

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 13, 2021

TITLE: 100 N. Hamilton Street – Addition to Madison Children’s Museum to Create a New Outdoor Exhibit Area. 4th Ald. Dist. (58757)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 13, 2021

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Tom DeChant, Rafeeq Asad, Syed Abas, Christian Harper, Craig Weisensel, Shane Bernau, Lois Braun-Oddo and Russell Knudson.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 13, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** for an addition to the Madison Children’s Museum located at 100 N. Hamilton Street. Registered and speaking in support was Josh Wilcox, representing GBA architecture|design; Jeffrey Brenkus, Deb Gilpin, Brenda Baker and Abbie Moilien, representing the Madison Children’s Museum. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Lou Host-Jablonski.

The Madison Children’s Museum is one of the top ten children’s museum in the country and has been on the Capitol Square for forty years. The museum has been closed since March and worked hard to preserve their assets. They have released 54 of their 70 employees, released most contractors and closed the site. Yet the community needs to rebuild and heal. Doing this sooner than later means getting this outside, which is critical to a child’s development. This is a modified plan for what the community needs, what we can commit to in a timely manner. Over 300 donors have given \$3 of the \$4 Million required to remain closed for a year and reopen post-construction. There is a real sense of urgency to move forward with this project. They have created this scaled down version of something they can open this summer, it will keep the museum in business, provide learning opportunities and provide sustainability for our downtown. The museum can help bring people back to downtown. The decrepit parking lot will be removed, providing open outdoor active spaces for children and families. The retaining walls will be cut to about 12-inches above the sidewalk. A 6-foot decorative fence will allow for safety and visibility. A small lobby and ADA accessible restroom facilities will be installed. The signature log cabin will be relocated to the lower area. The landscape plan creates a setting for the museum team to do their work, it’s simple and flexible. Relocated an entry off of East Dayton Street, vegetation is shown as a green buffer along East Dayton Street to add comfort and privacy. Four canopy trees within the space were selected for their quick growth and fun color. The playground area will have a specific kind of play mulch. There will be fruit trees near the cabin, with a garden space on the south side that the exhibit folks will tend to. Exhibits will be taking the lead on all of those specifics.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I love the project. Is there occupied space above the lower level restrooms?
 - The loading zone will be rebuilt in that area.
 - The bathrooms are below, there's no occupied space above the bathrooms.
- Thinking about where the exhaust from those restrooms will go.
- Clarification: is this a temporary intention or is this permanent? If temporary, curious about those trees, if permanent curious about where bike parking would go.
 - Because we don't really know the future of the pandemic, we're looking at this as a temporary measure. We don't know if that means 3 years or 10 years. We are still planning to come back and create the project we had proposed prior to this, we still need to solve some internal circulation issues. We haven't had any additional bike parking since we closed the parking deck down 5 years ago. We do know we haven't always had quite enough bike parking.
- Materiality, the permanence of some of these materials, asphalt as the primary walkway. Understanding that this is "temporary," that helps frame the context. Even so I would consider the edge treatment between the asphalt and some of these other spaces so it doesn't degrade prematurely. What is the base material of the fence, and have you considered bringing it inboard to give it some planting or vegetative buffer to improve that pedestrian and streetscape experience?
 - The intent of the fence installation is to utilize that existing concrete wall, this whole area will generally be lower than the sidewalk. It will be installed on the back face of the existing wall, and a bit behind that wall, to your point it won't be pulled back so there's space between the wall and the fence post.
- I trust over time the museum will infill that, like they did on the rooftop. Is there an opportunity to hold one or two, or reduce the fence wall datum?
 - I think that would be explored.
- It's not a deal breaker but I think it might be more aesthetically pleasing to hold that line for longer stretches without creating vision issues.
- The detailing of the fence is really important. This is the building edge for lack of a better term, it's important that the Commission determine we've gone enough detail on how that fence and that saw cut wall is going to be detailed, that's what we'll be driving and walking around for the foreseeable future.
- My concern was also with the fence, I find it visually somewhat like a penal institution. I understand costs and budget restraints. I think you could do something very decorative with the fence, like your example with the red birds.
 - We are working with some outside artists that have done metal work, we'll be hiring two artist to make the entrance gate, and we are considering trying to do exactly what you're suggesting to add decorative elements to transform a more economical fence and make it more beautiful.
 - There is a portion of a lot of that wall already open, especially on Dayton. The intention is to saw cut it at the same location and rub that concrete to match the adjacent material. We can work with Findorff to make the whole wall contiguous as far as the look and feel.
- Could it be sandblasted? The front will have a much difference appearance than a freshly cut top.

ACTION:

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (9-0). The motion provided for the following:

- Consideration about the datum on the fence and decorative features.
- Aesthetic consideration of the saw cut wall – it would receive a finish or a cap treatment.