

AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION

PRESENTED: 8/17/20

TITLE: 817-821 Williamson St - Demolition of an existing commercial structure, construction of a new three-story mixed-use structure, and land combination in the Third Lake Ridge Hist. Dist.; 6th Ald. Dist.

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: 8/19/20

ID NUMBER: 59708

Members present were: Anna Andrzejewski, Richard Arnesen, Katie Kaliszewski, Arvina Martin, David McLean, and Maurice Taylor. Excused was Betty Banks.

SUMMARY:

Kevin Burow, registering in support and wishing to speak
John Martens, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Steve Ohlson, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Rachel Bauer, registering in support and wishing to speak
Linda Lehnertz, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Gary Tipler, registering in opposition and wishing to speak
Scott Thornton, registering in support and wishing to speak
Brandon Cook, registering in support and available to answer questions
Peter Wolff, registering in opposition and available to answer questions
Jeff Waldman, registering in support and available to answer questions
James Wilson, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Sharon Kilfoy, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Joy Newman, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Pilar Gomez-Ibanez, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Leigh Mollenhoff, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Vaughn Brandt, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Michael Engel, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Tracy Dietzel, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Lindsey Lee, registering in support and not wishing to speak
John Coleman, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Ross Wuennenberg, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Mary Ann McBride, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Eric Welch, registering in support and not wishing to speak
Frances Ingebritson, registering in opposition and not wishing to speak
Jessica Wartenweiler, registering in support and not wishing to speak

Bailey explained that the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction was referred at the July 13 Landmarks Commission meeting with guidance to explore a two-façade solution and address the height of the building at the street. She discussed the applicable standards and said that the question is

whether the proposed building is visually compatible with historic resources within 200'. She described the updated proposal, which has a two-story façade projecting bay on the commercial side with a balcony above and a stepped back third floor. The apartment side has a three-story projecting bay and cornice at the second story, along with a setback at the corner to address the visibility triangle for the parking entrance. She said that the rest of the building is offset with inset balconies on the sides and the rest of the structure is nested behind the brick portion. She said that staff believes the standards are met and recommends approval.

Andrzejewski opened the public hearing.

Burow said that based on feedback received at the last Landmarks Commission meeting, they tried to create a massing that is visually compatible. He explained that they introduced a 6' gap between the façade, which mimics the gap in nearby historic resources, so the building now has the appearance of two separate façades. He said that the commercial building has a two-story façade with a concealed balcony and the third story stepped back. The apartment façade is three stories, but the cornice at the 2nd floor level provides a visual break in the façade and brings the massing down. He said that both façades are only 23' wide, similar to historic resources in the area. He said that they hope the commission finds that the overall revised massing and scale of the façade is visually compatible. Andrzejewski asked if the overall height changed, and Burow said that they since the original presentation, they have reduced the overall height, which is now 40'7" on the three-story portion and the two-story façade immediately on the sidewalk is 29'3" or 29'4". Andrzejewski asked about the relationship of the building to the street. Burow said they were able to gain another 2' along the front façade, so the building is stepped back 4' from the existing property line, pointing out there is a 0' setback allowed there. He said they tried to do as much as they could to pull the building back.

John Martens referenced the statement he submitted prior to the meeting. He pointed out that the building needs to be compatible with the rhythm of buildings masses and spaces of historic resources within 200', and he doesn't think it is even close. Regarding mass, he said that given the building's volume and what little space there is on the lot, it is not compatible with historic resources within 200'. He pointed out that the visual compatibility map incorrectly noted 803 Williamson as a historic resource, but it was built within the last few years, and said that this non-historic resource should not be used as justification for compatibility.

Steve Ohlson said that the first floor of the proposed project starts at least 6' higher than the sidewalk, which makes it a 3 2/3-story building, and BUILD II requires that new buildings be no higher than 2 ½ stories. He said that the spatial qualities of the building most blatantly violate the visual compatibility standards, including gross volume, scale, height, and lot coverage. He said that changes to the proposal are just cosmetic and urged the commission to deny the project.

Rachel Bauer said that she disagreed that the project is incompatible and thinks that it is obvious by looking around and down the street that it is compatible. She said that this is an important project because a city like Madison can't afford to stifle the growth of downtown. She said that it is important to Madison's future capacity to meet housing demands, and this is a critical piece of property where residential housing needs to exist. She encouraged the commission to consider this being the right building and the right place and the right time and to approve the project.

Linda Lehnertz disputed the applicant's statements on the size of setbacks where the façade meets the sidewalk and the 6' gap being similar to historic resources. She said that the 6' gap is only similar to 803 & 805 Williamson and one other place between homes that are set back from the sidewalk, but in most other places there is a 10-30' gap. She said that the project at 739 Williamson had a green wall to create a sense of space, and this project does not create a similar sense of space. She said that there is really no difference in the sense of mass and the building will have a huge façade, whereas existing historic resources have façades 1/4-1/3 of that size.

Gary Tipler said that he had the greatest problem with the mass, and the sheer volume of the building exceeds the zoning capacity and BUILD II. He said that if this project is permitted, we are going to see a lot more of this happening in the historic district. He said that the function and one of the underlying purposes of the historic

district and ordinance is to provide for certainty in changes to the historic district, otherwise we will see rampant speculation and destabilization if they are exceeded.

Scott Thornton said that he believes the proposed building is visually compatible and would be a fine addition to that block of Williamson Street. He said that the existing building and surface parking lot are incompatible, and the proposed building would be a huge improvement. He said that the developer has been responsive to comments from the neighborhood and Landmarks Commission, and he appreciates the changes they made to the building. He urged the commission to approve the proposal and said he welcomes this fine addition to the neighborhood.

Bailey read the remaining list of registrants who did not wish to speak. Andrzejewski noted that the commission received written correspondence from many members of the public as well.

Andrzejewski closed the public hearing.

Arnesen said that the project has been through a lot and pointed out that the commission had a staff recommendation for approval even before the recent changes were made. He said the applicants have done a great job with a difficult task of breaking up the mass and creating two façades on the small site, which helps with standard 41.23(6)(c), the proportion and rhythm of solids to voids. He said the applicants have done what they can with the height as well. He said that it may not be a perfect project, but it is a good project; the applicants have made good efforts, and he is ready to support it. Martin said that she agreed with Arnesen's assessment.

McLean agreed with Arnesen and said the applicants did a nice job taking the commission's previous comments into consideration in this iteration. He said that the overall gross volume bothers him and seems to be sticking point for those who spoke in opposition as well. He said the applicants did a good job with the street façade, and while creating two masses with a break in the middle is not as big as some would like it, it is still effective visually and goes with standard 41.23(6)(c). Speaking to 41.23(6)(e), he said that he is good with the flat roof, and for 41.23(6)(d) regarding materials, he said overall they are good but wondered if a brick in a less strong color might help. He said that he didn't mean a light or white brick, but something a little less dark. He said that there isn't much they can do about the height. Speaking again to the gross volume, he said the applicants also did a nice job breaking up the buildings visually from front to back. He said that the back elevation of the building bothers him and the back piece adds so much to the building, but he understands the commission's purview is more related to the street façade, which looks nice. He said that he is on the fence about the project.

Kaliszewski agreed with McLean. She said that she understands the argument about height but is having a hard time finding that both the volume and gross height meet the standards. She said that hearing the neighborhood residents say they have similar issues was also on her mind.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Arnesen, seconded by Martin, to approve the request for the Certificate of Appropriateness for new construction with the condition that final brick specifications be approved by staff. The motion passed by the following vote:

Ayes: 4 - Richard B. Arnesen, Arvina Martin, David W.J. McLean, and Maurice D. Taylor

Noes: 1 - Katherine N. Kaliszewski

Excused: 1 - Elizabeth Banks

Non-Voting: 1 - Anna Andrzejewski