

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: December 1, 2021

TITLE: 322 E. Washington Avenue –
Redevelopment of St. John’s Lutheran
Church to include 126 Market-Rate and
Affordable Units in UMX Zoning Located
in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 4. 2nd
Ald. Dist. (68154)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: December 1, 2021

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of December 1, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for the redevelopment of St. John’s Lutheran Church located at 322 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 4. Registered and speaking in support were Mark Binkowski, Peter Beeson, Brian Reed and Andy Laufenberg. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Brad Binkowski, Don Jones, Richard Severson, Tom Rivers and Doug Hursh.

Beeson spoke as the lead pastor at St. John’s, which has been at the heart of downtown for 165 years. They have a long-standing history of serving the community and those in need through an emergency fund for rental assistance, providing free space for Porchlight, discounted space, ministry for people with mental illness and other programs. They are focused on changing the building to adapt to the needs of ministry in the neighborhood. He shared a brief history of the building and showed various additions/renovations done through the years. Their goal is to provide substantial affordable housing for downtown Madison.

This is a highly visible corner that deserves extra attention. There is 13-feet of grade between the west end and the east side where N. Hancock Street is located. St. John’s will have their entrance in the middle of the block on E. Washington Avenue, with the residential entry on N. Hancock Street. In total they propose a 10-story building with 125+/- residential units supported by 2-2 ½ levels of underground parking. Of those apartments, 85% will be set aside for those earning below 60% of the County median income. This is not just a multi-family project with some low-income units; the goal is to maximize the amount of affordable housing, which is why they are asking for the additional two bonus stories.

Floor plans show the lower level at N. Hancock Street as the residential lobby and parking entry. As the grade changes along E. Washington Avenue the building is more exposed on the eastern side, with the intent for all the eastern exposed portion along N. Hancock Street to be occupied by residential-related functions and/or amenities. The primary level is St. John’s and their partnering spaces, keeping their prominence and identity

along E. Washington Avenue as well as providing higher visibility to some of their partner organizations. They will provide vibrant community space, allowing hosting of 12-step groups and community groups to continue and expand. A small courtyard space is provided for smaller gatherings. The green roof on the second floor will be occupiable as an amenity space for tenants. Some of the units will have balconies. The team looked at how to balance the language of all the user groups while paying homage to the existing church through form and through material. They have established a tall vertical corner element that draws your eye up a modern interpretation of the spire. The language came from the armature of a stained glass window that has smaller stone elements that come to a point in a very linear fashion with the corner element clad in stone. The sanctuary and gathering spaces are clad in a curtain wall pattern with a series of colored vinyl interlays as a modern interpretation of stained glass. Hopefully some stained glass can be reused. They are elevating the church on a plinth due to the grade change, with a stone base and brick language for a majority of the residential units. They are using simple materials but will play with coursing and horizontal elements in a stacked soldier course. The penthouse wraps around and back down both sides of the spire element to define the church entry with a stone canopy that extends out and monumental stair leading down to the street. The back is partnering space with the green roof above and courtyard. Planting beds are located in front of the church that will be used to grow vegetables and flowers.

Bob Klebba spoke as the Co-Chair of the neighborhood steering committee. They had a difficult time getting feedback from neighbors. This proposal addresses many of the concerns James Madison residents have, including affordable housing and social justice concerns, while not displacing any existing residents. The developer engaged neighbors early in the process and communicated clearly their goals. The congregation is committed to remaining on-site and continuing their mission. This proposal will help house people downtown and maintain vibrancy. There are concerns about deep shading of adjacent and nearby properties. Motorized vehicle access from N. Hancock is of concern, the design of the building affects how traffic will impact the neighborhood and adjacent bike boulevard. It was suggested that vehicle access be taken from E. Washington Avenue even though it would involve a major new layout of the first floor. The bonus height detracts from the neighborhood.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Low income housing, thank you for that. I really hope to see three-bedroom units in the future plans. The corner with vertical elements that look like folded Origami are quite lovely. How much glazing is there, the units are pretty small, might be worth reviewing for privacy and placement of furniture.
- I often wonder how I could stand having a bedroom with floor to ceiling glass in it.
- It is a concern of neighbors that you're always having vehicles come down that way. If there is an option and you could present it next time that would be appreciated. It is important to have plans that show traffic patterns and shade studies. Other than that it is a beautiful building. This is relatively within the expectations of the area plans.
- It's a very handsome building. Roughly 125 units, what is the expected number of parking spaces?
 - We are intending to build fewer parking stalls than we otherwise would, between 70-90 parking stalls. It's directly in front E. Washington Avenue and the future BRT, ½ a block from the bike path and a block to the Square. Hopefully that mitigates traffic issues on the neighborhood. We did look at the one-way configuration of N. Hancock Street, but because of grading on the side we have to put the access into the underground parking at the low point. If we put it on E. Washington Avenue we'd need fairly extensive ramping which would really negatively impact and take away a lot of the St. John's floor space and partnering space.
- It will be important for us to see where all the deliveries and ride-sharing vehicles will park.
 - I completely agree. We're engaging a traffic study, impact analysis and demand management plan.

- I struggled with the challenging mission to reflect the church's legacy. The stained glass incorporation is a really nice touch. How does the architecture of this building support low income housing?
 - We want to emphasize the warmth and authenticity of the material, we're not using a lot of metal panel or blank façades. Providing access with the outdoor space on the second floor, as well as some of the balconies, and larger windows to bring that natural light and warmth.
 - It's an unusual mix of programming functions. Being respectful of the church and its history, trying to create a project that is respectful of those who will live within the residences, welcoming and warm, trying to keep the materials at a level of quality fitting with St. John's and a project of this scale. It's a challenging project to weave this selection of materials for every component of the project.
 - It was important for us to choose material that's durable and will stand the test of time. We want this to stay affordable, stay beautiful, choosing those materials that will really last.
- I really commend this project for that goal of the residents you hope to house, and also the architecture.
- Good you don't distinguish low income from higher rent units.
- I have been looking forward to the conversation around this project with the mix of program being so unique. Had a range of emotions and reactions looking at the proposal. You're on the right track, when you consider sustainability, resilience, how the use of the building could change over time, choosing those quality materials and emphasizing that is the right move. When I consider the function of the church and community space and think of it as a cultural project it seems a little safe. The stained glass is a bold move and I like where you're going with it but it feels more like the residential program of the project. The actual light and tactile experience is going to be really fantastic. Like the clean plinth with the garden spaces. Stone would be lovely carried through down to that pedestrian level at the forefront of the elements. Very interesting project.
 - Intending for that corner element beneath the church to be stone.
- Balconies, nice way of separating elements with slight recess on the Hancock Street rendering.

ACTION:

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**