stair that is wider or terraced.
 - We've looked at 6 different options there. At the end of the day this option you see here is really what we feel is the most efficient by allowing the corner to still be prominent. We certainly can increase the scale of that.
- I agree that Traffic Engineering should weigh in on this. We have a lot of areas in the City like this where no matter how much you salt there are times when it's going to be bad. I wonder if there's a more proactive approach in the type of pavement on these more steep roadways.
- I think those kinds of questions are more appropriate at the Plan Commission where Traffic Engineering can respond to them.
- Create a greater zone at the street where a landing area could be more significant. The walls as shown shut the street out. Bringing the stairs back to the front, embrace the street. Changing the width and placement of the stairs will take away from what is above, but will create space at ground level.
- Spandrel glass may not be appropriate on the west elevation, adding some vision glass, so that headlights are not shining out may be appropriate. I wouldn't go with spandrel, but go with limited vision glass or stay with what you have.

- What we heard from adjacent residents was to eliminate openings on the west façade as much as possible. In addition, we would want to be above crash rail with any windows, where to start and stop becomes difficult.
- There is an issue of the tower lower portion of the building as identified in the staff comments.
 - It's my understanding staff is talking about where that component comes around the side, and not on the upper levels themselves.
 - The east and north façades, staff is referring to this area of the building not having enough articulation in what we call "the wedge." That's one item that we have talked at length about and ultimately we feel the proportions with the signage are good.
- Instead of dominant horizontal EIFS bands on the upper floor inset units, use subtle vertical ones, which would be more consistent with what is going on at the base of the building and in better proportion to the windows. The face of the EIFS on the upper wedge units is flat, the vertical lines would add texture and reflect lines expressed on the base of the building.
- Survey the trees and preserve the existing trees, which may mean impacting your first floor footprint.
 - The trees along the west and south property lines, some of those trees are actually in our building footprint so in order to do that it has a really significant impact and eliminates something like 40 parking stalls, which makes a project not viable, that's kind of a non-starter.
- You're probably going to lose the trees, but you can replace them elsewhere on the site. There is a need for big trees along streets.
- We're not approving signage at this point. You have this bump out again for signage, I'm not sure we want to have a bump out that we're not going to approve.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Harrington, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).

When the applicant returns for Final Approval, the Commission requested the following:

- Blow-up areas/renderings showing screening along the west side and the grades along Frey Street.
- Tree/plant list.
- Samples of the final EIFS color/finish.