

## AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** October 6, 2021

**TITLE:** 504-524 W. Johnson Street/312 N. Bassett Street/505-527 Conklin Place – New Residential Development in UMX District. 4<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (67242)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** October 6, 2021

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Tom DeChant, Shane Bernau, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Russell Knudson and Jessica Klehr.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of October 6, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new residential development in UMX zoning located at 504-524 W. Johnson Street/312 N. Bassett Street/505-527 Conklin Place. Registered and speaking in support was Neal Reardon, representing ESG Architecture + Design. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Mitch Korte, representing Subtext Development; and Jessica Vaughn, representing JSD Professional Services, Inc.

The proposed development includes eight (8) total parcels containing aging buildings to be demolished, and combined into one parcel. Massing diagrams show a 12-story building with some elective setbacks with zero lot line conditions. The side yard setback facing west is 10-feet, a 5-foot setback required at level one along Johnson Street, and a small setback of 1.6-feet on Bassett Street where it is not required. The entry is located at the main pointed corner, with walk-up units with stoops, steps and entries to activate Johnson Street. Bicycle and motor vehicle parking and drop offs are within the courtyard. The vehicle court in relation to Conklin Place is for servicing the building on one side, with a pull-in/pull-out situation for loading, ride share pick-up and drop-off and other deliveries for the building. They are working with MG&E on generators, transformers and other functions, and anticipate those happening generally in the vicinity of Conklin Place. The ramp down to the parking is secured. Floor plans were shared showing two levels of underground parking for 110-120 spaces, an amenity deck on level two with housing in a mix of bedrooms, an elevator core and small study room on each floor for a total dwelling unit count between 140-150 and 525-540 bedrooms. Level 12 has amenity spaces, a club room looking southeasterly towards the lake, supportive spaces and dwelling units. The roof plan shows stairs, elevator access and an equipment room. They are considering a fair amount of green roof and are working on the design to comply with stormwater requirements. Active and passive rooftops with those spaces are delineated. Renderings show split volumes and massing, with a thinner tall proportion as a good solution and a strong way to represent that main corner of Bassett and Johnson Streets. A simple medium gray and black metal panel material palette will make the building elegant, but they are considering other design and material options.

The Commission discussed the following:

- The pedestrian experience was taken into consideration along that level, but when you go up it's very flat. The windows are a nice design but it's just straight up, no relief or articulation. The top floor of the corner, I like that corner treatment but those windows are significantly taller, there's opportunity to create that cap other than just a larger band of windows. The building form itself needs a little bit of excitement. It's not bad it's just very flat. The materials are fine.
  - We're considering some articulation on the massing.
- Nice presentation. The first thing that comes to mind is it seems like a great opportunity to improve the bike path through there, it's a critical juncture. I don't know it's on your project to improve this, but have you spoken to the City to learn those opportunities?
  - We did have a DAT meeting and Traffic Engineering was there but we didn't engage about that specific item. But we will be talking to agencies as we move forward.
- Appreciate the materials, it appears you're proposing nice high quality materials. All the buildings around this site are warm tone masonry, this building would stand out and seems much darker. Like the roof deck and appreciate that, appreciate the ambitions with the green roof, like the window treatments as well but do agree on the notions of taking some interest in the façade.
- It is nice to see that green roof type of amenity included not just for stormwater management but also as outdoor relief and people spaces, plants and birds. I would highly recommend that at least the second story roof space be more than just an extensive roof in a 4-inch sedum mat but have some substance and depth to it, a semi-intensive in 6-8 inches of depth for other plant species including native perennials. I think that is more critical to open space than the rooftop. Like the relief as you wrap around on Johnson, that helps the pedestrian experience.
- Not opposed to the vertical-ness of that corner piece, it's a nice tailored element. I do think it could use flair especially where we have brick, the double soldier course at the base, there's an opportunity to do something more interesting at that level. Maybe it protrudes, or it's just a textural expression. Soldier course is too institutional. Would like to see something more interesting at the corners. It is kind of dark, the James as it comes around Gorham is really dark too and I don't know if it's very successful because there's no relief. Think about adding something to this that would make it more interesting than a brown rectangle. I do like how you stepped it back at the pedestrian level and I really appreciate the drive-thru, this is a really highly trafficked corner, having that was a really good idea.
- There are some more fundamental issues with this design that really should be addressed at this level. I don't think it adequately acknowledges or celebrates the curve. It's foreign to the smoothness of the curve. I like and appreciate taking the sidewalk off the curve and bringing it in-board. The walk-up units belong facing Bassett Street and the bike path. The storefront and sign should be on the curve where people are zooming by, not having your walk-up apartment right there. It's a highway there in the morning. I agree on the dark panels, a punch of color, something other than beige or brown would be a nice counterpoint to a lot of other things we see there. Take a look particularly at the ground plane on how that's programmed and expressed along those two corners.
- Maybe the walk-ups belong on Conklin? It's really tight back there, plus here's a little house there compared to this building. Agree about the dark storefront on the base, maybe at least the storefront framing system could be lighter in color.
- My first reaction was that the curve isn't celebrated. Perhaps the idea of moving those walk-ups is one option that should be explored. Those units feel heavy, a lot of masonry, closed in and not in keeping with the rest of the building. I do appreciate the setback and moving the sidewalk in very much. The westernmost tower appears to be all clad in that same brown material, it needs additional relief. At the base of that is that parking lot going to remain?
  - That parking lot is off the property and not part of this project.

- We're not seeing how car traffic is going to experience this. We're looking for views of the building from further out and how it's going to be experienced. The dog run seems like you're making the best use of that dead corner, it's an interesting choice for that space.
- With regard to the roof amenity, with prior projects we've been told no matter how small it is, that's a floor, but it's not for us to deliberate with the applicant, staff will make a finding on that and they'll bring back something in compliance.
  - Correct. Zoning would make that call. For it not to count as a story it has to have the bare minimum with no community room or space.
- Reiterate you don't have to use the colors or materials you see around town, really think outside the box.

**ACTION:**

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