

RE: Urban Design Commission meeting May 19, 2013

Agenda item 5

915 Haywood Drive "Ryan Brothers Ambulance"

While the redesign with the flat roof is an improvement, the large eaves with 3 foot wide soffits still impede the building from attaining a nice clean urban look. Granted most of the residential housing adjacent to this property to the west have eaves with approximately 18 inch wide soffits but these older boxy looking buildings are rather unattractive and the flat roof with the overhanging eaves is part of the problem with their appearance.

There are plenty of examples of urban commercial buildings in this area that the architect could use for inspiration. They include the Klinke Cleaners, Dunkin Donuts, the former Fire Station # 6, and even the existing Ryan Brothers building. The clean looking built up flat roofs with no eaves on these buildings help to make them all look great.

Another issue is that the building plans don't define the rain water runoff issues that this property has and possible solutions to them. Where is the runoff from the building roof directed to? Where is the significant runoff the subject property attains from residential properties on its west border directed to?

With the current trend towards incorporation of rain gardens and surface parking lot runoff retention areas into new construction, I suggest that the proposed building roof drainage be directed to the proposed grass areas on the property and a lower elevation rain garden area be incorporated into the landscaping design in this area.

A major issue with all the properties in this vicinity is that the existing storm water drainage patterns are simply to allow surface water runoff to flow from one property to the next downhill across the various properties towards the Park Street until it reaches a storm water pipe inlet along the Park Street corridor.

Most of the existing surface drainage from the residential properties to the west of the subject property flows across the subject property and then across the

alley and then across the properties along Park Street before it drops into the city storm water collection system.

It would be great if the landscaping design of the subject property would attempt to capture some of this water and direct it to the south along the west edge of the subject property and into a large rain garden in the middle of the grass area to the south of the proposed building. A portion of this runoff could also be directed to the north of the proposed parking lot to run down the landscaped area on the north edge of the property. This design element could be greatly improved upon by moving the proposed building and parking lot slightly to the south to increase the size of the landscaped area on the north side of the parking lot. During major storm events there would still be excess run off that would overflow from the rain garden areas to Park Street but this is true of many rain garden areas and does not detract from their benefits. This would be a great opportunity for showing other developers how they can incorporate rain water infiltration elements into their landscaping designs to help solve rain water runoff issues.

The existing landscaping design shows hedge rows of arborvitae type plantings along the west and north borders of this property. While they can serve to screen views of adjoining properties, the more important issue between all the neighboring properties in this area is surface water runoff from one property to the next.

I still feel that this entire block of Park Street has great future potential for higher density urban redevelopment and worry that this one little new building in the middle of the block can mess it all up. Madison is currently seeing multiple large scale development projects being proposed and constructed all along this portion of Park Street. We should try to look further into the future and plan ahead for the true potential of this entire city block.

In my vision of Madison's future, I was hoping that this entire block along Park Street could somehow be designed and built as one or two large development projects. Street level business and retail could occupy the frontage along Park Street while higher density multi-story residential with underground parking could be built in phases along South Brooks Street with elevated terraces connecting the various properties in the center of the block. My thoughts were for 5 to 6 story residential towers with wonderful views of Monona Bay,

the Arboretum and Lake Wingra.

Ryan Brothers Ambulance could still maintain a presence on this block and be incorporated into the overall design of the Park Street business frontage along with a new Famous Dave's Restaurant. A planned development of the entire block could do so much to beautify this historically important place in Madison.

In 1834, when the Madison area was first surveyed by the State of Wisconsin there were numerous Native American settlements in the Madison area. The proposed project site was at the base of what was once a high glacial ridge that extended from the Vilas Zoo area all the way to the new Wingra Clinic property. The ridge was dotted with many native American mounds and was higher than the isthmus hill the state capitol building was eventually constructed on. This glacial ridge was desecrated and hauled away to be used as fill material in the building of Madison during the late 1800's and early 1900's.

How nice it would be if we could replace all the worn out buildings and surface parking lots on this entire city block with something beautiful and more respectful of the people who lived here long ago.

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