

AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** January 29, 2020

TITLE: 7-9 W. Main Street – Façade Alteration in
the Downtown Core. 4th Ald. Dist. (56318) **REFERRED:**

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 29, 2020

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 29, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a façade alteration in the Downtown Core located at 7-9 W. Main Street. Registered and speaking in support was Matt Aro, representing 7 West Main, LLC. Aro reviewed existing elevations versus the proposed façade updates and explained their responses to the UDC’s comments from two previous meetings. They incorporated two different materials to create verticality, kept the windows as they are (they are not reducing the glass area at all), and the sash configurations will remain as is. The proposed material is a durable rain screen material, but they would consider an alternative material that has been used in the past at 110-112 King Street (non-metallic panel). By addressing the façade as a whole they believe they have mitigated the tension between two facades. The goal is to not be overly complex.

The Chair asked the Commission to take note of the staff report and the guidelines by which they should base their findings. Building material samples were passed around. The Commission discussed the following:

- The new materials are very uniform in texture and color and have a flatness about them. I don’t think they are appropriate materials for recladding this building; it’s an applique. I just don’t know if you’ll get the detail that has that level of refinement that you’d expect from something on the Capitol Square. This is a high contrast in a very prominent city street. It’s too flat, too monochromatic, there’s not enough finesse in the details.
- Is this meant to be maintained as a single business?
 - Yes, that’s the intent but it’s not finalized.
- If there’s two businesses there I’d be more on board with the color aspect of the change, but if it’s a single business I would find the change in both material and color to be somewhat confusing. It visually implies two businesses rather than one. I’m happy you left the windows alone on the front second floor. I would agree with Lois that I’m not sure about the building materials. The Capitol Square is not the proper place for faux wood material.
- When I look at your design, there was a decision not to keep the existing façade, but total replacement.

- There will be no brick removal, it will still exist underneath.
- When you look at the context along the elevation on that street, it's a lot of old and new buildings with break-up between them. Can you talk to why you chose not to make it look like two smaller buildings?
 - There's a stepping down that occurs with the Justice Center.
- The Candidas Chocolate building is existing with the Risser Center behind it. It would seem to me it would be better to have one design, why break it up on a smaller building, especially if it's going to be one business?
 - That was in response to one Commissioner comment that led us to understand that recognizing the original block face character with a more vertical expression would help from a composition standpoint.
- I do think there are some material issues but I don't mind the way that it's organized. There are some things you could do, the wood could go through a bit to bring it together into that band. Just like other buildings that share multiple fronts it would look like two different buildings. It's just designed differently than having one material go across the whole thing. Making it more contemporary is probably the right thing to do with all the issues of restoring an old façade. My only issue is the wood, it's really really fake looking.
- The Urban Design Guidelines talks about that multiple materials can be incorporated, and given the information we have here about fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story, are you asking us to make an exception to the guidelines?
 - One question is whether that applies to the façade remodeling. It applies to additions to buildings, I'm not sure if this section applies or not.
- (Firchow) The guidelines would all apply, however the standard that limits the amount of fiber cement on the ground floor is a requirement for a new building. Those standards only apply to new structures or additions, not to changing façades. That provision does not apply to an alteration.
- The first time we saw this building there was the desire to do that big seamless window at the top. That seemed to be the driving force for the simplification of the top and the bottom would stay the same. I'm trying to understand, now it's keeping the windows but modernizing or making it more modern looking. We often see a renovation or modernization of a building and it's really the pedestrian level, you can keep the historic appearance above that without people really noticing. Is there a way to simplify all of this wood detailing on the first floor so you have that modernization, simplification of the old storefront? Is there any functional reason to cover the brick at the top? I don't know how you're going to make this transition from a material like that functionally. Maybe it's better to leave that second floor alone and rather than reclad the Brocach façade, maybe strip it down and clean it to give it a more modern look.
 - The problem is we have three kinds of brick across the second floor.
- The motivation seems to have changed from a seamless view to keeping the windows. Why not just focus on modernizing and simplifying. Remove some of the extra wood detailing and give it an update without cladding.
 - As far as the change a lot of it is trying to respond to the various Urban Design Guidelines. It's history as well as evolution over time. Being able to address it as a whole is a more comprehensive way to approach these various elements. We realized we weren't going to be approved for those window changes.
- I think this is the perfect example of embrace what it is. I certainly appreciate that you heard our comments and looked at it holistically. But I have no problem with two historic bricks living right next to each other on the upper levels. I mentioned previously that the detail of the parapet adds a lot of the character of the property and we're seeing that lost. We learn from history, there's literally books written about cladding over facades that end up coming down 20-30 years later. Bringing it all back to the Downtown Guidelines, using the existing property and architecture as a benchmark would give a step backwards in materiality and detail.

- We need to remind ourselves of our general responsibilities which are to protect and improve the design of all buildings. We have to ask ourselves does this protect and enhance the building and foster civic pride? I'm not sure we're there yet with this new skin.
- If these are in good shape I just don't understand why you would cover it up.
- What is your motivation? To modernize, what's the goal?
 - This design is to create a contemporary façade on the Square. To attract a tenant for this particular building.
- If that's the goal then go with it. I don't think every historic building needs to be saved. The Square is a juxtaposition of all kinds of building and that's what makes it unique. Something contemporary in the middle of two other types of buildings is fine. The materials can be refined and be better quality. If you did go back to the big window it would tie it together a little bit.
- How much of that existing façade is going to be reversible? You're going to be drilling a lot of holes for the rain screen. You either go with something brand new or you keep the original. This halfway in between, if you do this there's no going back.
- I feel for you, you're hearing lots of different directions. But this is not pushing any buttons for enough of us here. To me the problem is that there's too much stuff going on. If the brick (to the right of the door) was at least the same color, it's just a mess, if that was uniform and cleaned then you could clad the first floor while enhancing the stuff on top. I would see that as somewhat of a compromise.
- You can't not touch the top part.
- There are contradictory comments here and I want you to be able to move forward.
- There are a couple of people not here who have very strong opinions about what's going on here.
- Most of the buildings we've lost on the Square in the last 10-20 years have been completely razed and replaced with something that warrants the location: materiality, detail, the scale.
- It's the Square, urban strip mall material doesn't cut it for me.

ACTION:

On a motion by Weisensel, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0). The motion to refer noted the following:

- The proposal does not meet the design bar needed for higher level design given its location on the Square.
- If you're going to do new design embrace it and not just do a very basic façade restoration that in another area might be OK. This is not acceptable on the Capitol Square.
- If you're going to renovate the existing in a way that keeps what's there while still improving what the owner is looking for, it could enhance the first level pedestrian experience.