

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: July 15, 2015

TITLE: 3520 & 3546 East Washington Avenue –
New Auto Service Station with Detached
Car Wash and Convenience Store for
“PDQ” in UDD No. 5. 15th Ald. Dist.
(38452)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: July 15, 2015

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 15, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a new auto service station located at 3520 & 3546 East Washington Avenue in UDD No. 5. Appearing on behalf of the project was Tate Walker, representing OPN Architects. Registered and speaking in opposition were Kathy A. Warren, Diane Calhoun and Jackie Shivers. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions was Nancy Troxel-Hoehn. Registered neither in support nor opposition and not wishing to speak was Kip Schick, representing the Wisconsin Physical Therapy Association.

The site is currently 94% covered with hardscape; recommendations are for 85% and they are proposing 61% for a reduction in the allowable hardscape coverage. The contemporary design uses brick and metal panel and allows for 150-feet from curb cuts for pedestrian and vehicle safety. It is intended to be an open and transparent design for the neighborhood. The building has been pulled towards Schmedeman creating a strip of land on the western edge that provides a buffer for the residential area and provides an opportunity for that land to be used in the future. Extensive landscaping is proposed to capture rain water and soften the edges around the site. The Plan Commission recommended placing this item on file, citing two conditional use standards that have not been met (#3 and #4), as well as not complying with the Comprehensive Plan, and not being conducive to development on the site in the future. The developer strongly disagrees with that position. This project provides “eyes on the street” and a nice change from the empty restaurant building currently occupying this parcel.

Jackie Shivers spoke in opposition, noting ideally a different plan would be better. For 20 years the Prime Quarter site was a very well managed, quiet neighbor. The proposed plan doesn’t have anything to help the people living on the backside of this proposed building. She offered ideas on relocating the driveway in order to maintain the 150-foot buffer from East Washington Avenue, while giving more of a buffer between the gas station and the abutting residential properties.

Diane Calhoun spoke in opposition. She has great concerns about the high volume of traffic this will generate. The Prime Quarter restaurant that had occupied this parcel didn’t open until 4:00 p.m., meaning this was a very quiet area. Now with the PDQ opening there will be constant traffic and noise all day and night. She cited safety

concerns with people cutting across areas to reach the store. She noted that PDQ has met with the neighborhood twice, but not before having everything in place. Residents were not aware of this project until it had already begun going through the City process.

Kathy Warren spoke in opposition. She has lived on Ridgeway Avenue for 38 years and has tremendous concerns about noise and traffic. She is in her house 24/7 because of her health/situation. They have had issues in the past, they don't need another driveway. She would like the wall to be 10-12 feet high like they have along the Beltline, and she would like to see signs that state that Ridgeway is not a truck route.

Heather Stouder from City Planning focused on the elements of the staff report relevant to the Urban Design Commission's review of the project. Planning staff from the beginning has expressed its concern with the site plan, its inefficient use of land and its suburban design. It would be one of the largest sites for a gas station in the City of Madison. Planning staff feels the site could support much more and in a more sensitive way. The suburban style layout of the buildings and parking doesn't do much to hold the corner of Schmedeman and East Washington Avenue; more could be done. They appreciate the applicant's work on meeting this concern; they were able to do a slight shift with the car wash that creates a space for a future retail building, but that is not what Planning staff had in mind. They envisioned a much more significant shift of the grouping of buildings in order to really meet that concern. They have little concern about the actual architectural details of the building; they feel it is a very strong example of what a gas station could be as far as how the building is designed. Pertaining specifically to the UDD No. 5 guidelines, parking spaces need to be no more than 70-feet from a canopy tree, the guideline related to the location of parking (the building would need to be moved and really hold that corner), the lighting plan needs to be adequate (detail on canopy), avoid long unbroken façades (they have added clear-story windows to the building but could add more), and the use of stone mulch which is not allowed in the Zoning Code. The bioretention area is rather small and is of some concern as well.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The removal of large trees is a concern. This landscaping is pretty inadequate and could be more extensive. I would like to see calculations for the bioretention areas. If there is stone mulch in there, it's got to get removed. I have concerns about whether this fits the district or not, but if it did, I'd like to see the driveway moved so you don't have to take out that large tree.
- Regarding conditional use standard #4, to me that talks about context, whether existing immediate context or the potential context as the neighborhood develops. That, in addition to John's comments, I'd like to see them take another try at it.
- I think it's worth bringing the building to the intersection, having the entire circulation happen from East Washington Avenue, no access from Schmedeman Avenue at all, and provide enough of a buffer between Ridgeway Avenue and the gas station functions are, that we can have rather than a 12-foot high fence, I understand the need for that, but I'd like to do that with dense vegetation, conifers and deciduous trees to fill that zone in. That leaves an opening of bareness between the "arts district" but I think a buffer can be provided there too.
- My concern is that we look at site plans very carefully as part of an overall design issue, and we have a site plan that has a big question mark on one side. We're not very fond of site plans that leave a question mark, neither we, the Plan Commission nor the neighborhood know how that question mark gets filled in. You're creating such a small narrow other little parcel there that it's questionable whether you can get good development in that. I drove around the neighborhood to get a sense and feel for it and it really is small little streets out there. Something like this is clearly oriented only towards East Washington Avenue and if you really think about a project of almost this size, it really has to have a sensitive relationship to other things, not just East Washington Avenue, so I think there's some issue with the site plan on this project.

- Also there should be plenty of property to do the things we're asking. Sometimes we see site plans that are so tight there's only one way to maneuver, but with 1.88 acres there should be room to do these things. The only concern I would with bringing everything out towards East Washington Avenue is that we're concentrating more and more activity to the back of the site near the neighbors, so we really have to pay attention to that vegetative wall, that screening because it'll become imperative that that gets taken care of and solves that problem.
- (Alder Ahrens) Unfortunately this has been referred to as a gas station. Although it sells gas, they sell a lot more than that, and that's of very significant importance to the area because there's no other place to buy food. Without the parking lot of Prime Quarter, Visions is gone. As long as Visions is there that neighborhood will never change or become more densely populated. There's very little investment there. In terms of a transition, this is really a transition from this very blighted issue with Visions and the run down restaurant, to no Visions, the possibility of development on that block, and everything will be relating to the 51/151 interchange. These are the real contexts for this space. If you move the building to the corner, you lose Visions and you want to build housing behind the PDQ. With that intensity of lighting required I don't see that happening.
- I think it's a good point that there's an uncertainty about this area. I don't think Visions is a long-term use, obviously the boarded up houses are not a long-term use. What's the possibility for the Planning Division to help envision a mini neighborhood plan that can talk about how that area can be something that has a broader future rather than looking at a parcel here or a parcel there. This is one of those special cases where we need some extra attention.
- (Stouder) Looking back at our 2001 Carpenter-Ridgeway-Hawthorne-Truax Plan, it really did go parcel by parcel for several areas, including the Visions block, looking at multi-family development for that block. It did talk a little bit about perhaps redeveloping this block for multi-residential/mixed-use. We could certainly go in and do a more updated version of that, but the bones are there, the framework is there to support multi-family residential or mixed-use on these two blocks. We'd like to see more space made for those other uses in the back along Ridgeway aside from perhaps a landscape buffer. Let's look at activating Ridgeway Avenue.
- Driving out there I was impressed that this is a small little neighborhood, it has some fragile populations, how does the City come up with tools to make sure that that kind of a neighborhood can continue to exist and be strengthened when you have some opportunities for redevelopment that obviously exist along East Washington Avenue? That's the broader strategic question for the City, rather than deciding on this particular use or not. Do you have that capability to help come up with those strategies and those systems?
- (Cornwell) I would say that it's already fit into the zoning. It's a transition zone district looking at moving from auto-oriented development to a more mixed-use condition. We're doing all sorts of planning related to the transit system to improve East Washington Avenue as one of our BRT corridors. We really want to preserve our potential to get mixed-use development along this corridor, whether that is housing or office or more intensive commercial development, the critical element is making sure we're maintaining a pedestrian environment and everything that we're doing is moving in that direction. The examples we've got speak to the kind of form, we're not actually opposed to the use, but the form is critical here and the zoning is very clear in the purpose statement about that transitional use. Our plans are really pointing at East Washington Avenue as a really critical growth corridor. It's not at all out of the question that we could see 3, 4 and 5-story development along that corridor as that critical mass comes together. If we are building fast food restaurants and convenience stores and gas stations in that conventional form that we're trying to move away from, we're going to seal the deal on it. This is a critical turning point for the decision makers in the City.
- Obviously it will remain at least in part a residential neighborhood because of the publicly owned housing there, in fact we're just reinvesting in that as well, and to not encourage its companion

residential neighborhood that's privately owned, would seem not very strategic for the City in terms of making a decision right now. I think there are broader issues than the parcel design issues in this case.

- (Alder Ahrens) I think the concepts of pedestrian oriented are fine but this is going to be, for some of the plans, this could be around 100-feet from one of the biggest intersections in the City where traffic goes over East Washington Avenue. This is an area that carries 55,000 cars per day and would probably carry 10's of thousands of more with these plans. Under the plans Pedro's would be gone, all of that would be gone, and this would be one of the first non-expressway sites. A series of townhouses overlooking the highway, maybe that's OK for some people.
- Part of the charge of this Commission is to consider the context of things. David, you're trying to be helpful in bringing in the context of what may happen to the interchange and what those designs may be. One, we don't have those here so that's not context that we have here, and that's part of my complaint about what we get from developers. They give us narrow context of just a lot and understanding both the context of what you're trying to bring, the context of what the neighborhood needs, those are things that have to inform a decision that this or any other public body should make about this kind of a project. I'm not sure how long the DOT will even have money for these projects with the way the State's going and the City before has refused to do an interchange out there. There's lot of things that potentially could affect this. The question for the City strategically becomes how do we handle our traffic and design streets so that we don't kill residential neighborhoods, because that's what used to happen. Have we learned enough as a city in this last decade or couple decades that we could do something better than just abandon it to a traffic corridor with gas stations and other things. This deserves more discussion and thought than we're having by looking at a small parcel.
- Are you familiar with the one on Fish Hatchery Road? If you moved the breezeway and moved the parking you would have more room for something to go here.
 - The dimensions are kind of set on that because of the setbacks with the pumps.
- That doesn't necessarily mean it's the only design that could work. You're just defaulting to what your pattern is.
- I'd like to be more up to speed on the delivery truck schedule: how often is it there, what time of the day does it come. A lot of the pavement I think is because of the circulation with that truck coming through.
 - Gas delivery is usually once a day, the truck would come up Schmedeman and into the site near the tanks and exit the site on East Washington Avenue. That was the safest consideration that we could come up with in working with Traffic Engineering. We've worked on so many iterations. I really think we've gone through a lot of these ideas before and this is kind of where we are now.
- Is there any way you can look into saving the tree? Or even taking off the car wash so people can walk that way? It would give more room in the back.
- If the success of Visions is occurring because of the use of the vacant building's parking lot, could City staff see if there's a way to temporarily barricade that parking, or talk to the owner and get essentially those construction fences that everyone is desiring with this project up early?

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0). The motion provided for address of comments in the Planning staff report, address of UDD No. 5 provisions including more details on WisDOT plans for the area, along with neighborhood plans and area context with "Visions," and to provide more dense vegetation screening, including deciduous materials along its boundary with the residential and a buffer for residences on the "Visions" streetside; and the following:

- Much more context is needed for the next review.

- We need to see the Carpenter-Ridgeway Plans for the neighborhood and what the CDA is currently investing in housing.
- The context of development along Ridgeway behind this project and how that will be incorporated.
- This site is deserving of much more density and activity and ability to flourish and support the neighborhood. What comes back to us should have a realistic plan for a substantial scale development and considerations for parking and access, and how it could really succeed.
- Save the tree on Schmedeman.

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 3 and 4.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 3520 & 3546 East Washington Avenue

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	3	5	3	-	-	4	2	3
	3	5	3	5	-	4	3	4

General Comments:

- Site layout/building placement is very suburban...design an urban solution!
- Inadequate use of space. Bioretention adequate?