

CITY OF MADISON
Common Council
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL
CORRESPONDENCE
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Rm. 417
266-4071

DATE: February 23, 2009

TO: Members of the Plan Commission

FROM: Ald. Mike Verveer, District 4

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item #2, Legislative File ID #13107**

I respectfully request that the Plan Commission refer the above-referenced agenda item to its next meeting. It is my understanding that the applicant does not object to this request.

My reason for requesting referral is twofold. First, I am out of town today and thus am unable to be with you at tonight's meeting to share my thoughts. Second, and more important, I believe the project will benefit from a referral to allow time to improve the proposal. It is my opinion that the project as recommended by the Urban Design Commission is not appropriate for this location on W. Washington Avenue. However, I believe that further refinement of the proposal would yield a plan that both I and a majority of the Bassett Neighborhood could support.

I concur with the Planning Division staff analysis of the project. A four-story, mixed-use building would be relatively non-controversial. However, height and massing of the current proposal is inconsistent with both the adopted Bassett Neighborhood Master Plan and the adopted Comprehensive Plan. I believe that referral will allow time for the various stakeholders to further refine the issue of the proposed fifth floor.

Thank you for your consideration.

ecc: Attorney Bill White

Bassett Neighborhood Meeting on Proposed Redevelopment of 425 W. Washington Ave.
Thursday, February 19, 2009

I counted about 65 people in the room last night. We had 43 sign in-- 28 Bassett residents (I've included a few people on the north side of W. Wash in this count); 10 other downtown residents; and 5 from outside the downtown. Written comments are below—I've taken the liberty of paraphrasing some of the longer comments, hopefully without compromising the concept. Jonathan

Bassett residents:

- This is a needed project! Please gift this gift to the people who want to continue to live in Madison and thrive there
- Very excited!
- I'm in favor of the project. Looks good in many ways
- Sounds good—except for the stretching of height limit to 5 stories. If that extension is allowed, soon it will be extended to 6 stories, etc.
- I am very excited about this project
- Great job & great project
- (1) Parking shared between residents and gym users—how do you get the residents to vacate their stalls, especially on weekends; (2) I'd like to hear/see a more definitive # of efficiencies, 1R, 2BR—need to see the plan
- Much needed project for Bassett: (a) apts. are basically full in area, lots of young professionals want to live in area; (b) current site is terribly underused! Land is assessed at 10x the building assessment; (c) current neighborhood retail desperately needs more people to support it; (d) 5 stories not a problem; next block east has 10, 12, 14 stories; (e) construction industry surely needs this “shovel ready” stimulus
- I'm a newcomer here. Yes I believe in improving & updating the environment here. I support the ideas and the project
- I think this would be a great project for the area. It would bring good services to the community along with a pool which would be a great asset
- Despite massing controversy (& it feels rather large in context) I feel there are many positive aspects of this project... fitness center (pool). Further, this project enhances W. Wash corridor; I'm not confident current housing stock on W. Wash is sustainable in the long term
- I came in very concerned about project being taller & more massive than comp plan and neighborhood plan recommendations. I'm leaving quite excited about the project & support. Only concern is setting a precedent on these blocks of W. Wash. I'd like to see neighborhood character retained in future projects
- Strongly support project development. No problem with size or mass of building ... We need more services downtown and this project needs to be passed
- Building being replaced does not fit the neighborhood. Proposal is an excellent design and would be a great asset to this city
- I am in favor generally. My only concern, rather than height, is material choices for the exterior. Mock-up of red brick & white masonry doesn't look to fit. A solid brick front would look better

- Really like the design of the building—great quality; appreciate multi-use; new build will improve existing site tremendously; please build it—I really like idea of gym on west side of the Square
- Replaces underutilized site; quality building; great mixed use; no TIF; compares very positively with Cap West/Metro Place in terms of quality; size should not present any problems

Other downtown residents:

- It will be a great addition to an area that's been known for bad student housing. I've been a downtown resident for 32 years and a downtown business owner for 24 years.
- Applaud proposal to reinvigorate character of Bassett in current economic downturn... Current area is underutilized and needs to be redeveloped
- This is all about neighborhood revitalization. I support it
- I'm concerned about trend to ignore neighborhood plans and use buildings which are out of scale as precedents... it's disheartening to have plans so frequently set aside. A good thing about this project is that it doesn't tear down an architecturally significant or historic building, plus it brings a good amenity to area
- Current member of Cap Fitness & am excited from that aspect. Quality housing is needed & Eric takes care of his properties. Current business will stay and we will gain more stable neighbors who care for the area. Quality design with energy efficient features
- I really hope it goes; seeing the picture of the existing building and lot really says it all. Better utilize the location. Great design
- I am in favor of reducing the number of cars, parking spaces & concrete. I support high-speed rail

Residents from outside downtown:

- I like the look & the use of the building. It would be a nice facelift to the street
- It looks to be a good building and use for the site
- Scale back apt. building to 4 stories (if that is within neighborhood plans). Even though it's costly, create more parking. Fitness center plus optometry and tenants will create a great deal of parking shortage
- Very much in favor. The plan has evolved over time & looks like a great project. Being an urban and growing downtown, I believe the project should be more dense with additional floors.
- Looks great, sounds great. We are for the project & look forward to completion
- The building should be good for all

Murphy, Brad

From: mkbridgeman tds.net [mkbridgeman@tds.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 21, 2009 10:19 AM
To: Murphy, Brad
Subject: Plan Commission: 425 W. Washington

Brad,

I will be unable to attend the Plan Commission meeting on Monday, Feb. 23 and want to comment on agenda item 13107 to construct a new mixed-used building at 425 W. Washington Ave.

The neighborhood meeting on Thursday, Feb. 19, was my first chance to get caught up on the plans and hear the developer and others speak about the proposal. The plan has two qualities to recommend it. First, it replaces an under-used site with a project that has a good mix of uses. Second, the design is better than what I have come to expect on such proposals, not merely a timid re-hash of quasi-historical forms and gestures.

These good qualities, however, do not compensate for the considerable harm the proposal does to the neighborhood plan. In his quick review of plans for this area at Thursday's meeting, Tim Parks noted that a consistent thread has been the desire to maintain the character and scale of the street with buildings of two, three or four stories. I don't believe the positives of this proposal compensate for it's being too large. When looking at the drawings of the street facade, it's easy to see that the new structure matches the old AAA building to the west, a building clearly out of place on the block that I don't think would be permitted today. The new building is out of scale when compared to the frame structures to the east, the "character and scale" that the adopted plans seek to emulate. These plans include the Madison Comprehensive Plan and the Bassett Master Plan.

My concern is that neighborhood plans can be too easily undone. The question is whether allowing the new building at 425 W. Washington would be an exception or a precedent. I fear it would be the latter.

The Bassett area has developed nicely over the last several years with a series of well-scaled projects that have increased density and brought housing and vitality to a downtown neighborhood. I think this proposal tips the scale away from the long-range plans for the area and should not be supported at this time.

Michael Bridgeman
106 S Franklin St.