



**Agenda Item #:** 7

**Project Title:** 4716 Sheboygan Avenue - New Hotel in Madison Yards Planned Development (PD) in Urban Design District (UDD) 6. 11th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 78595

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau, Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad, Russell Knudson, Marsha Rummel, and Wendy Von Below

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of July 26, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new hotel in Madison Yards located in Urban Design District (UDD) 6 at 4716 Sheboygan Avenue. Registered and speaking in support was Ethan Skeels. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Michael Siniscalchi, and Kyle Strigenz.

Proposed is a five-story, 144 guest room hotel with a large courtyard for guest amenities including fire pits, grill stations and a game lawn area. The first floor includes a series of guest rooms along Gardener Road, a public entry to the south along Sheboygan, connected through a corridor to the central main hub, with back-of-house and food service areas located to the north. A marquee extends toward the drop-off area for a covered zone along Hill Farms Way. Some guest rooms have been rotated to increase the amount of glazing and have more presence along Sheboygan Avenue. The landscape plan will create a lush landscape along the neighboring streets. Screening for a pedestrian area and fireplace is integrated into the building. Building materials are the prototypical colors and textures of Homewood Suites by Hilton, but upgraded to use masonry, wood accents and a textured profile metal panel. They are using brick to set the corners with a strong material and layering the massing of guest rooms with different materials to create a layered effect in the façade. Guest room a/c units are integrated into the overall architecture of the building. Projecting parapets will act as screening for mechanical equipment.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- It looks like the wood material comes down to the ground. How does that perform in Wisconsin winters with salt?
  - It's an aluminum product, used extensively out at Madison Yards, it's the same material we've used for the shade and cladding structures on Whole Foods. It's very durable.
- In the section, where is the finished floor relative to what you're showing as the bottom of the window in typical hotel rooms and how does that relate to where P-tack units are located?
  - We have vertical units as opposed to P-tack. Our guest room windows actually come all the way to the floor, the V-tack unit sits adjacent to the window behind the corrugated metal.
- So the P-tack units are located behind the metal louvers?
  - Yes.
- The precedent images with twinkle lights. Have you looked at the dark sky ordinance?
  - That has come up internally, as well as the idea of fire pits without things hanging over it. We're open to discussion as to what those lights would be for activation and dark sky compliance.
- That terrace area is very appealing, except on a day like today. Have you looked at sun shading?

- Yes, the fire pits are one of the considerations there. We want the ambience at night, any shading would have to be away from that and the grill stations. The height of the screen wall and use of vertical fins will actually create some shading. But shading should be considered in more detail.
- The entry off Sheboygan is referred to as the south entry, but that's a major entry for TOD. I'm curious if you've tried any further investigation in your floor plan layout to make that a more prominent actual entry versus kind of the back door?
  - We have created a space, we feel it's a usable space for guests to utilize the courtyard. We feel it will be used by people using the BRT line and entering from Sheboygan. We created a seating group there, using it to navigate the grade change on the site. The function of guest arrival and guest experience is desirable from the perspective of the overall development, with the canopy along the central green and pedestrian realm being created within Madison Yards. Other projects within the development are oriented inwards. We feel the connection and double corridor we've created is an extension of the lobby using the courtyard as an organizing element.
- The loading berth is next to the outdoor courtyard?
  - It is, we are a relatively tight site. It is larger than we would like it to, but would be open to discussions about shortening that. We've pushed it closer to the courtyard to accommodate vehicle circulation within the employee parking. Our food service is pretty limited, so we don't anticipate heavy loading and unloading for this use. We did use the grill station, and created a solid wall at 12-14 feet to block the view of that loading. It was preferable to get that off of Iron Street and centralized to the block.
- (Secretary) To clarify the entry orientation to Sheboygan, in talking with the Zoning Administrator it is possible to have two front doors. The design team is working to design the entry on Sheboygan to appear to be more of the front door. Whether that meets the TOD requirements for a front door is up to the Zoning Administrator, but I don't think we're at that point in the design yet. This is a Planned Development, should they want to seek exceptions to the TOD they certainly can do that through an amendment process.
- The outdoor enclosed patio, is that over structure?
  - No, it is on grade.
- Has the neighborhood had any comment about the surface parking facing Sheboygan?
  - We had a positive neighborhood meeting. There wasn't any specific concerns about the surface parking lot, more general questions about hotel operations.
- You have designed other buildings in the area. I would really benefit from a reminder about context. When you come back it would be great to understand that. The intended use of that rooftop #2, is that a public amenity or is that for guests?
  - That is a guest courtyard. There is a security guard rail so it is closed off with guests being able to fob in. We did feel that keeping it open allowed for that activity to be visible from Sheboygan is important.
- This is a PD, could you tell us the objectives and what's their relationship to design, including green building technologies, land uses, important environmental features with placement of building, preservation of historic buildings, provision of more adequate usable open space recreational amenities, facilitation of high quality development consistent with the goals of adopted plans.
  - Talking about preservation and activation of open space, it is important to note that Sheboygan is important to the TOD aspects of the neighborhood. The central green is an important asset to the development and neighborhood, it's important to the objectives of the overall development that we create a pedestrian scale street experience along Hill Farms Place and Sheboygan. There is some contextual response to the adjacent development beyond our parcel to the south. We also have robust and significant landscaping, we've included a pedestrian area along the front of the building. It will be a four over one podium building with significant amounts of masonry, along the entire service area as well, and a base course of stone along the entire building for a high quality building that will last for many years. As far as green building considerations, we are upgrading our HVAC beyond what would normally be utilized in a hotel like this as opposed to individual units.

- I appreciate that. I agree with you about the spirit of Hill Farms Place, I'm not seeing much design on the building itself that encourages that pedestrian experience. It seems like the public amenities are at the other side.
  - We've added glazing going beyond the Hilton prototype, including moving the fitness amenity space along Hill Farms Place. We've also moved our employee area and administrative offices to the northwest corner to encourage active uses behind that. The employee area is a large space with open windows to activate that area.
- Can you talk me through the door location? It really seems like the more interesting entry is on Hill Farms.
  - We've been working on this for a number of years prior to the TOD being enacted. This is an adaptation to meet this new requirement. We do feel that we're meeting the spirit of that requirement with this adjacent lobby space that stretches the site. But from a guest experience and the vitality of the central greenspace, the vehicular drop-off and guest arrival should be in the heart of the development. That's not something we could replicate on Sheboygan Avenue. In addressing the pedestrian experience, that front court is not gated off in any way.
- Lost Audio 1:38:30...audio resumes 1:39:10 during a development team response to a question.
  - In the center of the site, we were reserving that space for any required stormwater management that we may need. As the engineering has progressed, and as you may recall that the Madison Yards Development has some incredible stormwater infrastructure that was designed and redesigned after flooding a few years ago, it was planned for a much larger building with less permeability. So we have more than enough stormwater capability and we did not end to provide underground detention, infiltration, rain garden, any of that wasn't necessary within the site. We have reduced the surface parking lot by half. We have taken comment to rotate it and push it into the corner while still allowing enough screening around it. That greenspace is up for interpretation, if you had thoughts on what you would like to see happening in there. We do feel it is something nice to look on and helps with views from above from the guest rooms, but it is greenspace that we feel is just clean and simple as an amenity for viewing.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I've always liked the Madison Yards project, this fits in nicely with it, it's a very simple, modern building; it works. The only thing I have a problem with is the five different materials that all look the same. If you are going to have a modular brick that is gray and fiber cement that is almost gray, why not have them be the same material. A burnished block that is dark and a metal panel that is dark, why not have that be the same material. I think you can narrow the number of materials down. They're so similar in color. That's the only issue I have. You could simplify some of the five materials. I love the wood accent, it's a great contrast to everything, the monochromatic thing you have going on here.
- And the plan works, you don't need to program every bit of this space, so having some open just regular greenspace works.
- It's a well-designed project with the exception of all of the different materials that are similar colors. If they were different colors, it works, but the fact that they are the same color but different materials, it tends to be a waste of detailing.
- The brick looks flat, a lot like the cement board, and the metal panel looks like it could have some texture and throw some shade/shadow in interesting patterns. Maybe the brick could be handled differently than the cement board so that there is not only more texture to the building but also a bigger difference between the brick and the cement board. The textured metal panel is intriguing, the different ins and outs on that, I wonder if color effects that at all; how dynamic that is. The dark charcoal might take away from the shade and shadow, a lighting color may show more shade and shadow; something to consider.
- This is an attractive project, my first reaction was a bit of surprise with the courtyard being more Sheboygan facing. I had always imagined that indoor/outdoor relationship being oriented to the north towards Hill Farms Place. Your courtyard is a really great space, maybe if you can work in some tree canopy and make the fire

places work, that space could really sing and be an incredible place to hang out. On that side, I like the repetition or rectangular spaces you have. For the green next to the parking lot you have some differing plans. I like the rigorously outlined geometry that plays off the courtyard; one recommendation is to make sure that landscape material, or wall, or hardscape material reinforces that edge so kids can play freely there and not worry about the front end of cars hanging into it. That sort of like relief from the building mass and the walled in courtyard is exciting and the lighting could be a great contributor to this as well. The repetition of the wood accent facing Hill Farms Place on the first floor level. That playfulness of the façade is really interesting. Thinking about the treatment of some of the edges of the parking lot.

- When you come back, I would call it metal panel with a wood look, not a wood accent.
- I agree with most of what's been said. It's a fairly handsome project with a nice amount of regularity and some specialness by using some of the features with the taller parapets. I appreciate that the mechanicals are hidden. One thing that I too a little surprised that there wasn't a stronger urban edge along Sheboygan. Is there a way to extend that metal wood look across that southern edge and strengthen that with landscaping so it has a firmer edge? Think about the connection between the courtyard and the proposed lawn area, if there is an actual physical connection between those.
- I'm still struggling to understand the hierarchy of streets, and knowing that it is not our purview, can you assist in helping understand why Gardener is a secondary street and not Hill Farms Place? Seems to be me that Hill Farms and Sheboygan are the major focal points to this building and they are each attractive in their own ways.
- (Secretary) Ultimately the Zoning Administrator determines that, a lot of times that has to do with where you are taking access from and pulling your address from. Sheboygan is the primary street in this general zone. You are also looking at the classification of the streets as well. In this case, Gardener is the secondary and Sheboygan in the primary.
- I still think Hill Farms Place is the focus, but the Zoning Administrator doesn't address that at all?
- (Secretary) Not at this time. At this point, since the project is still conceptual, there will be more to come on that. It is unfortunate that a definition for a primary street was not included in the TOD overlay for clarification, something worth considering for an update to the ordinance.
- Primary and secondary streets are confusing. I was struck looking at these plans, trying to Rubik cube this building and parking lots into different configurations that would go along more with following the letter of the law. It seemed to me that the development team structured this pretty much the most obvious aesthetically pleasing way that it should go. That secondary entrance on Sheboygan Avenue, I don't see too many people arriving at this hotel by BRT, it will be in cars or Ubers or taxis and getting dropped off at the real front door which is on Hill Farms Place, which seems to me where it should be. A hotel like this being forced being forced to have their main entrance or even the side streets, as opposed to Hill Farms opening up to a central park area, that seemingly was designed to interact with the surrounding building would not make any sense. This whole project was designed with certain goals that seem antithetical to what those goals are. I hope accommodations can be worked out to make this end up in a layout that is at least mostly similar to this.
- As far landscaping, it will be key, to block the view of the employee parking lot and some of these other areas too. Do some really well thought out plantings in a mix of deciduous and evergreens and to assign extra money in the budget to accommodate larger sized specimens to plant. This is not a project to plan saplings in and let them grow into the space. I hope that the foundation plantings, the border plantings along Gardener and the front of the building are not just like a single row of the same plant. Nobody wants to see another row of calamagrostis or a feather reed grass along there that we see on every other development in town. Show a little verve and imagination in the plant selection and it will go a long way towards complementing the building.
- That large yard space, there is not anything wrong with that being an unprogrammed space. If you choose the right selection of trees around the perimeter and do some nice uplighting, it could really be a striking extension of the courtyard area as well as something nice to look down at from the rooms above.
- I will echo some of the comments about the material finish. The material finishes and colors are a maybe little too understated, I'd like to see something more dynamic in textures and possible colors, but all in all it's a handsome project. This is seen as a replacement for the hotel at the corner of Segoe and University, which turned into an apartment. I kind of like the hotel better in this spot.

- You did show that adjacent residential building and I would just let this building stand out, I appreciate cohesiveness in the context of this Planned Development, but don't be too consistent with the surrounding buildings.
- UDD 6 talks about parking on primary streets, it should not be located there. So there is another conflict. I don't know if we really heard the applicant address those concerns. Just wondering what others think about that parking area. Should it be smaller, is it fine? I also assume there is parking in the structure, and that this is for staff. Just thought I would raise that since we have not discussed it.
- (Secretary) With regard to the parking, the big thing to note is that Sheboygan is considered the primary as coming from the TOD. Currently this site plan does not meet that requirement. They can ask for an exception to the TOD overlay requirements with the Planned Development. UDD guidelines and requirements cannot be modified as part of the Planned Development, the requirements must be met and the guidelines should be met as closely as possible. The Commission should provide direction or comment with regard to that parking and its location along the primary street, and if there are any suggestions or comments that the Commission has on how they can improve or alter it for the Commission to make a finding that the guidelines and requirements are being met.
- You answered my question that the UDD cannot be adjusted through the Planned Development process.
- With regard to the parking, I could see an argument that it's not necessarily between the building and the primary street, it's on the side really. It's not as though we have a big surface lot between the entire building and the street. I like the fact that there is an entrance on Sheboygan Avenue, TOD or no TOD. The thing that really strengthens it is that it's a one story element and you'll see a lot of daylight through those doors, that strengthens and identifies it as an entry element. It is a circuitous path to the front desk, but you're looking out to the courtyard, that strengthens and identifies it as an entry element. The number of materials is my biggest criticism, there could be one less material, my vote would be for removal of the cement panel; it doesn't have the richness that the brick and metal panel will have on a smaller scale. We see a lot of cement panel and how you detail it, if you're going to use it, will go a long way to make it feel like it's a high quality building. I would also reinforce comments about considering a building wall around maybe the corner, or at least along the way, maybe not continuous. A wall to reinforce that edge using some building materials that can incorporate all of your lush landscaping would really help screen the parking and make it seem like a cohesive development that belongs to the hotel.

## Action

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