

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** May 8, 2013

TITLE: 3330 Atwood Avenue – Public Building,
Renovations, Upgrades and New
Construction for “Olbrich Gardens.” 6th
Ald. Dist. (29855) **REFERRED:**
REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary **ADOPTED:** **POF:**

DATED: May 8, 2013 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair*; Melissa Huggins, Richard Slayton*, Dawn O’Kroley, Henry Lufler, Ald. Lauren Cnare, Tom DeChant and Cliff Goodhart.

*Wagner recused himself; Lufler acted as Chair. *Slayton also recused himself on this item.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 8, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for renovations, upgrades and new construction for Olbrich Gardens located at 3330 Atwood Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Dan Shields, representing HGA Architects; Roberta Sladky, and Jim Whitney, representing the City of Madison. Shields gave a brief history of the site and timeline. They have scheduled five public stakeholder meetings as part of this process; four have already been held. The 1970s/1980s building is overstressed and there has been a huge increase in people who visit the botanical gardens. They have looked at other botanical centers around the country and reviewed the building condition of the existing facilities. Programming and site planning was discussed where over 70 people attended. Schematic designs and initial concepts have been presented to the public and commented on. The 1977 building is of prairie style with stone, copper and timber and is an architectural gem on this site. The parking is in desperate need of reconfiguration, and there is no connection between the bicycle path the site; access to the lake means you have to walk through parking areas. Based on community input they intend to maintain the front parking along Atwood Avenue with that front entry. They are proposing bringing the parking as close to the waterfront as possible and retreating the parking to a degree against the residential lots. Pervious asphalt would be used that would drain to rain gardens with native plants; a parking lot that would be a regional model of “green.” Sugar Lane is proposed to be improved with bicycle lanes and a pedestrian pathway to the lakefront. A new northwestern entry into a new entry atrium is being proposed for people from the neighborhood to come down the bike path and come into the facility without having to walk around to Atwood Avenue. A new “lobby” will replace an existing canopy entry which will allow them to immediately engage the original building and establish a new courtyard that uses the original building to establish that court. This entrance would have a green prairie roof, native plants and deep soil, and visitors would be able to come in from the north and enter that way. A dedicated education wing is proposed with a place for school buses to drop-off and park, toilet rooms for the children, places for their coats, several classrooms and the ability to move directly out into the gardens.

Comments from the Commissioners were as follows:

- I appreciate the vastly improved parking.
- Very exciting. I love that you're incorporating the bicyclists and pedestrians. The shapes are very exciting. The only thing I have to offer is with the new architecture, I love the way the new relates to the old but there may be an opportunity to juxtapose something completely energized from the old structure. You're keeping the character which is great, but to use the modern day techniques and materials, you could do something totally different.
- Does your work include defining the architecture or is it more master planning?
 - Our scope of work does involve having plans, sections and elevations. One of the intentions is to do enough drawing to be able to have an accurate budget forecast.
- The circulation, the wrapping and creating a secondary circulation really does feel like the right answer for that site. And to create a safer entrance focused on children.
- Has there been discussion on how to maintain the private functions that go on here, weddings, etc.?
 - Yes, the use of Olbrich as a rental facility. One of the issues is that it's so popular it's almost squeezed out education. We're proposing that the hall currently used for most rentals be maintained for that. We're proposing to develop a new catering kitchen so we can serve directly into that. And a new courtyard out here where visitors could move from the hall outside into the gardens. When there aren't any plant shows that area can be used for rentals as well.
- By creating a structured courtyard it almost feels like one is more separated from getting into the gardens, when really you almost want to step one foot in the door and one foot into the garden space. That's the challenge I see by placing that form there.

ACTION:

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

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 rating for this project is 8.5.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 3330 Atwood Avenue

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	9	8	-	-	-	8	9	8.5

General Comments:

- Very nice, tough project to resolve various parts and pieces.
- Only concern is next addition. Now seems site constrained against gardens.