

## AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** November 13, 2013

TITLE: 632 Howard Place – Five-Story Apartment  
Building. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ald. Dist. (31893)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: November 13, 2013

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Lauren Cnare, Cliff Goodhart and Tom DeChant.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of November 13, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for an advisory recommendation for a 5-story apartment building located at 632 Howard Place. Appearing on behalf of the project was Mark M. Smith, representing Lake Towne Apartments, LLC. Registered and speaking in opposition were Cheryl Elkinton, representing Vegan Haven Central, Inc.; and Franny Ingebritson. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak was Alicia Lux. Smith introduced the student housing project, noting the basic strategy of having the four-story element of the building correspond to the neighboring buildings on Howard Place and Frances Street. They see this as a fabric/background building of the neighborhood and not a featured piece. However, they are focusing most of the budget (materials) on Howard Court, the two facades that face north and northeast; it will be primarily masonry in light color, with a strong element of brick and masonry on the back of the building, which will complement the nice interior court formed to the south of this site. The balconies are classic French where the patio doors can open with a protection railing. There is a balcony above the fourth floor for the two apartments on the fifth floor, roughly 5-foot wide along the Howard Place side of the building. There is a low pitched, hip roof not really visible from any vantage point in the neighborhood. The stone will be a better quality and more polished than what is represented in the elevations. There is no automobile parking at this location. There will be plenty of bicycle parking in the building’s basement. Designated moped parking spots will be minimal.

Franny Ingebritson spoke in opposition. She stated that last May 13<sup>th</sup> the Director of the Department of Planning spoke to the Landmarks Commission about issues surrounding the Waterfront Place. He told the Commission that “when it came through the Urban Design Commission for an informational presentation, we as staff stated we really can’t support this project at this time because it is taking down three older buildings. But we also did say that when this project comes in with a really great design that might be a justifiable reason for taking down these three older buildings.” He then added “that was stated at the UDC.” It sounds like Mr. Cover’s statement suggests that this Commission would be comfortable at that time ignoring the newly minted Downtown Plan that took four years and enormous cost. Just to dismiss it all, if the developer comes in with a really great design. She hoped that was not true; that doesn’t reflect the vision of the residents of Madison. As a

result of the Waterfront development three contributing buildings were demolished, now this Howard Place where they want to demolish two more contributing buildings. She showed the contributing buildings that make up part of this historic fabric.

Cheryl Elkinton spoke in opposition. She sees traffic problems and buildings with potential losses. She would like to slow traffic with other options, possibly digital cameras. She would prefer doing work on existing buildings rather than demolishing and replacing them. It's a lot of waste of materials, there's already so much student housing that are still sitting. Reduce construction noise, dust.

Heather Stouder of the Planning Division stated that staff is not recommending approval of this project but want feedback on the design of the proposed building. Specific elements include the idea of four-sided architecture, concerns about the use of fiber cement on most of the interior of the building, the 5<sup>th</sup> floor and roof element, and consistent color of stone on the base. Smith indicated it is intended to be a darker stone to read as a consistent vertical element down to the ground. Stouder reiterated they would prefer a consistently colored base.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I like the actual way the 5<sup>th</sup> floor is treated as a stepback. It's a play on how you get design on some of the buildings in this area.
- The drawings don't even do justice to how tight this neighborhood is. I would never go down there unless I was a student. Unless you have a reason to go all the way down to the end of this court, nobody is ever going to see this building. I think the design is appropriate because you're never going to get far enough away from it to get any kind of perspective on the building. Except for that middle view, which is what I really noticed when I drove down there, the bases on these buildings are so high. The only way you can experience this building is walking along it. I would recommend dropping the base down a little bit. To me would make the building a little bit less fortress-like. I never realized that any public streets existed like this in Madison.
- I don't know that you need that third material. If you brought the brick all the way down it would unify. I would test that and see if that's enough. I like the contrast of the two façades. I think this building does fit with the rhythm and size of the area.
- The Commission agreed with Heather's concerns stated and within the staff report regarding four-sided architecture.

The Chair noted that staff has said the demolition issues will be decided by the Landmarks Commission and the Plan Commission. He also noted that Mr. Cover is not a member of this Commission and by no means speaks for this Commission.

### **ACTION:**

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