

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: October 7, 2020

TITLE: 6145 Mineral Point Road – Oakwood Village Affordable Senior Living Apartment Complex. 19th Ald. Dist. (61778)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: October 7, 2020

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 7, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED TO DENY** the construction of an affordable senior living apartment complex located at 6145 Mineral Point Road. Registered and speaking in support were Kevin Yeska, representing JSD Professional Services, Inc.; Mark Larson, representing Korb + Associates; and Ted Matkom, representing Gorman Co. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Ann Albert, representing AgeBetter.

Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Virginia Shannonon, Julie Hayward, Ann Ostrom, Emma Macari, Hanque Macari and Hildegard Adler. Registered neither in opposition nor support and not wishing to speak was Linda Knox. Registered neither in opposition nor support and wishing to speak was Nino Amato.

Matkom introduced the project for AgeBetter on the proper Oakwood Campus, a non-profit that is 50% Oakwood/50% Attic Angels. The affordable component is a mutual cooperation between each Attic Angel and Oakwood campus on the west side. They had initially selected a parcel on Elderberry but that changed because of WHEDA scoring. The parcel is a compressed site, meets the traffic challenges, elevation challenges and is consistent with the density on the campus. Yeska noted the GDP amendment and context photos. The Oakwood Campus currently has 727 surface and underground stalls with 588 beds/units; this proposal would increase that to 801 surface and underground with 665 beds/units. There is 20-feet of relief with this project, the existing maintenance building would come down, and a number of trees would come down. A robust landscape plan is proposed to replace those trees. The main entrance is in the crux, with 11 stalls on the southwest side of the building, access to the underground parking on the south end, an infiltration pond and a green roof. 77 total units are proposed in this building. The first floor houses enclosed trash, bicycle storage and tenant units. The basement includes 63 parking spaces and mechanical equipment. The roof provides space for mechanicals, a solar field and a green roof for stormwater. The building is clad in a combination of stone and brick veneer, cement board siding at window insets and an architectural façade.

The Commission discussed the following:

- What's the basis behind this design?
 - We are trying to create something that complemented the campus but didn't necessarily blend in. Some of the structures are a bit dated and we wanted to provide a more contemporary flair to this corner.
- This is very flat, not necessarily the best use of a variety of materials, they could be better worked. I have this thing about housing that caters to groups of people such as elderly or affordable housing, those designs tend to be dumbed down and very plain. There is no reason for this to look flat or as institutional as it is, that's a problem.
- Materials: some of the elements that jump out are the vertical window elements but then with horizontal material with a different texture and feel to it tends to play to horizontal banding, it doesn't have rhythm to it. Other design elements, the L-shaped element coming around, it could just be the profile, accent pieces should have bigger impacts or stronger presence to it. It needs a stronger entrance, pull that to the entrance and canopy.
- Within the last 12 months we were presented with a master plan for Oakwood but I don't recall this site being proposed for development. Is this consistent with the other long-range plan we have already reviewed? It does remove what is almost the signature – the Oaks.
- This is an amendment to the GDP, so no.
 - That's correct. To our knowledge we're not very familiar with that master plan. This GDP amendment is not taking into consideration the master plan, just this site individually.
- (Ald. Furman) This was not part of that plan, that had to do with replacement of their big tower and reconstruction of the campus, but my understanding is this is reaction to the feedback to that master plan to offer affordable housing.
- (Firchow) The master plan was never submitted or formally approved. UDC saw it informationally but it was never adopted.
- The building footprint feels too large for this site. Very disappointed to see 14 mature Oak trees being removed. Those trees and canopy are the gateway into the campus, but also how the footprint meets the site. It leaves you with building and then pretty much auto-centric site development. Agree that the architecture is not there. Solar, sustainability of the green roof are good aspects, but I'm struggling to reconcile the loss of trees and the footprint in this tight corner of the site. A different proposal that celebrated the Oaks as an amenity to the site would be received very differently from me at least.
- Similar feeling about the institutional look. I am very excited about the green roof and solar panels. I'm curious, why green roof on the location you showed and why solar panels on the location you showed?
 - We wanted to make sure we were going on the requirements of how much green roof we would need in order to support the water infiltration and size of water collection we have. Truly just to determine that balance of what we need for requirements and then work with solar engineers to confirm the best locations.
- Your main audience is the much taller building up the hill. The solar panels are up on a support.
 - That would be based on the final product selected, working with that engineer and figuring out what those supports would be. The supports are to maximize the tilt of the solar panel. The screening is the parapet built into the architecture.
- I see about 2-feet from mechanical equipment boxes and the plantings. That's very close if you're planting sedum there, the mechanical equipment could degrade the health of plants close by.
- The building is a little flat, too many materials and it lacks a warmth I would expect to see in this environment. Feels a little stark to be in this vicinity. Is there a way to minimize some of that asphalt in the corner?

- We could look at different brick tones to warm it up. We wanted to find a thoughtful way to change materials with the horizontals. From a flatness perspective, we weren't providing any balconies to play with that facade, but we can look at pulling the ins and outs more. If we added more definition or change in planes instead of it being more linear as we have it, would that help?
- Fundamental problems with this project? Shane started talking about this being too much building for the site, it's not well connected to the Oakwood Campus, even if it's not an Oakwood product. It's not pedestrian sensitive, the way it addresses the street is pretty awful. There are no balconies or sufficient greenspace around the building. My sense is that there are significant fundamental issues with this design.
- Was there any other massing explored? Why four-stories and not five? Were there any other explorations of different heights?
 - Maintaining requirements for parking was a challenge. If we go taller but decrease the footprint we can't get as much of the parking.
- The goal of this type of development is so laudable, we need these types of facilities. I like that this is a collaboration between two very good organizations, but it seems to me that in pursuit of that goal, this little tiny corner of this large property was deemed the only place willing to be given up by Oakwood. It's so shoe-horned in there, coupled with the loss of the namesake trees of this property, it rubs the wrong way beyond just the loss of those trees. This is driven by parking?
- Could this just be a completely inappropriate site? Do we revisit the master plan?
- There is a master plan in place, not the one we saw informationally for the future large development. This is to amend that plan for the placement of this building. Rarely in Madison do we have a chance to protect trees of this stature and presence on a place like Mineral Point Road.
- (Firchow) The overall plan recommendation is high density residential. It is a change of zoning so the use question will be weighed at Plan Commission and the Council is the deciding body on the rezoning request. UDC is advisory on this one per the PD standards.
- If it is high density, there's no real outdoor space for any of the residents, no balconies, no rooftop space, what is the solution for a livable space here? You're creating a very urban dense layout, what's the solution for health and wellness?
 - It does live within that Oakwood Campus and they would be utilizing those amenities on the campus itself.
- But for the building itself, residential health and wellness, they have to go somewhere else? Please explain where they are going if that's what's being proposed.
 - There is a bit of an outdoor environment by that entry court. There is community environment internal on the first floor. As we continue to develop it and as we take COVID into consideration we can see them changing. We'd be able to provide fitness alongside that club environment.
 - The Oakwood Campus has various gardens, we can work on making the entrance more pedestrian friendly.
- This design doesn't seem equitable. Other changes could happen to other parcels because they're independent. If this is a stand-alone project I'm not sure it's sustainable.
 - We could look at balconies, and also that first floor space and creating an outdoor space there, providing an outdoor terrace area.
- This canopy type roof element, I'm not in support of that at all. This is not informational, this is for initial/final? We're going back and forth on the same comments.
- (Firchow) The UDC is advisory to Plan Commission, it would be a motion to approve initially with conditions, I can't recall an instance where the recommendation was to deny, but believe it's in the scope. Other recommendation would be referral. The project schedule involves affordable housing

funds, that application is due early December. Perhaps in consideration of that, referral for one month would still get this to the Council sometime in November.

- With the significant site issues that were presented, is a month enough time, it is worth referring?
- It's out of our control with the meeting schedules, but essentially we have to make a recommendation to the Plan Commission whether or not this is good urban design. A referral says there are changes that would make it good urban design. In terms of the purpose and having affordable housing, those are all very worthy causes, but we're here in a narrow focus on the building and design and urban design considerations.
- Site plan – is this the right site? The positioning of this building does a great disservice to the careful layout of the rest of the development. Pushed back from Mineral Point Road with this beautiful green buffer, it completely changes the character of the rest of the development by penetrating and interrupting that green buffer.
- This project is going to CDBG for getting City funding next week. So this will likely get money from the City. I understand the Commission's concerns, I think we should refer it and give them a chance to come back. I won't be able to support a denial.
- I'd like to amend the motion to add clarity to the referral: because the proposed solution has significant issues a redesign could potentially reduce massing or site layout changes and/or different site altogether to find an acceptable solution.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Braun-Oddo, to **RECOMMENDED DENIAL**. The motion noted the following:

- Architectural aesthetic;
- Building materials;
- All the site issues presented;
- Removal of all the natural landscape;
- The size/footprint of the structure relative to the site; and
- Pedestrian circulation.

An amendment to the motion was made by Weisensel, seconded by Abbas, to clarify that because the proposed solution has significant issues, a redesign could potentially reduce massing or site layout changes and/or a different site altogether could find an acceptable solution.

Asad stated he would prefer to keep his motion as presented. The amendment passed on a vote of (7-2) with Asad, DeChant, Weisensel, Braun-Oddo, Knudson, Klehr and Harper voting yes; Bernau and Abbas voting no; Goodhart non-voting.

A motion was made by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Harper, to reconsider the motion. By unanimous consent the Commission agreed to reconsider the motion.

Discussion continued as follows:

- I agree with the motion but the terminology of deny vs. referral confuses me. The basic concept is that in order to achieve the parking they want, they can't do a smaller footprint, so it doesn't seem conceivable that any change wouldn't have the same issues just because of the tightness and location of the site.

- Because it was a recommendation back to another committee and we aren't an approving body, referral might not be a clear enough message, it might be constituted as not that big of a change, or it's close and just needs modifications, that's why I wanted to add the clarification, so people understood it was possibly a significant change to the whole layout, if they chose to move forward with that massing it might have detrimental impacts that we could not recommend when it comes back.
- Referring this would come bring it back to the Urban Design Commission, not the Plan Commission.
- My thinking is we should get them back to UDC. Rather than going through that route we gave them a lot of feedback, there are a lot of concerns. I was thinking it might be better to get them back and see some improvement, in case the Plan Commission approves it. Can the CDBG funding go to other projects then?
- If we refer back to us it could take a long time.
- It's worth discussing to be sure we're giving a clear path forward with our recommendations. We all agree improvements need to be made.
- The UDC has referred items, the next meeting would be November 4th, with Plan Commission on November 9th and Common Council on November 17th.
- We need to vote on the motion and move on.
- We're not discussing the motion, we're discussing civics.
- As an Alder, I can always refer this to UDC from Council if the Plan Commission approves it.

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Weisensel, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED DENIAL** of the project. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (9-0).