

# AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** March 13, 2019

**TITLE:** 929 E. Washington Avenue – New  
Development of a Commercial/Office  
Mixed-Use Building Located in UDD No.  
8. 6<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (54198)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** March 13, 2019

**ID NUMBER:**

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

## **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of March 13, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a new commercial/office mixed-use building located at 929 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 8. Registered in support of the project were Curt Brink, Doug Hursh, Abbie Moilien, Dan O’Callaghan and Andrew Laufenberg, all representing Archipelago Village, LLC. Registered and speaking in opposition was Henry Doane.

Hursh reviewed the site, existing buildings, the previous phase of the hotel development and the arrangement of current and future phases. The credit union site is not part of this development. Services will be accessed on the north-south entry drive. Eventually the parking will be enclosed by future development. The team walked through photos of the existing buildings and adjacent developments on E. Washington Avenue, presented the site/floor plans and walked through site access and parking layout. The parking is a podium level with a green roof with the building sitting on top. The setbacks are 15-feet on E. Washington Avenue with 15-foot stepbacks above. Twelve stories are allowed in this district; they are asking for a portion of a bonus story based on the restored historic building, green roof, cross-site access and public parking allowed in the ramp. Massing diagrams showed Phases 1 and 2. Building materials include an articulated base with Bison stone panel in a natural range of texture within a gray metal frame. The idea is to match the stone with Breese Stevens Field across the street. The glass is reflective and transparent at the same time, not a fully clear glass. At times the building would look like a prism and other times you would be able to see through. This is about 27% reflective with clear glass being 11%. Darker panels of glass will be at the floor level to have less reflection. The concept of the volume is simple with more articulation at the street level while giving it an iconic appearance at a distance. Windows are structurally glazed with metal framing. In the future the parking structure will be covered with gray concrete spandrel and a green screen. The west elevation of the parking structure will remain exposed due to public stairs and mechanical rooms in that zone. The roof terrace shows a frit coating on the glass handrail to deter birds. The landscape plan shows a double row of trees along E. Washington Avenue. Perforated metal panel on either end will add texture and privacy for those tenants. The E. Main Street side has some terrace seating and landscaping. The fourth floor roof terrace is similar to the E. Washington Avenue side with outdoor rooms for each tenant. The rooftop garden will include full trees spaced to align with the building columns. Sedum trays are shown in areas where there may be future additions that overlay the roof. They are

looking to add a couple of floors on top of the telephone building to give it a better scale with residential added to the backside of the parking. During neighborhood meetings there was desire to save the garage building at 924 E. Main Street. This would require rebuilding the footings, foundation, walls and roof and wouldn't be that usable in the end. Consideration has been given to saving the façade, taking the doors and windows out and creating a pavilion. Signage will be submitted separately with retail signage hanging underneath the overhangs.

Henry Doane remarked that this is a great project overall that is doing a good job restoring the windows on the historic portion. He has always liked the building at 924 E. Main Street and the telephone building. As a long-time business owner he has always placed his restaurants in historic buildings for built-in charm, character and authenticity. As more of these buildings are lost each year, he fears his business model is harder to do. This building offers a human scale to the street and would shield much of the proposed parking from public view. It could become part of the growing east side entertainment district. If this building and others like it go away, so will some of the businesses that thrive in these spaces. Demolition should not be the only option. These places are the bedrock of a healthy city and not a roadblock.

The Commission discussed the following:

- This reminded me of Judge Doyle: how do we approve a bottom without a top? There's no tie in of materials. It looks like two separate projects stacked on top of each other. Where 929 is, why not bring that top glass material down, relate the top and bottom in some way? The backside is more successful where you bring some of the stone up. I like the concept but it's too disjointed and needs to complement each other.
- You mentioned the fritted railings. What about the rest of the building? 90% of the building is glass.
  - We've done some research on that. There are cities that already have ordinances for bird deterrents. We've learned that the majority of the strikes are in the lower levels (40-50 feet) where birds are going tree-to-tree. The base of the building is a lot of opaque. There are three types of bird glass; one from Germany would add \$2.1 million to the project. The second option is glass from Canada where they put frosted dots all over the exterior of the glass in a 2x2 grid, and that added \$1.9 million to the project. The third is the American version, which is cheaper, basically putting spandrel lines all over the glass. That one was objectionable to trying to rent the space and added \$950,000 to the project. Right now they are over budget and are trying to make some decisions that affect the birds by looking at the glass handrails.
  - I don't have a problem with the two different designs, we have a clear base and top. It's designed to be something that's read from the street and from the pedestrian viewpoint. There are a lot of housing projects along E. Washington with a lot of details. The concept here was to come up with something different from that, something clean that acts as a skyline element. We've tried with the glass to separate the top and bottom.
- I like the separation and separate element. I think it would take away from that if you tried to pull something up into it. In addition to seeing reflectivity in glass, have you done any studies with reflecting of the sun, especially in lower winter? It's a highly traveled road, are you going to be reflecting sun into the eyes of spectators at Breese Stevens? Having it splayed out at the bottom should help. What have you done regarding water run-off?
  - We've done shading studies.
  - That is one reason we have an almost one acre green roof. We're trying to take a lot of that water through a storage tank underneath and use it back on top. The green roof holds 103,000 gallons.
- This is a striking design. When I look at future phases the iconic nature of the upper portion seems to diminish. The reflectivity and birds are still an issue for me. The US Bank building in Minneapolis was controversial and on-going; part of it is the location, the Isthmus between two lakes is a major pathway for birds, especially in spring and fall. You did fritting on just one tiny portion but you've got a huge

expanse of reflective glass. That's not selling it to me, that's getting worse. I can appreciate the costs but I've read accounts of the US Bank project, it would have been 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the total cost and they've lost at least that much in public relations. The new Bucks arena in Milwaukee was specifically built with bird-safe criteria and has received certification from the Green Building Council.

- I didn't see an actual planting plan of the green roof. For the record there should be an identification of the actual planting materials on the roof.
- Are we approving turf or synthetic turf? It should be stated and then we can debate whether fake grass is preferable to turf.
  - A small part of the high use area will be fake turf where the rest will be real turf.
- Why not use pavers if you're concerned about the amount of traffic?
  - It's like a little picnic area.
- The documents call for Bluegrass.
- The fake turf at the Galaxie is not good.
- The bird collision issue is mostly at lower levels, but once you introduce a green roof there are more collisions in those areas. It's worth exploring special glass in at least the first two floors around the green roof.
- What are the site wall materials? Does that tie into the hotel project?
  - Cast in place walls, and they do tie into the hotel.
- As a material it doesn't really relate to anything on this building. You're using stone to tie into the aesthetic of Breese Stevens, which would be a nicer way of tying the site to the architecture. I appreciate the perforated panels, bike parking and café seating. I think the area for planting is a little skinny; that dimension combined with those species of plantings is not enough dimension for what is shown. Go with a double row along there. The Juniper and Burning bush feel a little suburban on the Main Street side, I would swap those out for something different. Groupings of species would be stronger.
- The public comment was insightful. Was that a consideration at any point, to keep 924 E. Main Street fully functional or overlap with future phases? Could it be more substantial in overlap?
- (Chair) The Plan Commission is the body that determines demolition permits.
  - This was a garage, we have to clean the site per the DNR and dig up underneath it. Main Street has no activation now at all because everything is up to the sidewalk. We've tried to save what we can on the site. The ordinance allowed a 15-foot setback. We were trying to honor the front. We're excavating right up to the existing façade.
- Are we approving just 929 or is this the site in general? It seems like a lot of trouble for this garage. I don't understand the purpose.
- It's 929 but that's going to drive a lot of the site. We need to be concerned about the parking ramp appearance. Regarding the garage, he was responding to questions from the neighbors.
- It's hard for you to show all these future phases and not consider all this stuff going on. You have this historic garage that's going to abut something, but you don't know what shape or material it's going to be. That's my problem with 929 also, you're essentially going to attach a whole other building to it.
  - It's an urban site.
- When you present a building attaching to it at multiple levels, I can't not look at that and approve this building.
- If that comes back it's a whole separate approval.
- Can you show how this building relates to the hotel?
  - The 18-inch poured concrete base at the terrace.
  - We had to match the five-story building dealing with the Department of the Interior and Parks Department.

- It seems like a lot of work for a “billboard” (924 E. Main Street). Regarding the new alley, keep that safe and at the human scale. I didn’t see any renderings or views down that but I know the parking garage is facing it with hanging gardens. Just make sure there are eyes on that.
  - There is lighting in there and some small trees.
- I’m curious about those hanging gardens and how they look during a polar vortex. I like the undulating panels, maybe go up the entire wall instead of just strips. Go really big with the green wall.
- We can recommend that this meets the criteria of the corridor plan. The level of design we have here and with the revision to that subsection I think we should make sure we note we’re approving that.
- As for the overall design, I like the variation on this corridor; this will be a unique and iconic design. I’d be worried that changing any of the glass for bird glass is going to have an objectionable impact to this design. We need to be clear on that. I think the bonus story criteria has been met. The public comments were excellent, anytime we can save a historic building for adaptive reuse is good. As far as building into the telephone building, that’s really well done.
- My big concern is the reflectivity. I would really like to see studies done, particularly for the winter sun. That should be presented to the Plan Commission.
- I know there are buildings around the world where birds are injured. I look at local buildings, but I don’t see dead birds or see stories in the paper of the carnage of birds flying into buildings. I understand the majority of strikes are under that 40-foot level. I’m confident the developer has done due diligence and this is really good urban design.
- The site walls should be stone for better pedestrian experience.
  - I’d caution against that with salt usage, it will eat up the stone.
- What about textured formed board?
  - Yes we could add some texture to it (applicant agreed).

**ACTION:**

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-2) with Braun-Oddo, Klehr, Goodhart, Asad, DeChant and Weisensel voting yes; and Bernau and Harper voting no.

The motion for approval was based on the following conditions:

- Identify the tree species on the fourth floor green roof plan.
- If synthetic turf is used it shall be limited to the small rectangular area near the shaded area.
- The planting beds above the site walls are too narrow to be effective. Replace with more substantial species or widen the planting bed to allow a double row of the current species.
- Consider adding a texture (board form) to add interest to the concrete planter bed walls.
- The Burning Bush and Juniper species do not seem appropriate for this type of development and are not the right fit (E. Washington, E. Main and the fire lanes). Consider replacing those species.
- The approval is conditioned on approval of the zoning text amendment for the articulation of the upper floors.
- Recommend that you don’t salvage the façade as it will impact and limit the design possibilities to develop the site.
- Recommend that a building (glass) reflection study be done and presented to the Plan Commission (i.e. glare impact on adjacent buildings and soccer field).