

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 4, 2019

TITLE: 636 W. Washington Avenue – New 5-Story, 50-Unit Apartment Building with Underground Parking and Ground Floor Commercial Space. 4th Ald. Dist. (57114)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 4, 2019

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 4, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new building located at 636 W. Washington Avenue. Registered in support were Robert Levin, Kirk Keller, Gary Shmenler, Jeff Lee and Spencer Christiansen, representing 636 W. Washington Avenue. Registered neither in support nor opposition was Ron Luskin. The project is zoned UMX with no proposed change. They have spoken to U-Haul about a comprehensive redevelopment of both properties but there was no interest. The proposed site plan reduces the two vehicle access points down to one and widens the City sidewalk to 7-feet. There will be underground parking, pedestrian drop-off west of the building, a dog walk area and multiple entry points along the building. The mixed-use building will contain commercial on one half of the first floor with an apartment lobby on the other half. The landscape plan includes urban tolerant and salt tolerant species, as many canopy trees as possible in the terrace and a dog walk area in the northeast corner. They are working with both City Forestry and the Fire Department. The site is a prime urban site, they have held neighborhood meetings and are working with the Alder, and will be holding a joint steering committee with both neighborhood groups. They have gone to the Landmarks Commission as they are adjacent to a landmark. On the opposite side of West Washington Avenue the brick is very dark where the brick on this side is lighter in color; they are looking at modular lighter brick. The building steps back 30-feet at the top, there is a lobby at the front and two levels of underground parking, including two stalls with electrical charging stations, and a dog wash station. The building will contain approximately 52 units with larger than typical units, including some three-bedrooms. The entries are purposely set in with semi-private seating areas. Floors 2-4 are similar with second floor balconies on the backside. Strong datum lines and glass at the corners were emphasized, and a 90-second fly-by movie showed 3D views. They have started to incorporate comments they received during the Mifflin meeting, including more plantings and more windows. Stormwater will all be addressed and handled underground.

Ron Luskin spoke as a resident of the Lofts building and Chair of the joint steering committee of the Mifflin and Bassett neighborhoods. He commended the development team for their response to comments. While they would be taking a gas station out of the neighborhood there is another station at the corner of West Washington

and Vilas Avenue. To some extent the balconies may be inadequate; people need the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors in an urban setting.

Robert Levin spoke as a neighborhood resident who volunteered to be on the steering committee. This is a terrific way to bring more housing to downtown Madison. When we can take out a non-descript gas station and put in 50 apartments, that's a terrific gain for the neighborhood.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I understand the stepback and material change in the beginning, but it seems disjointed. It needs to seem more like one building, the materials more cohesive. Everything seems so compartmentalized.
- What is the rationale behind creating the entrance point on the west side rather than the east side, and creating a buffer between U-Haul and the apartment units?
 - We are looking at higher end apartments, experience, the thought was putting that less desirable aesthetic to the side and come in closer to the bike path and rail station made more sense.
 - There was a desire by City Engineering and Fire at DAT that the driveway to the east to have access at this side of the property.
- This building seems big enough for a larger main entrance or two separate entrances. To do a more historic look would be difficult with side by side new construction. Maybe the division you have between the front and back, there's more contrast of a historic building with the modern addition and you give up trying to tie them in. It's just too massive. The balconies hanging off the front don't seem to fit that architecture. It's too in-between where it doesn't look authentic.
- I agree with that.
 - We purposely inset the entry to serve as a central access point for the lobby and also for the main tenant and the lease space. I was meant to be a more activated lobby rather than multiple doors across the front. The balconies at the corner, we're cognizant of scale when talking with the Landmarks Commission, the idea was to take this façade and not have it appear as it stretched across the site as one long façade. Kind of what was done on the Marling on East Washington, purposely taking a lighter feel.
- Either embrace it and make it authentic or abandon that and incorporate a more modern expression.
- The old Hotel Washington had a historic presence and architecture. It had second story wrought iron balconies, maybe draw from that. It had a corner entry that addressed the rail station. The history of this site might help you make this more distinctive. The history of this site should lead to something distinctive. Maybe the residential entry on the corner?
 - I completely agree. We will have an updated design that addresses this particular corner.
- The old hotel was angled. Things that echo that in some way may help you.
 - It's a zoning requirement that the main entry face the street. We originally had a corner entrance but zoning would not sign off on that meeting the ordinance.
- I'd like to see more detail of the outdoor areas up on the fifth floor. Green roof components are more or less mandatory in a lot of areas now.
 - There will be no condensers on the roof. The roof membrane will be light tan and we're structuring the roof for photovoltaics. Then the roof area will be brought to life. The roof deck will also provide exterior amenities for the apartments.
- You are limiting yourself with this conservative approach with the revival style you're trying to emulate. You're not able to achieve a successful revival design because you want roof decks and cantilevered balconies. Let those two elements express themselves as two elements: a real elegant front of house and a bit more edgy piece in back. In talking about the Hotel Washington we don't want replication, but have some elements. You could have a corner entrance facing the train station. I would think you would want more openings on the West Washington façade. It doesn't need to be so beholden to the symmetry.

- Metropolitan Place has that off-set entry that's slightly angled.
- The Depot doesn't overdo it in terms of the historic elements.
- The shade of brick seems fine, it does seem rusticated.

ACTION:

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