

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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**REPORT OF:** URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** December 5, 2018

**TITLE:** 1954 E. Washington Avenue – New Development and Alteration to an Existing Development for The Avenue, Options in Community Living, and Graaskamp Park. 12<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (52598)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** December 5, 2018

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Christian Harper, Craig Weisensel and Jessica Klehr.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of December 5, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of new development located at 1954 E. Washington Avenue. Registered and speaking in support of the project were Randy Bruce, Kevin Burow and Lorrie Heinemann, all representing Madison Development Corporation; and Tom Landgraf. Registered and speaking in opposition to the project were Ben Soba, David Taylor, Sheri Rein, Chris Sell and Sara Hinkel. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Dawn Sabin, Mary A. Bailey, Jessica Wheeler, Tess Camacho, Mary L. Ward and Natasha Fahey-Flynn.

Burow gave an overview of the project for a 4-story apartment building facing East Washington Avenue as well as townhouses with access off of East Mifflin Street. Graaskamp Park would remain as it is. Elevations and renderings were shown, as well as colors and building materials.

**Public comment:**

Sara Hinkel spoke in opposition as a near 20-year neighborhood resident. This neighborhood doesn't change a whole lot due to concerns with maintaining the quality of the neighborhood. The addition of density is troubling, in addition to the design. She hadn't seen this most recent rendition and was caught off guard; that undermines a bit of her confidence in the process. The height of the building doesn't appear to be resolved with this new design. It removes daylight from adjacent buildings and it affects the accessibility to the neighborhood. The design creates a "bowl" between the existing properties and the larger structures being planned. The additional density and tense environment will be problematic in terms of how it affects interactions with the neighbors.

Chris Sell spoke in opposition and submitted documents for public record. His previous concerns have not been addressed with new iterations of the project. He compared the UDC's mission statement with concerns with this project: this is not the highest quality design, the aesthetics don't match the neighborhood and do not integrate well, the materials don't match and are not high quality, the proposed new buildings are not cohesive with current buildings on the site. The developer uses their limited budget and non-profit status, that is not adequate

for something so visible. The heights and setbacks are more about generating income than about aesthetics. The rehabilitation of the existing buildings is prioritized in this and is of concern. It's cluttered, not cohesive and creates a disjointed campus with four different designs. The huge trees won't be able to be saved. It's worth considering the long-term aesthetics and how it will look in 40 or 50 years. There are major safety issues exaggerated with this development. Setbacks are of major concern being a nearby resident and homeowner. The average setback for houses is 24-feet, this proposes 16-feet (33% closer to the sidewalk) and that will create additional safety concerns. The more pedestrians added to this neighborhood without addressing safety concerns becomes a larger safety concern for the entire city. This is not part of the neighborhood plan, the East Washington Avenue Corridor Plan that ends at First Street, that is worth considering. This will not add to property values. If the aesthetics are not considered it's going to dominate the architecture of their neighborhood. There was not enough stakeholder collaboration for this to move forward.

Sheri Rein spoke in opposition. This project is not a good fit for the neighborhood. The architect stated that they are maintaining the greenspace facing North Second Street that is so highly used by the neighbors and resident, but they are adding a bioretention basin to that area that will take up half of the space. The loss of mature trees, the lack of cohesion, lack of coordination of design, the setbacks, and building heights all are of concern. She noted the steering committee has committed a lot of time working with the developer to reach some sort of consensus, but that hasn't been reached. The Chair inquired if the garages were not under the building, but on another part of the property, would that be a trade off the neighborhood would think is better? Probably not, losing the greenspace is more of an issue than the heights.

David Taylor spoke in opposition and spoke to a PowerPoint presentation previously submitted to the Commission. This is not about accepting additional affordable housing in the neighborhood, issues of economic diversity in the neighborhood, or not supporting MDC's mission. This is about the negative aspects of the project, specifically size, scale, design and density. Bungalows make up East Mifflin Street directly across the street, right next door and right around the corner. These are tiny houses, 1,100 square feet on average and 22-foot high. The townhouse building is 38-feet high, 4,300 square feet on the footprint; very large in relationship to the most adjacent neighborhood. It's immense compared to the houses. The proposed townhomes do not fit the typical definition of a townhouse. The East Washington Avenue building would be 54-feet high and 16-foot setback; it's grossly out of character with the rest of the neighborhood. They've tried to shoe horn in buildings where they don't fit. There was never a shadow study done; it's so obvious what the problem is, they're putting people in the dark in their own property. Over 200 residents will be added to this neighborhood; there's only 2,000 people in the Emerson East Neighborhood, which means 10% of them will be living on this parcel. There's been no information about additional support for all these people, and this isn't phased in, it will happen literally overnight. We're asking you to give consideration to passing a recommendation that they go back to the drawing board and actually engage the neighborhood in detailed planning for these additional buildings on their property.

The Chair noted the other registrants who are in opposition but not wishing to speak.

Randy Bruce spoke about the size of the building and impacts on the corner. There is a survey that will show there's an existing office building there now (about 4,100 square feet); the building proposed is about 4,300 square feet so approximately the same size in terms of its footprint. It is taller because of the pitched roof in an attempt to integrate with the existing character of the neighborhood. It is somewhat taller because we're tucking the parking in underneath but that's the most efficient way to do it. The impacts on Mifflin Street in general have been minimized when MDC made a commitment to maintain and improve Graaskamp Park. The East Washington side will utilize what is now a parking field to add density and more residential to the area. The height of that building is also impacted by the proposed pitched roof.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Is the long-term plan for the other 3 interior buildings on this space to be replaced or rehabbed?
  - The long-term plan is to reinvest in the larger building. If there is anything to be done it would be residing and repainting.
  - We intend to utilize historic tax credits and renovate those units. It will be done in phases and we anticipate Phase 1 to be about 30 units. Phase 2 would be the townhouses, and then we could rehab the other units.
- You're doing the tall building first, and then what is the timeframe for the townhomes?
  - It depends on whether or not Options in Community Living decides to give them costs to move. They've been there as a service provider. The goal is to break ground on the 30-unit in 2018 and on the townhomes in 2020.
- Where is the parking for the building north of Building A?
  - Currently there's a very large parking lot that is adjacent to the Options building. A lot of our tenants in the 28-unit don't have cars, so there's additional parking out front as well.
- Have you done a parking study that talks about resident and visitor needs?
  - The proposal is 71 parking spots for 76 total units. The neighbors expressed concerns about the current parking situation (64 spaces for 40 units).
- Did you do an analysis, did you look at what your parking needs really are for the tenants you have?
  - The townhomes with garages underneath are very well liked.
- What kind of analysis did you do, not just catering to preferences?
  - Of the units proposed, our existing tenants, of the 28 in that particular building there's only about 20 that want a parking space so a lot of time they go empty. The biggest request was to have benches out front for when they're waiting for taxis or other rides. They also requested security cameras.
- Basically you're telling me you didn't do a parking analysis.
  - We tried to get to the ratio, .93.
  - We're sitting right on a bus line too. All the new development is accommodated based on the location, the .93 ratio is comfortable for us.
- The other thing I hear from the neighborhood is this is a neighborhood of smaller houses, and my guess is they park on the street. They don't have underground parking, they probably don't even have garages. You're trying to fit into this neighborhood, but are you really doing that in terms of thinking maybe some of your residents aren't going to have 2 car garages, which is suburban rather than urban for this area.
  - We have opened up all of our meetings and have been open with communication. But we have never been invited to these subcommittee meetings, so communication has kind of been one-way. The big request was for bike racks.
- The materials you're showing versus the renderings, the red looks more brown.
  - It's called Country Lane Red.
- It's more muted and not as bright as the rendering.
- On the units on East Washington along the stone base and height of that, as far as human scale, especially with the proportions of the residences next to it, it makes it seem taller.
  - We compromised and did 3-stories in essence. We could look at scaling that back down if you feel that's appropriate.
- What's the size of the balconies on the townhouse buildings, the square footage? They don't look very usable.
  - They're approximately 60 square feet.

- Out of curiosity, are these two houses between his (Mr. Sell) house and this development, are those owner-occupied or rentals?
  - Those are rentals.
- The difference between the one landscape design and the one that shows the bioretention basin, could you talk about that bit?
  - It's about 9 inches deep and intended to remain dry unless there's a large rain event, it's just a small impression for the additional stormwater to have a temporary spot and then dissipate into the ground.
- I would certainly consider turning that into something more aesthetically pleasing than just a hole in the ground. I noticed on the landscape plan designations for areas with stone mulch; we've made it clear as a Commission that we don't want stone mulch being used.
- The parking under proposed Building A is only for Building A?
  - Yes.
  - But if we don't rent it up to the existing tenants our other tenants have first option to do that. It depends on the source of funding, it's included right now.
- Has there been a consideration to move the building further away from the neighboring houses and have the ramp go on that side (west) of the property?
  - The assumption is we're not getting a curb cut off of East Washington Avenue. We would need to maintain this one because of the size of the parking area.
- What if you entered the parking sooner?
- I'm trying to figure out how to get away from those houses. It's a massive building height-wise, and I will preface this with, I don't think residential necessarily means putting a peaked roof on it. There's nothing residential about a four-story building with a peaked roof on it. I would even challenge the townhouses, you could do something different. It feels like it's pushed way over so the scale is so directly against those houses.
  - We have to maintain that width in order to meet fire codes.
  - That's a comment we could investigate. Kevin's correct, we started the site planning process trying to maintain existing cuts. But we could work with Traffic Engineering to see if that's another option.
- It just seems pressed up against the neighbors. When you pan back on this particular image, there's nothing in that scale on either side of the street.
- I feel like there was an image in the PowerPoint presentation that had a horizontal somewhere in the middle that made the buildings look less vertical. I'm not necessarily proposing that but there are other options to bringing these buildings more into scale, whether it's lowering the pitch or getting rid of the pitch altogether. This connection of dormers isn't enough of a townhouse style. This is really accentuated and you need more of a repetition rather than just dormers off the roof.
  - We could take a look at other options, either handling the gables in a different way or looking at the pitched roofs.
- The report says that staff supports the rezoning. It seems as though along Mifflin Street this building complies with the existing zoning, and the only reason we're considering a rezoning is for the additional story on East Washington being an arterial street. I think this building would comply with zoning, but it also says on the new zoning that the maximum front yard setback is 15-feet or average, and I don't see anything in your submittal about what the average setback is, but when I look at the aerial on your front page it looks like the houses along Mifflin Street are further setback. It kind of looks like if that is the recommendation of the zoning district that it would be the average setback on Mifflin. In addition to all the other concerns it looks like this building is pushing itself out onto Mifflin Street.
  - It is when you look at the left side of the block.

- I think that, in addition to the building being longer than most of the houses there, it pushes itself into the neighborhood a bit. Even if you lost a little bit of greenspace in the back and picked up some along Mifflin Street and showed us some photographs of what it would look like that would help. I remember at the informational presentation the recommendation was to work with the neighbors and see which one they prefer. I don't know if you did, or if these people here tonight just weren't able to participate...I'm just wondering if two smaller buildings is worth reconsidering now.
  - The feedback we got from the neighborhood was that this is an improved version than having a building fronting right on Mifflin and taking away the greenspace. We were able to set it back from Second Street to maintain that existing greenspace and we've got the setbacks line further down Mifflin Street.
- I agree with all the design comments. The repetition, the real townhouse look, and on Building A, the pattern of development is to create an edge there. I know you're tight with the old hospital building, but is there a way to stretch it out?
  - This is the most efficient footprint we can get to reduce the scale of the footprint and get the parking that's needed.
- Is that the average setback? It looks like it's pushing out there.
- (Firchow) Where at least fifty percent of the frontage of a block is building the setback is based on the block base calculation. The setback shall be the average setback for the existing block face or the standard for the district, whichever is less.
  - Regardless, I think your comments seem to make some sense.
  - The Options building is there right now and the setback on that is 13-feet from the sidewalk. With the 6-unit townhouse it would be a 16.5-foot setback. We had quite a few discussions on the setback and rooflines with the neighborhood.
- (Firchow) In the Zoning Code there is another provision for a residential building complex, which this is, where the Plan Commission could approve an alternate setback. The UDC could make a recommendation to the Plan Commission regarding the setback for their consideration.
- Initial approval says we're good with the site plan and building massing, but I think we have too many issues and some more negotiation needs to happen.

**ACTION:**

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0).