

## PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

February 24, 2016



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 1605-1609 Monroe Street  
**Application Type:** Informational Presentation  
**Prepared By:** Kevin Firchow, AICP, Planning Division  
**Reviewed By:** Jay Wendt, Principal Planner

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The following project is before the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for an informational presentation. Based on the information provided, a formal approval request would require approval of two demolition permits and multiple conditional uses.

The Conditional Use approval standards state that the City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable, neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan... Additionally, Conditional Use Standard 9 states, in part:

When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation.

The Planning Division has concerns with aspects of this proposal that are not consistent with the City's adopted plans. This includes the specific recommendations of the Monroe Street Commercial District Plan (adopted 2007), that provides specific block-by-block redevelopment guidelines for properties along this corridor, including the subject site. Among the key recommendations for the subject block is having building heights between 2-4 stores (with the third and/or fourth stories set back from the front façade). The general design guidelines note the desirability of "dominant" corner entrance features on corner sites and that the base of buildings should be detailed to enhance the "human scale qualities of the building." The Plan is available at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/planning/pdf/monroe.pdf>.

The Planning Division requests the UDC provides specific feedback on the following issues:

- **Building Height.** The five-story proposed building height exceeds that recommended in the plan. No proposal has yet been approved in the Monroe Street planning area where height exceeded that recommended in the Plan. The applicant has provided justification for the proposed height noting this is a low point from a grade standpoint and the desire for excess height to better frame the public Crazy Legs plaza, on the opposite side of Monroe Street.
- **Exposed Building Base / Relationship to Street.** Due to the proposed parking configuration and grade change along the street, portions the parking level are exposed up to five-plus feet near the sidewalk level. The Planning Division has concerned about this relationship. The introduction of a stair along Oakland Avenue has improved access at the corner, but the Planning Division remains concerned. The building is setback about a foot to add a planting area to soften this edge, though Planning also has concerns about the adequacy of this planting area and whether the suggested planting concept would survive.

- **Residential Entrance Orientation.** The Planning Division also seeks feedback on the residential entry location, which is accessed from the side of the building, not along the front.
- **Articulation.** The Planning Division looks for UDC's feedback on the side elevations, which are anticipated to be visible along the corridor. Staff appreciates the large amount of masonry utilized on all sides and does not object to metal accents. The end facades are articulated with both changes in plane and materials, and staff looks for feedback from the UDC on whether some simplification of these facades would be desirable.

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: February 24, 2016

TITLE: 1605 & 1609 Monroe Street – New Mixed-Use Building with First Floor Commercial, 44 Rental Housing Units on Levels 1-4 and Residential Condominiums on Level 5 with Below Grade Parking. 13<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (41853)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: February 24, 2016

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Cliff Goodhart, Richard Slayton, Lois Braun-Oddo, Tom DeChant, John Harrington, Michael Rosenblum and Sheri Carter.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of February 24, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use building with first floor commercial, 44 rental housing units on levels 1-4 and residential condominiums on level 5, with below grade parking located at 1605 & 1609 Monroe Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Paul Cuta, Marc Schellpfeffer, both representing Gregg Shimanski; and Gregg Shimanski.

The project is located at the corner of Oakland and Monroe Streets where there is currently a two-story office building. The site drops about 9-feet from one corner to the other. Cuta walked through the proposed building design and how it addresses Monroe Street, the neighborhood and the urban fabric. A green roof is proposed where the building pulls back and steps back on 3 of the 4 sides. Public use parking is included, along with 15 automobile spots, and 11 bicycle stalls (7 of which are inside the structured parking). Building materials are envisioned as masonry, hook strap metal panel and darker reclaimed wood accent panel, and wall to wall glass.

Kevin Firchow discussed the Planning Division memo, noting that this project may not necessarily return to the Urban Design Commission. The development team wanted the Commission’s feedback, and Planning would like the Commission’s feedback on the following specific issues:

- Building height.
- Exposed building base/relationship to street.
- Residential entrance orientation.
- Articulation.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Looking ahead at future Monroe Street improvements, stormwater management is a real issue. Your building should try to sync up with that.
- It's headed in the right direction. Your desire to create a space across the street is admirable. You could work with Forestry to have all the streets around the park all have a certain kind of look that takes that park and brings it back across the street.
- My main concern is that the parking access will be a real issue during peak times of the day.
  - Traffic was the biggest concern during our neighborhood meetings. We have begun a traffic impact study and are conscientious about that.

Gregg Shimanski spoke as the owner and long-time Monroe Street resident. They received positive comments during meetings with the neighborhood board, which gave its endorsement of the project. They have received no opposition to the proposal.

- I completely support your trying to encourage your park dedication funds to be put to the planning of the space in the short-term, as well as the long-term, and hoping that Parks moves forward with that development, possibly concurrent with yours. This is really good infill in a really good location. It's very sensitive to the location, the heights, and the transitions. To speak specifically to the Planning memo, the 5-story height is very much appropriate to this location. The base as the grade drops away, I feel it's appropriately articulated. It's very appropriate how it handles the transition. Consider the comment about the setback from Monroe Street as you plan the number of risers you would need if you were to infill those other openings with more stairs.
- The residential entrance does seem appropriate to have it adjacent to the other residential entry, and the setback feels appropriate as it creates a "front yard" to what is otherwise a 1-foot front lot development.
- You'll need 12-inches at least for plantings.
- Your watershed is really important; you're doing everything right.
- Regarding articulation; on the east elevation, if you felt it appropriate, you could maybe exercise a little bit more restraint on the ups and downs of the masonry, you see that pretty strongly from Monroe Street. I think it might be a little bit stronger without so much ups and downs.
- Looking at the floor plans, the efficiency units look very small. If some of your tenants would prefer that balcony space inside instead, to be used 12 months out of the year, I think the Monroe Street façade could actually be pretty sunny if it were glass instead of balconies. It's like 15% of the unit space; maybe they'd say "I'd rather have a bigger living room."
- I think you've gone an excellent job here, especially for such a disjointed entrance into the neighborhood. Having this anchor there is great. That first view that you see, have a little less articulation, it'll be very welcoming.
- The residential entrance on the far west side of the project, I'm wondering how close it is to that 3-story building. I don't get a good sense of how that will look there.
- It is a really thoughtful design and I appreciate that you're looking at the entire texture of the neighborhood. I encourage you to bring the light level down as you come around the entrance so it's safe but not intrusive on the close neighbors.
- If you go down the long ramp to the condo parking, be sure to sign it very well.
- Check out the northeast corner of Mills and Johnson Streets. You realize how impactful a change in elevation at the sidewalk really is. You don't have as extreme a change in elevation, but not what's wrong with that and how you can avoid that.
- Thank you for not giving us a pseudo-traditional design; this is a very nice contemporary design.

**ACTION:**

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

A motion was made by O’Kroley, seconded by Rosenblum, to note that the Commission finds that the height is appropriate, the relationship to the street is well-designed, that the entrance orientation is acceptable because it preserves the commercial activation of the street, and that the articulation of the design is well-done.

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 ratings for this project are 6 and 7.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 1605 & 1609 Monroe Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	5	7	-	-	-	5	6	6
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7

General Comments:

- Great start, coordination with Monroe Street future improvements and park site is important. Stormwater management is critical in the Wingra watershed.
- Positive improvement, well thought-out.



## Office of the Common Council

Ald. Sara Eskrich, District 13

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City-County Building, Room 417  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703-3345  
Phone (608) 266-4071  
Fax (608) 267-8669  
[district13@cityofmadison.com](mailto:district13@cityofmadison.com)  
[www.cityofmadison.com/council/district13](http://www.cityofmadison.com/council/district13)

To: Members of the Urban Design Commission  
From: Sara Eskrich, District 13 Alder  
RE: 1605 & 1609 Monroe Street  
Date: February 21, 2016

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Thank you in advance for your review of the project at 1605/1609 Monroe Street, before you this evening. I have another commitment on Wednesday evening and anticipate that I will not be able to attend your meeting in-person. Please accept this as a brief summary of the feedback relevant to your review of the project.

Gregg Shimanski and his team have done their work in outreaching to neighboring property owners (homeowners, residential, and commercial). We had a positive neighborhood meeting on March 10, where approximately 40 individuals voiced general support for the project as proposed. The concerns raised related to the Plan Commission (traffic and general height concerns). Beyond those concerns, I have only received support for the project. Some feedback included statements such as,

- “Even though the proposal is five stories, the massing does not appear to be a problem for this site. Massing is usually my main concern with new projects. I think it will be a quality built building and the management will be excellent. The condos on the fifth floor may provide opportunities for current residents for the Vilas neighborhood to sell their houses, but still live in the neighborhood.”
- “We were very impressed with the design of the project.”
- “There was less pushback on both the size of the building and its height than I'd expected from neighbors. It's still quite large and tall compared to immediately-surrounding structures and current zoning. If the mass (# units & setbacks) is acceptable, I'd push the developer to choose the concrete construction option which would shave ~5 feet off of the building's height. If the proposed height remains with stick structure, I'd recommend an increased setback on the upper floors (4&5) along both the alley and Oakland, which may reduce the # units.”

I believe that this project will contribute positively to the neighborhood. The design has been proposed to fit in with the surrounding properties and potential uses of the building, both in function and aesthetics.

Thank you again for your thorough review of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly with any questions.

To: Urban Design Commission Members,

Re: 1605-9 Monroe Redevelopment

On behalf of the Vilas Neighborhood Association (VNA), we would like to outline the following for the Urban Design Commission's (UDC) consideration.

Over the several months, the development team for the 1605-9 redevelopment presented twice to the VNA executive committee and to a formally noticed neighborhood group. In addition, the developer came a third time to the last VNA meeting on 2/18/16 and answered additional questions.

In each meeting, the development team was thoughtful in its presentation and proactive in receiving neighborhood feedback and answering questions regarding the project.

While some questions came up from neighborhood individuals regarding height, massing, market conditions and traffic, none of the comments or questions rose to formal objection or rejection of the project. Following the Q and A period the Executive Committee of VNA discussed the project. While some individual members of the Executive Committee of VNA considered a potential request for reduction in either height or massing, the general feeling was the site was appropriate for this type of infill.

As a result on 2/18/16 the **VNA executive council voted to unanimously approve** the development proposal as presented.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted

Craig Stanley

VNA President