

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: February 13, 2012

TITLE: 25 North Prospect Avenue – University Heights Historic District- Construction of a new single family residence in the University Heights Historic District.
Contact: Erica Simmons and John Balz (25301) INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Amy Scanlon, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: February 13, 2012

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Stu Levitan, Chair; Erica Gehrig, Vice Chair; Christina Slattery, David McLean, Marsha Rummel, Robin Taylor, David McLean, and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

Mr. Balz and Ms. Simmons gave a presentation and requested information to move forward. Ms. Simmons said this is a design in progress that they wanted to get feedback from the Landmarks Commission and neighbors. Ms. Simmons noted that they received a letter from some of the neighbors this morning and are grateful for their comments. They requested feedback on massing, roof shape, and materiality. Mr. Balz said splitting up the volumes of the footprint and materials on the exterior would reduce footprint and preserve trees. He noted that they are interested in understanding material considerations. Wood or glass to reflected the surroundings and seasons. Architect sent out informational to neighbors on materials and variations of color. Ms. Simmons gave examples of wood panels and colored steel which resembles stucco texturally and glass. Garage can be set back 2 feet before trees will be impacted. Mr. Balz asked if another connector could be added from garage to house and how that will impact the approvals.

Rummel asked about consideration to street presence and how to address letter from neighbors. Ms. Simmons will look into these aspects.

Gehrig asked are green roofs accessible. Ms. Simmons stated that details haven't been completed yet, but that a green roof was a design priority. Ms. Simmons said that a green roof blends into site better.

McLean request 125% from O composition.

James Vogel, 7 North Prospect Avenue, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. Mr. Vogel noted that the proposed project is a very good contemporary design and that he likes modern architecture. He stated that this design would not be a good complement to the other architectural designs in University Heights.

John Schlaefer, 1814 Kendall, registering in support and wishing to speak. Mr. Schlaefer said that this neighborhood has an eclectic feel based on history of architecture that included contemporary masterpieces like

the Braley House, the Gilmore House and the Buell House. He stated that a contemporary building which fits the scale of the neighborhood would be a welcome addition to this evolving historic district.

Elizabeth Kerwin, 1 North Prospect Avenue, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. She loves the trees. She takes exception to the particular design because it is cold with monolithic materials and size and height. She noted that the First Unitarian Society building uses red sedums and is a lovely “green” roof example.

Bernard F. Micke, MD, 26 North Prospect, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. He would like to see the proposed residence have a more traditional style and respect the history of the neighborhood. He thinks of Prospect Avenue as being an extremely historic street. Mr. Micke noted that property values may suffer and that the shape, mass and height are not a fit.

Julian Edgoose, 15 North Prospect, registering in opposition, wishing to speak, and available to answer questions. Mr. Edgoose stated that the neighbors immediately adjacent to the project site held a neighborhood meeting and prepared a letter of their findings. He stated that the neighbors found agreement in the multi-unit volume that creates courtyard and preserves trees and a modern architectural style. The neighbors had concerns about the lack of street interaction, the overall heights, and the actual lack of vegetation on the site. He noted that the neighbors want to work with John and Erica to have a successful project realized.

James Pawley, 21 North Prospect Avenue, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. He doesn't think it is the right design yet. He noted that the lot is not heavily wooded as described. He stated that the proposed building is dark and is unfriendly. The proposal seems too high.

Ivan Ermakoff, 2021 Van Hise Avenue, registering in opposition, not wishing to speak, but available to answer questions. He then changed his stance to wishing to speak. He appreciates some aspects but his main concern is the height. He noted that the view from his residence will change to a view of a dark massive element. He encouraged the applicants to continue to explore the modular units and he appreciates their desire to preserve trees.

Lawrence Shriberg, 2015 Van Hise Avenue, registering in opposition but not wishing to speak.

Joyce Knutson, 24 North Prospect, registering in opposition but not wishing to speak.

Mary Niedermeier, 2021 Chadbourne Avenue, registering in opposition, not wishing to speak but available to answer questions.

Florence Vatan, 2021 Van Hise, registering in opposition but available to answer questions.

Ms. Simmons said she appreciates the input from the meeting. Mr. Balz also wanted to clarify that the trees in the drawings are existing and new plantings.

Levitan asked them to address the forbidding nature of black cube.

Ms. Simmons said they did not interpret the color and form in that way, but that it has been helpful to hear input. Mr. Balz said that a light colored structure would also stand out.

Ald. Bidar-Sielaff said that she understands the issues with the proposed design to be the lack of windows and doors facing the street, lack of interaction with the street, and height of the one building.

The Secretary explained that after a serious discussion with staff about Building Code and Zoning Code, the building as proposed is found to be a 2-story structure with loft-mezzanine. Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator, also stated that the State interpreted the bedrooms open to below as a mezzanine level. The City of Madison Zoning finds that it is a 2-story structure.

Gehrig would like this to look more like a house. The current design doesn't explain itself. Each house in the district explains itself and its social history. Darkness and lack of door and windows are the main reasons that this does not look like a house. She appreciates the contemporary design but thinks it should be somewhere else.

Taylor said there is a texture in all the rest of the houses, but this design is texture-less.

The Secretary said that prior rendering had vertical boards treated in a dark manner. The ordinance specifically says the vertical boards are prohibited materials. An appeal could be granted for this particular design to allow vertical boards with scale and texture instead of monolithic appearance.

McLean said first impression of this design is that it is commercial not residential due to monolithic expression and lack of scale. The neighborhood has more expression. This design is not appropriate for this neighborhood.

Rummel noted that there are no typical cues to fit this design into its context, for example, an entryway or porch. She complimented the applicants for the thorough submission materials and noted that the flat roofs in the visually related area are secondary roofs.

Rosenblum appreciates modular idea but interaction with street face is important part of historic district. He encouraged the applicants to consider how this design would look against the snow.

Levitan said that when designing a new building for a vacant lot, the Landmarks Commission favors contemporary style.

Ms. Simmons wanted specifics to go back to Architect for revisions:

- Roof shape. Modern design and flat roof go hand in hand, but pitched roofs with modern flat roofs could add sense of scale.
- Materials. Consider numerous materials with inherent texture to provide scale. Also consider warmer color palette. Metal and glass are not compatible with district unless coupled with other materials. Levitan said ordinance will allow a variance on materials.
- Modular volumes. Consider reducing the height. The current proposal meets ordinance on height (35 feet or less and 2 ½ stories or less). The modular volumes seem fine as a design concept.

ACTION:

No action was taken.