URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

December 14, 2022

Agenda Item #: **8**

Project Title: 6604 Odana Road - Planned Multi-Use Site. 19th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 74229

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Russell Knudson, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad* and Amanda Arnold

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

*Asad recused himself on this item.

Summary

At its meeting of December 14, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a Planned Multi-Use Site located at 6604 Odana Road. Registered and speaking in support were Randy Christianson, Bruce Bosben and Marc Ott. Registered in support and available to answer questions was John Kastner. Registered and speaking in opposition was Colleen Robinson. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions was Clare Boulanger.

Christianson introduced the proposed six story building that falls under the current zoning height maximum, and noted that Planning staff has said they like the proposal, and this type of development in this area. The team has looked at ultimately redeveloping the entire Market Square center of 9.5 acres, but there are tenants in those buildings having rights that extend as late as September of 2030. They are hopeful to do one more building sometime in the next several years but do not have anything concrete, not knowing when things will be available and what the climate will be at that time. The architecture material palette includes brick and fiber cement. The building steps back in a couple of locations, provides covered balconies and two levels of parking that will be exposed. A requested shadow study was shared.

Caroline Robinson spoke in opposition, commenting that the renderings ghosting out the building make it look even larger. The closeness is still a huge concern.

Colleen Robinson spoke in opposition. The photos are not in context, the theater is a one-story building with a peaked roof and you can see how it compares to the three story Normandy Square apartment building. Looking at something that is five or six stories gives you some point of reference and scale. The parking area between the buildings is narrow; emergency vehicles would take up that entire area. The view will be completely gone, the shadowing will occur, and a lot of people with walkers, scooters and mobility challenges will face safety concerns. It is unclear where parking goes. She urged the team to get creative and think about putting a new building on the corner instead.

The Commission discussed the following:

- The extra story necessitates the conditional use, not necessarily the height in feet.
- As an advisory body we should think about the impact on surrounding properties, as well as compatibility with the existing or intending use with Market Square as a whole.
- The future of the whole area, all land uses are on a spectrum of time, there's going to be some impact on the adjacent apartment building, but I also feel that the current auto-oriented use is not a good use. The market is going to demand height. The whole environment is likely to change, I personally feel some impact, but we have to acknowledge that in a small matter of years this environment is going to be completely different and this building may not be so big.

- This is reacting to an available site in the middle of what may be developed in a decade or so. Right now the existing apartment building is new and is there, and it should relate to that a bit more than it does. Right now it's an island with all this vehicular traffic around it.
- It could relate much better if the massing also related to the apartment building rather than the most efficient shape to get as much building on the site as possible. It needs to have more forward thinking of what is the future of the development and responding to that vs. the shape of the building in front of it.
- Is there any retail facing the new development in the existing development?
    - Those are exit doors. Extending it out to the street doesn't work because of the cross access easement for Normandy square. That is why the building is where it is and not out to the street, there is no opportunity for another curb cut.
- It's really unfortunate. That forward thinking to the future development, it's really hard to imagine this being a nice place to live completely encircled in a commercial parking lot.
- That doesn't mean it has to have a row of parking in front, it could just be the drive and more greenspace in front of the building.
- I feel like the building has a lot going on and could be simplified. The material changes, different kinds of balconies, the overhang on part and the roof stops at others, there is no cohesiveness or elegance. In fact it accentuates that this is a big box with no cohesiveness to the design. All the different unrelated languages there, it needs some definite refinement.
- I echo the site plan comments. I don't see the height as out of context, I like this higher density infill of a rather suburban model. Because the Comprehensive Plan does allow that sixth story through the conditional use, it seems fine. I don't think the proximity to its neighboring building is so close to be an issue, the shadow study reveals the lack of shadows cast on other buildings. I don't like how it's a building surrounded by parking, reducing that along Yellowstone is a good suggestion. The Stella D'oro daylily is overused and could be swapped out with Coneflower or a nice native perennial.
- It's not in our purview but what I see being offered is a relatively small retail space in terms of what's useful to neighbors. Otherwise it's a majority of living units. There's an added element of imposing height with some of these projections that might be complicating the issue further. What consideration has there been to step back elements of this massing, a rooftop amenity space that can reduce mass but perhaps be open to the public?
    - The roof is difficult in terms of getting up there, the City would consider a penthouse to be a seventh story, the exiting out of there, and we didn't choose to go up there. It will be solar ready and explored during the bidding phase. We have two areas on the 2nd and 6th floors for amenity spaces. The development team wanted to provide covered balconies. It was a conscious choice of the programming, trying to differentiate themselves in the market. Stepbacks get expensive to construct.
- To some extent the questions of density and housing infill might be better answered by another commission other than ourselves. We have a question of whether this additional story is architecturally significant from a design perspective, and I'm not seeing it, not seeing what the extra story does that gives more meaning to the design. It just shows a larger contrast from the neighboring structures.
- I have sympathy for the Normandy residents and the distress the possibility of this is causing. There's no guarantee of either your access to sunlight or your view codified here in Madison. These happen all over the place. We've asked and seen a lot of shadow studies; almost always they show morning, midday and evening, I couldn't help but notice that the midday shadows were omitted, but you can clearly draw an arc from the morning to the late day one and see where the shadows are in the middle of the day. I think one of the reasons they were left out is because it showed it as throwing considerable shade on the Normandy building. My gut feeling is to deny the extra floor, but at the same time I'm not sure it would change anything, maybe the amount of sunlight and the view in only a moderate way given the actual distance in linear feet from the Normandy. It is fairly rare we see a building plunked down in the middle of asphalt and I don't know that this is making the best, strongest use of its location, or what would need to happen to make it seem like a better fit. Otherwise it's a fairly handsome building, Madison in general is the most over-balconied place I've ever been and this certainly seems to be all in on balconies. I'm not sure every single unit here needs to have a balcony, but I basically like other elements of the structure and materials.

- As far as landscaping, the western side shows just a single row of single species. 21 junipers along there, that is just the laziest, most boring way to treat a foundation planting. Mix it up, use golden junipers, change the color every third one and toss a couple of uprights in there. Your various renderings are a little tough to read because they show the exact same side of the building but are rendered differently. But there are huge expanses of blank wall at the base of the building that are crying out for some foundation plantings and something with a little imagination for varying heights and color. On the north side of the building there are trees with Annabelle Hydrangeas, those are nice but you want shade tolerant plants, and the Molinia Skyracer will get no sun whatsoever so close to the building, that's a misguided choice. A little more attention to the landscaping can make a huge difference.
- At minimum there needs to be more greenspace around the building, in addition to maybe eliminating the parking and keeping the access drive in front of Yellowstone. Why doesn't the drive aisle for this building give that extra space to the building landscaping? That may allow for 7-8 additional feet for trees in front of the building. Maybe some masonry raised beds along the blank walls and plants at grade to give it a three dimensional lush quality.
- The 2,000 square feet of retail is hurting this, make it an asset, make it connected to the rest of the building, make it more of a building that relates to the Normandy than something in between. We do have to make a recommendation as to whether that additional floor is warranted. I'm not convinced having a taller building in this sea of asphalt is a better thing. Having a hard time seeing the compelling case for that extra floor.
- This side slopes down that it almost looks like seven stories from this side. It's also a really hard façade for anyone walking here if you consider the area around will get developed. It makes even a stronger argument of not going up to six stories.
- Are those windows into the parking garage?
    - Yes, it ramps down.
- That's a consideration, how many stories by which side your address faces.
- That corner with the logo, there are four different types of outdoor spaces in materials and details. It's a lot for what this building is trying to do and doesn't make a lot of sense right now.
- I don't think the massing is acceptable, it doesn't have enough design significance to warrant the extra floor, it's not situated right on the site.
- A referral means that it does not advance to the Plan Commission.

Action

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).