



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Office of the Director

Steven R. Cover, Director

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December 10, 2014

Melissa Huggins, AICP

Urban Assets

16 N. Carroll St., Suite 530

Madison, WI 53703

Re: 114 N. Bedford Street Residential Proposal

Dear Ms. Huggins,

As you are aware, your client's proposal at 114 North Bedford Street was discussed by Planning Division staff on Friday, December 3. Staff believes that this site presents a strong redevelopment opportunity for a high density residential project, but that the massing and architectural design of the proposed building should be revisited before moving forward with a presentation to the Landmarks Commission or formal submittals to the Plan Commission and Urban Design Commission. At this time, we have removed the item from the December 15, 2014 Landmarks Commission agenda.

Specifically, staff does not believe that Conditional Use Standard 9 regarding design of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the character of the area, or Standard 12 regarding additional height can be met with the proposal in its current form. For reference, these and other conditional use standards can be found in Madison General Ordinances, Section 28.183(6)(a).

Among the design concerns discussed were the following items. First, the massing of the five, eight, and ten story elements is not sufficiently articulated, and the location of the towers on the outer boundaries of the parcel maximizes the building's heavy massing from all vantage points. Secondly, the intent to match the scale and rhythm of the Mifflin Street neighborhood along the Bedford Street frontage with townhomes is a good one, but has not yet been effectively executed, and still reads as a single horizontal, five-story element. Thirdly, the concept of an interior courtyard is interesting, but staff does not believe that this space would be well utilized as currently proposed, as very little natural light would enter the space. Finally, the current choice of materials for the tower elements of metal paneling and fiber cement paneling does not translate to a high-quality building that can stand the test of time. At the first meeting with your client, staff indicated that the aforementioned issues would be concerns, and we advised that the compact, dense development that could be supported here would need to reflect a very high architectural bat to be compatible with its context.

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We urge your client to reconsider the program and architecture for this site, with a focus on compatibility with the surrounding area, improved massing and articulation befitting this relatively small site, and a simplified palette of higher-quality materials. Please pay close attention to the adjacency of the local landmark building, the surrounding neighborhood context, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. Staff would like to work with you and your client on the next iteration of this proposal in the coming weeks and months. Please feel free to contact me with questions as you move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Cover', with a stylized, looping flourish at the end.

Steven Cover, AICP, Director

Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Copies:

District 4 Alder Michael Verveer

Katherine Cornwell, Planning Division Director

Jay Wendt, Principal Planner

Bill Fruhling, Principal Planner

Amy Scanlon, Historic Preservation Planner

Heather Stouder, Planner

Al Martin, Planner