

## AGENDA # 7

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION      **PRESENTED:** March 9, 2022

TITLE: 222-232 E Olin Avenue - New Mixed-Use Building Located in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 1. 14th Ald. Dist. (70106)      **REFERRED:**  
**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Jessica Vaughn, Secretary      **ADOPTED:**      **POF:**

DATED: March 9, 2022      **ID NUMBER:**

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

\*Asad recused himself on this item.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of March 9, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use building located at 222-232 E Olin Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Tom Lee, Christopher Eastman and Lance McGrath. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Joseph Lee and Taylor McGrath.

McGrath presented the modified design approach to the project, with the main changes being height and scale. Plans show a smaller, more efficient footprint at a height of 12-stories, which is now permitted in the South Madison Plan, with the Wonder Bar to remain in its current location. The architecture reveals the different layers of programming in a series of volumes that slip and slide to fit the confines of the site, but also step down to accommodate terracing and outdoor spaces. Light brick material with horizontal features is used to contrast the verticality of the metal and lend weight in contrast to the perceived lightness of the metal panel. The 2-story gesture at the corner conceals the parking beyond, while giving prominence at this point of the intersection for the commercial space. The massing steps down on Olin Avenue to a 2-story datum line intended to relate to the adjacent Wonder Bar and transition the scale back to the street. The southwest facing orientation of the façade means it gets a lot of daylight and sun, the lighter brick keeps the building cooler and maximizes the use of that thermal mass.

Bob Klebba spoke in support. He likes a large building at this location because we need a strong iconic statement at this vehicle entrance to the City. This development will jump start the Alliant Energy Center redevelopment and facilitate what will be happening here, this is a great mixed-use design. He appreciates keeping the Wonder Bar in place as an important reminder of what used to be Highway 14.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I'm conflicted with how you approached the new design. I agree this is a unique site and entrance to the City, but it's surrounded by vehicular traffic. The idea of layers was a strong one and the ends are

looking like sheer forces, that's really successful; it's also the most interesting part of the building. Are you going for calm and serene or for entertainment-oriented? There was a lot of energy in that previous design, it felt like it was really fitting for the amount of traffic going by. I wonder about what's happening on the inside, include families, outdoor spaces, pedestrian access to this and so on.

- It's almost too restrained. There's a lot of action and movement in this part of the city. I was really excited about the conceptual drawings of layering. The interpretation of it isn't as apparent in the execution because of all of the similarity, it's more like three buildings pressed together. There should be a bit more slipping, more contrast in between layers, these just seem glued together. It's there as far as a lot of the massing and some of the geometries, it could use more articulation with the skin of the building. Right now I see a hotel or a hospital, I'm not really seeing residential. I do like the materials, the thin brick, the base looks really nice, that long linear brick really goes toward mimicking that concept you were describing. As far as the gateway to the city, it's really the street that's the gateway, not the building; it needs to have more of that dynamic appearance.
- Lovely materials and content you provided. We don't know much about the inside of the building yet, wanted to ask about the function of these long balconies. These are shared balconies?
  - The intent is to have dividers to separate those spaces.
- I love the layering concept. I wish we had some more opportunities to use some of these concepts to be more protective of this particular façade, the extreme solar exposure here. You're pushing something like a 50 percent window to wall ratio with the upper floors, which is very high. Recognizing the tremendous views this will have, I hope there's an opportunity to explore giving depth to that glass.
- The layered concept diagram really caught my eye. I don't think it translates successfully to this building, specially the Olin façade which is basically flat, even with the projected balconies. Appreciate the inset balconies, the long linear look is clever and useful, it still needs more dimensionality. Appreciate the classic materials, but it reminds me of a hospital, it has a heaviness to it. Too much restraint, needs more dynamism, more of the motion that was visible in that massing diagram initially. I want it to have a more lively presence. The height belongs here.
- The fact that you are well tied into a bike network system here, making sure that pedestrian realm and connections to the bike path, how this project really allows residents to easily funnel into downtown Madison in a very sustainable way will be key.
  - We have had discussions with Traffic Engineering, we talked about an easement along the railroad corridor, further west for a future bike path. They are looking at improvements to Olin Avenue, changing it to two lanes with a middle turn lane and bike lanes, which we fully support and would be really good changes to the area. As the project advances, we're going to have some big bike storage areas to connect to.
- Is all the surface parking reserved for the Wonder Bar?
  - We're not sure what that use will be yet. It won't be all for that, there will be some overlap.
- The current revised Metro bus plan eliminates the #13 bus that runs down Olin Avenue. If we're going to build more with limited parking, you need bus service to this area. Suggest supporting the return of the #13 bus on Olin as part of your strategy on this project.

## **ACTION:**

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