

AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** August 20, 2014

TITLE: 739 Williamson Street – Rezoning from
TR-V1 to PD for Construction of a New
12-Unit Apartment Building. 6th Ald. Dist.
(34926) **REFERRED:**
REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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

DATED: August 20, 2014 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Lauren Cnare, Acting Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, John Harrington, Cliff Goodhart and Tom DeChant.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of August 20, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a rezoning from TR-V1 to PD for construction of a new 12-unit apartment building located at 739 Williamson Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Michael Matty, Chris Oddo, representing Renaissance Property Group; and Lindsey Lee. Matty described the layout of the property lines, making this a rather unique situation because of the angle of the block. They have received their Certificate of Appropriateness for the entire development from the Landmarks Commission. Because they have agreed to renovate 740 Jenifer Street as well, they have been granted an extra bonus story. The unit mix now consists of four efficiencies, 8 one-bedrooms and a 3 ½ bedroom, 2 ½ den house. He strongly but respectfully disagrees with the staff report on its direction of defining the project. The Landmarks Commission also disagreed with staff, as did the neighborhood association, historic stakeholders in the neighborhood, and immediate neighbors to the development; they all feel the project has met the BUILD Plan or exceeded it. Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator has said they are a four-story building; 50% or greater of their street facing lower level is exposed. By IBC code they are 3-stories. The majority of the structures facing this block are all 3-stories by the same definition. The material palette has been simplified from concrete to a continuation of the dark fiber cement panel with climbing vines (Hydrangeas). The railings have been brought down and opened up using horizontal lines to turn the corner. The landscape plan has been further detailed to create a more pedestrian feel and the hardscape has changed color. The building has been condensed and pulled back off the City right-of-way, leaving not much room for the 3-foot sidewalk easement; City Engineering is working on this issue. Circulation of traffic in and out around the interior parking was an issue; some stalls need two maneuvers to get out, some will need four.

Lindsey Lee spoke in favor of the project. BUILD II does state 2 ½ stories in this area. He thinks the nature of this street will be changing over time and this project will fit in well.

Tim Parks of the Planning Division spoke to the issues contained in the staff report. He clarified that Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator did say that the adjacent building could be considered a 3-story, with Mr. Lee’s

house considered 2 ½ stories. The report talks strongly about 2-stories when in fact there is a 3-story building on this block. There is a preservation height bonus that may be allowed because Mr. Matty is proposing to renovate and restore to its 1894 condition the house at 740 Jenifer Street. However, because 754 Jenifer Street is not considered part of the adjoining parcel, bonus stories will not be granted because of that renovation. There are still significant issues with the project, first and foremost the percentage of the property occupied by the building is significantly greater than what the BUILD Plan talks about for this site. This is going to be a 58-foot wide by 76-foot deep lot, there is a recommendation in the BUILD Plan that there be a 35-foot rear yard unless there is, within the building structure, underground parking, in which case the rear yard can be reduced to 15-feet. At a minimum BUILD calls for a 6-foot front yard setback; this proposes 2 ½-feet. Not wanting to put buildings too close to the street, they are trying to create some space on Williamson Street. Traffic Engineering's comments speak specifically to what is occurring in the parking area, less than sight distance and relationship to the existing sidewalk. They are concerned about the geometry within the parking structure and whether or not it meets MGO 10.08 (which is something not considered by the Urban Design Commission or Plan Commission). There is concern that on a northwesterly facing wall the ivy won't turn out to be very green. Mr. Parks also noted that Planning staff does not like to view projects through how they are going to be landscaped, they look at the buildings "as is." They do not feel this building would be the building that the BUILD Plan is encouraging for this site. If this building were to move across the street it would be a much better fit.

Alder Rummel commented that there is neighborhood support for this project. Maybe it's four stories but it doesn't feel taller than its surroundings. There are obviously fine layers that staff looks at. There is a community benefit to the renovation of 740 Jenifer Street.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I'm concerned about the context and placement of where it's at. I'm more concerned about how close it is to the street. Buildings look crammed if they're too close.
 - (Ald. Rummel) I'm the kind of person who doesn't think anything should be built to the lot line, so I hear you.
- I'd like it to back off the street a bit more.
- Tell me your thoughts about what those angled supports add to your design. Especially on both sides.
 - To differentiate what was happening up here from the middle and from the bottom. And that's one of the reason why the material changed here at the bottom. I did study what that would look like without those "branches." I'm testing different options and I'm not married to the branches.
- I think it distracts from rather than reinforces.
- There are a couple of properties on this block that are likely soon to develop. If they were, what would the goal or requirement for setback be?
 - A minimum of 6-feet off the property line. If there is less there, then you have setback averaging that reduces it below 15-feet to as little as 6-feet. It would depend. This is infill in the truest sense in that it's mending the gap in the 700 Block of Williamson Street. But as you start taking pieces away from what is otherwise on each side of it, then those proposals would have to be viewed based on the recommendation of the BUILD Plan. The more ground that you're occupying, the more you should be able to comply with the recommendations of the BUILD Plan.

- Lindsey Lee had to dedicate an easement for the right-of-way, which is very minimal. Normally as development occurs that request is consistent so the City gets the land to provide for improvements to the right-of-way. If we don't get that with one property it sort of throws that out the door.
 - This was one of those not entirely unheard of but pretty rare demolitions in a historic district. The replacement house was built under the C2 Zoning that used to run along Williamson Street, and it required a slew of variances (front, side, rear) for the single-family house.
 - They would like to widen the public terrace. We're bound by trying to save a house and divide a lot line where a natural leg already exists, so we're fighting all that. We're trying to infill with something that works. It is a give and take.
- You said you were getting awfully close to the lot line of the house in the back. If you get that front sidewalk easement, could you move it back further? You might not want to but could you legally?
 - It's a PD, legally a PD I think I can put things wherever Common Council agrees to it. There's a natural eastern leg of 10-feet so when we discussed dividing it this seemed like the best way in. I guess the answer is if the City allowed me, I could push this back. We already have our fire separation.
 - (Parks) Under the subdivision regulations, which seldom comes before this body, you are technically required to have a 100-foot of lot depth when you create a new lot. There's two ways around it: you can have a Planned Development District in which case there are no prescribed widths or depths, or there is a variance that the Plan Commission can grant. We looked at this, as did the Landmarks Commission and came to the conclusion that splitting this to allow something to happen here could be fine, you could reduce that 100-foot even without rezoning to Planned Development by granting that variance of the subdivision regulation, which would allow a single-family home on a 30-foot wide, which this is in spades, 3,000 square foot lot, which it is and then you could do a single-family home or a two-family flat on the front in the existing TR-V1 zoning. There are related questions but they can be answered differently. You don't need the PD zoning to split the property and we support the subdivision of the property. Basically what it boils down to is we don't support what's being proposed on the front. But the question is, is this what should be on the lot in the first place and if the answer to that question is yes, then I suppose the next question is do we move this building back, do we change where the lot line occurs, do we even allow the lots to be created or does this become a condominium? We have to first look at whether the 12-unit building is the solution for this proposed front portion of the property and if it is, then do you want to move it around.
- (Matty) We've been told by Matt Tucker that this allowed, so we now have approval and a formal recommendation from Landmarks to send this lot division to Plan Commission as an allowable TR-V1 lot and we now have submitted this application for a PD for 739 Williamson Street as a 12-unit.
 - It's spoke to in the report about how there was at one time a desire to maybe keep the house in the TR-V1 and then the lot depth issue came up, identified in the report, the Plan Commission can still deal with this, they can recommend approval of a reduced area.
- So in essence we're having lot division that accommodates two PD developments.
 - You can have the whole lot rezoned PD and split, the Plan Commission could grant a variance for Lot 2, the Jenifer Street lot to allow it to be less deep than 100-feet and then recommend that the Planned Development zoning be only for the 58' x 76' lot in the front, or the whole thing can still be split without any PD zoning and it would be a variance for both lots in the TR-V1.

- I would appreciate either of you bringing us back to the decisions that we are allowed to and should make tonight.
 - It doesn't have an adequate setback, and that inadequate setback is also hindering it providing for necessary right-of-way dedication. So is the additional 1 ½-feet something that the Commission wants to say, "we need it, move the building back this much."
 - Setting aside what we do with the single-family home lot on Jenifer Street, the 12-unit building cannot be built under any conventional zoning district, it needs Planned Development zoning. Whether the entire site or that portion of the site has Planned Development zoning, that discussion will occur at the Plan Commission. The focus for the Urban Design Commission should be whether the 12-unit building should be approved, and in what form, and what conditions do you recommend.
- It seems like this body hasn't had very much time during this presentation to deliberate at all. I heard from the neighbor, and the Alder reports that the neighborhood, people in a very involved and active neighborhood and are very sensitive to these things, don't seem to have a substantial problem with the project before us. I did hear one concern in the staff report about the building's closeness to the property line, but it seems like there may be an avenue to resolve that, and if that is the only really substantial issue holding up this approval of the project and there's an avenue to do that...why shouldn't I make a motion?
- This limits your flexibility along the street. One building can do it. If that's the setback that the City wants to have, that's the one thing I think we need to honor.
- The setback of the elevator tower from the building face is what makes the massing successful in terms of breaking it down into two more historical parcel sizes. Any alteration to gain setback from the street, the setback from the elevator tower should not be decreased, I would even encourage it to be further. That is kind of the contribution to acknowledging the scale.
 - If we do push the stair tower away from the street the stair tower has to move with it as far as exiting and cross-traffic.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (3-1) with O'Kroley voting no. The motion provided for the following:

- Achieve the goal of the setback for the additional right-of-way for the sidewalk relocation.
- No "branches" on the upper posts for balconies on the building.

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 7 and 7.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 739 Williamson Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	6	7	6	-	-	7	8	7
	6	8	-	-	-	-	-	7

General Comments:

- A little more quirky than I would prefer, but overall a well thought out infill project.
- Love this, mixes well with surrounding residences. Not out of scale at all.