

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** April 8, 2015

TITLE: 701 East Mifflin Street and 124 North
Livingston Street – Four-Story Multi-
Family Residential Development
Containing 189 Dwelling Units. 2nd Ald.
Dist. (36904)

REFERRED:
REREFERRED:
REPORTED BACK:

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

DATED: April 8, 2015 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Cliff Goodhart, Melissa Huggins*, Lauren Cnare, John Harrington, Dawn O’Kroley, Richard Slayton and Tom DeChant.

*Huggins recused herself on this item.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of April 8, 2015, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** on a four-story, multi-family residential development located at 701 East Mifflin Street and 124 North Livingston Street. Appearing on behalf of the project was Joseph Lee, representing Veritas Village, LLC. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Patty Prime, representing the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association. The project provides one level of covered parking 5-feet into the ground, four-stories of multi-family residential above, with some 3-story massings. A second public entrance has been added on East Mifflin Street, as well as the existing entrances on North Livingston Street and Dayton Street. Access points to the courtyard are available on both Dayton and Mifflin Streets, which also breaks up the scale of the building. The distance between the sidewalk and the parking deck (5-feet from grade) varies by location, roughly 11-12 feet. A series of planters and steps will lead to these plazas and will be different along the length of the project. The height has been reduced mid-block along Mifflin Street to break up the massing. Material samples were shown, with the Mifflin Street side and Dayton Street sides having different elements. A utility size brick is proposed. A concrete base goes around the entire building in a smooth finish, with the Mifflin side using a brownish brick and a reddish brick on the Dayton side, fiber cement siding and paneling with an accent color on the Mifflin side in a couple of options, and a more conservative toned down color palette in warm reds and beiges on the Dayton Street side.

Patty Prime spoke as the President of the TLNA. They want to preserve their neighborhood character and the safety of their neighborhood. There is a large mix of renters, homeowners, students and older people, a great proximity to downtown and they value non-car occupants. They support density and are happy with elimination of the 5th floor. Some of their concerns include the sheer massing of the building being so large, and do feel that the design is a bit too “suburban.” The colors feel busy, and the pedestrian façade feels too high.

Ald. Zellers noted concern with the parking level coming up and out at 5-feet, but complimented the terracing. She is concerned that there may be too much reliance on landscaping to soften the feel of the development. It is a very large building and she is concerned with the mass.

Heather Stouder of the Planning Division highlighted their concerns with the project. They would like to see similar landscape treatment on portions of the Livingston Street façade as the courtyards. They were hoping to see more details on the plans for hardscape in the courtyard areas. Regarding the exterior materials on the building, on Dayton Street they think the brick and fiber cement proportions seem to be optimal but do want to see the brick a consistent color; the ins and outs of the building serve well to articulate the project. Also on Dayton Street, as well as Mifflin, there are four colors of composite siding; better outcomes might be achieved by simplifying those palettes. They appreciate the modern façade on Mifflin Street and the differentiation between the two. The changes to the Livingston Street façade are very good. The architect did a good job of integrating the louvers into the building. The Secretary noted that signage will require a separate approval.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The 3-4 story brick building is a very traditional form in Madison. I think this is pretty close to getting there, but again the multiplicity of materials that staff commented on, those orange panels strike me as introducing something that's not in that particular form. I also wonder about the double columns in one area and single in another; I don't know whether that's a good relationship to that form either.
 - There are no panels on the Dayton side.
- Is the use of the planks or panel more appropriate with the Dayton Street side? It seems to me it's a wood architecture versus a brick architecture and the panels might go better with the brick.
- It's hard to read the scale and texture of things on the Dayton Street side. When you talk about bringing in a more historic or traditional architecture you should look right next door at Das Kronenberg. They don't have fussy lintels and cornices and dainty columns and pieces that feel out of context. Or utility brick.
- On the Mifflin Street façade there does start to become some interest in the composition. I can understand living units, smaller applied entrances, as opposed to Dayton. It kind of loses some of that hierarchy in the dialogue. The comments made earlier hit it right on the head: that five-foot plinth will make or break this building and it is a large footprint without any breaks between buildings. Density is great on this site, Das Kronenberg has great density, but it doesn't have that massive footprint that this building is going to carry.
- (Patty Prime) Is there nothing that can be done about the 5-foot high curb seating (raised plinth)?
 - In addition to the water table, there are soil issues so we're pretty much going down as far as we can go. The scale of the structure was brought down as we get closer and closer.
- I think the building is too massive for the area and without any breaks. These walls are coming out, in some ways they just accentuate, just bringing that wall out to you (the pedestrian). I don't think you're terracing up very well. This type of planting does nothing but accentuate that wall.
 - That plant isn't representative of the landscape plan.
- So what is, is any of this representative? These planters that come out, you could be more inventive and use those areas where the planters are as showcases and create some really interesting landscaping. Things that are massive enough, not too huge and will fit the space but will also break up that five-foot wall.
- It does set back and the mass is broken up in a couple places. There are ways to make it work and make it work better.
- You have to be really creative, and I don't think this is it (attempt to mitigate the 5-foot raised plinth due to parking combined with ground water issues).

- Be really creative and potentially lose some parking stalls. Don't force that plinth to the street all the time.
- What about a line of understory trees that could grow in the shade you're going to get in there, in a minimal amount of soil, just so when you look out your window you'll see a leaf. Unless there's already programming for this space but it doesn't look like anyone would use it.
 - That's going to be lots of outdoor furniture, places for people to interact, and it's all designed to be movable. I like the idea of the trees but on the other hand, this has stunning views of the Capitol. We've lined it up so you can see the Capitol through that corridor.
- I understand the view of the Capitol but the more frequent view is across to your neighbors. An Amelancher in that setting would be very open. It just seems kind of cold.
- Terracing can be very effective in bringing the heights down, but it doesn't have to be all the time. Sometimes it's more effective if you were to have a space level with the ground that goes back far enough and retreats at the wall, and maybe your trees grouped in that opening. If it were a hollow it would be more inviting, rather than pushing the pedestrian away (raised plinth issue).
- Maybe you could do the trees at the end so they wouldn't block having a party there. Maybe some sort of arbor structures with vines, that would also soften it. We need more detail on how that's going to work.
- If there is a view, you can frame that view with the placement of plant material or arbors, not block it. But I'm more concerned about the cross view.
- You've got some plants south facing that just are not going to do well. I don't think there's a good selection, I don't think it's a good solution.
- If Livingston Street were done right and had enough space with less built elements to it, it could be successful mirrored off what could be an improved Water Utility façade and that greenspace. Livingston could be successful as a wider, open usable lawn, if that were improved. But right now there's bike parking, ramps, several stairs; it's not quite there.
- The plinth itself has been brought up as an issue consistently, which leads to how the landscaping functions or doesn't function, whether or not there's retaining walls or insets, etc. The length and size of the building are a major issue.

The Urban Design Commission recommends the following:

- Concurrence with Planning staff on the simplification of building materials and colors. The colors are complementary but maybe too polychromatic and require address.
- A more detailed review of the courtyard design should be provided (detailing is minimal currently).
- The landscape plan needs study and modification (in regards to the raised plinth).
- The context really calls for modular brick, not utility brick.
- The continuous footprint without relief should be reconsidered with the buildings as designed.

ACTION:

Based on the above discussion points made by the Urban Design Commission, its **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATIONS** are as follows:

- Blue not green as an accent siding.
- Concurrence with Planning staff on the simplification of building materials and colors. The colors are complementary but maybe too polychromatic and require address.
- A more detailed review of the courtyard design should be provided (detailing is minimal currently).
- The landscape plan needs study and modification (in regards to the raised plinth).

- The context really calls for modular brick, not utility brick.
- The continuous footprint should be reconsidered with the buildings as designed without relief and openings.
- Address of architectural comments made by the Commission.
- Modify plinth relative to landscaping and screening comment made by the Urban Design Commission.
- Alternate terrace and hollows at walk including use of ground cover with understory trees.
- Provide an alternative to the use of “Arborvitae” on the south facing wall.
- Redesign the Livingston Street frontage with a wider open lawn.
- Plan Commission action is contingent on a further landscape plan and architectural modification details in address of comments made to be reviewed by the Urban Design Commission as a condition of approval.
- Only one color fiber cement should be used.
- One color brick on the Dayton Street side should be used, where the building is more traditional.
- If the Plan Commission does not find that the comments made by the Urban Design Commission are sufficient for it to act, that the matter be referred until a future Urban Design Commission meeting.

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 rating for this project is 7.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 701 East Mifflin Street & 124 North Livingston Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	7	7	6	6	-	9	8	7
	4	5	5	-	-	-	-	-

General Comments:

- Simplification of details, colors and improvements to landscape plan will make the project much better.
- Too massive for site and context.