

AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: May 25, 2011
TITLE: 1001 University Avenue – PUD(SIP), St. Francis Episcopal Student Center Redevelopment – Relocation of the St. Francis House and Construction of a Twelve-Story, 90-Unit Residential Building. 8 th Ald. Dist. (21945)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: May 25, 2011	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Marsha Rummel, Mark Smith, Dawn O’Kroley, Todd Barnett, Richard Slayton, R. Richard Wagner, Melissa Huggins and Jay Handy.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 25, 2011, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a PUD(SIP) located at 1001 University Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Randy Bruce, Ken Saiki, representing Ken Saiki Design; and Att. Bill White, representing LZ Ventures. Appearing in support and available to answer questions was John Leja. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Rev. Brad Pohlman, Jon S. Enslin, Douglas Swiggum, and Harvey Temkin, representing Luther Memorial. Appearing in opposition and not wishing to speak were John Robison, representing Luther Memorial; Marsha Steffen, Robert Steffen, Gerald J. Miller, Helen Hartman, Neal Deunk, Randy Burmeister, David Zentner and Robert Maynard. Bruce assured the Commission they have been working with the neighbors on issues, as well as trying to respond to as many comments as they have received both from Luther Memorial as a group and from the Urban Design Commission. In reviewing changes made, the mass of the building has been taken back a bit towards Conklin Place; they believe they have unified the University Avenue frontage. The newest iteration of plans tries to utilize the space and maximize the views towards Luther Memorial. Context photos were displayed as per the Commission’s request. The visibility of Luther Memorial’s facilities has to do more with the main roof element and not the tower. The entrance to the parking will be off of Brooks Street with moped located along the street and under a covered area off of Conklin Place. Bicycle parking is located both in the basement and the courtyard. Adjustments to the site plan have been made to create a pedestrian linkage along Conklin Place from Brooks Street to the edge of their site in anticipation of pedestrian traffic along Conklin. The floor plans were shown, including two levels of basement parking containing roughly 65 stalls, along with streetscapes showing this building fitting in well with other University buildings. Building elevations showed precast or stone panels in vertical elements juxtaposed with light glass and metal curvilinear façades. The glass gives the building a lot of light and reflects its surroundings. Sun studies had previously been presented but one of the issues was the impact on Grainger Hall; he distributed studies showing Grainger Hall at 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. during spring and winter equinox. A slideshow was presented showing the effects of light on Luther Memorial throughout different times of the day; Bruce stated he believes this development will have minimal solar impact on Luther Memorial.

Pastor Pohlman had asked the Commission for referral at the last meeting to give them the opportunity to do a shadow study of their own, as well as an engineering assessment on the building envelope to see the long-term effect of leaving an old building and the shadowing of an existing high-rise and potential high-rise. They believe that this project will bring about the long-term destruction of their congregation. The traffic, congestion, visibility, safety for preschool, light into the space, loss of a beautiful historic section of the University will all degrade their congregation. They have ample evidence of this at other religious University institutions.

Jon Enslin spoke about his concerns with the future viability of Luther Memorial. This is a vital congregation with over 1,000 members. Luther Memorial has a strong connection with area poverty, the University students, and a connection with the Lutheran Ministry next door. A congregation in this area has many strains that include constant maintenance, traffic and parking issues, new buildings that have come along, difficulties scheduling funerals and weddings. These complications make it too difficult for some people to be members there. His concern is that building this project will have such an impact on a congregation that already has odds against it that eventually it will not survive. He feels this proposed development puts this congregation at great risk.

Douglas Swiggum spoke as a member of Luther Memorial Church and chair of the facilities committee. He documented early morning light inside the nave of the church. The view that happens at 8:00 a.m. with the light coming in through the windows would never happen again and would be a tremendous loss. The Sunday school classrooms upstairs would also have no sunlight when Sunday school is held. More seriously the preschool on the ground floor would suffer from a loss of natural light. This project will destroy the aesthetic beauty of the nave space of Luther Memorial.

Harvey Temkin spoke as a representative of Luther Memorial. He disagrees with Bruce's statement that he has listened to the comments of Luther Memorial and has worked to incorporate them. What he sees tonight is really the same as it was two weeks ago with significant problems. A meeting between the developer and Luther Memorial two weeks ago was productive and suggestions were given; but unfortunately the problems Luther Memorial has with the site have not been solved. Specifically the fact that their lighting study shows something completely different than the developer's, affects the historical significance of this building, as does the St. Francis House next door; not every building fits on every site.

Att. Bill White concluded from a meeting one week ago that the opposition is with the project – not the building. The statement they heard was that Luther Memorial feels threatened by this and feels they cannot be sustained. He feels this is unfortunate but yet not an architectural problem. Everything he has heard tonight is related to use and the impact of neighboring properties, but they are here for urban design. He did not understand how they could know they would be losing such light if their lighting study wasn't completed until a few days ago. In terms of the zoning and use they feel they are perfectly well-suited for this development.

The Secretary clarified that this is a PUD zoning, not development under the existing R6, so it's a rezoning. Barnett reiterated that this is subject to the PUD standards. Slayton asked about the morning service times. The Commission discussed what aspects of this project they have purview over and what kinds of decisions the Plan Commission is charged with making. Commission comments were as follows:

Smith:

- What is the elevation of the peak of the main portion of Luther Memorial relative to the elevations you have shown on your project? 95-feet.
- The east light is trumping the long view of the tower for Luther Memorial. The shadowing effect on Luther Memorial seems much more important than the longer view of the tower along University Avenue. He got a strong sense that some of the mass of this project could be moved onto a current four-

story design and a floor or two could be lost. Most of the units could remain in the current design and it might help with the design of the building itself. This would be a reasonable compromise.

- The architecture in general is going to be high quality. To my eye it's a little bit better than Grand Central.
- The setbacks created along Conklin are important and should remain.
- I would need to see more information on that references to solar access would cause maintenance or engineering hardship to Luther Memorial itself. Grand Central was put up, possibly creating some of those hardships, at the direction of Luther Memorial.
- A successful project on this site will go a long way to preserving Luther Memorial in its current condition. If the St. Francis site is left for a number of years into the future you are almost guaranteeing that the whole site will be leveled and something else will be created.

Barnett

- What's the responsibility of the applicant in terms of the PUD process for light and air?
 - The Plan Commission, Common Council and UDC use PUD standards to determine whether or not they've been met. The applicant has to be able to demonstrate sufficiently for those bodies. How to you balance that out? Do they have a different threshold because they're a church?
- Obviously there is a precedent for a larger building on this block and that was due in part to Luther Memorial. The benchmark of height, mass and impact is there already and was facilitated by Luther Memorial.
- O'Kroley suggested putting the entire building on the south side of the street. It seems to address many of the issues brought up here.
- I wonder if Luther Memorial has looked into buying the property, and buying some of the air rights to the upper stories to get rid of the light concerns they have.

O'Kroley

- The greenspace in this relief by the trees in the public way and the trees on the property – the placement of the existing structures is more comfortable along the street.
 - There's a large tree that will be removed. There are trees on just either side of the property line on University Avenue both of which, if construction will allow, will be kept.
- The shifting of the existing historic structure squeezes against University Avenue.
- Does the development better the front half of the site? This is a challenge. Overall this could have a positive impact on the neighborhood and the congregation. It brings more life to the site, potentially more members to the congregation. I continue to go back to the moving of the building and if that's appropriate.
 - We did show you the other development options, one of which kept the St. Francis house only in its current condition; another one kept the entire facility. Seeing this structure with this kind of mass behind it didn't make architectural sense to us.

Is it development sense that it's making? Maybe the density can come down.

Our understanding is that the density we're proposing is one that makes his an economically viable project, one that allows us to save the St. Francis House, allows the ministry to be funded into the future. If you ask us can we reduce the height, the economic question is then can St. Francis continue? We've internally discussed having air rights over Conklin, we just don't realistically think this is a viable option for us.

Slayton

- I don't understand how the life of Luther Memorial is hinged on light and traffic. I'm not that worried about the site issues.

- Vehicular issues – city buses, carpool, commuter van. There are solutions to the traffic issues.
- There may be use conflicts – student housing next to a church.
- As far as design issues, they have addressed our comments.

Wagner stated the question of balancing the two historic structures and their long-term life is more tasked to the Plan Commission and Common Council. The question is whether the design that's given to us is one that we find from a design point of view, acceptable. I think our expertise lies not in the universal issues but the design issues.

Huggins stated she would rather see something more stand-alone. The original design with a giant tower in white could be played with a little bit to make this project work while still meeting some of the needs of Luther Memorial. She remarked she didn't see anybody here from St. Francis; the developer replied this isn't appropriate for a public forum, we're here to discuss the design aspects. Smith asked about the possibility of moving St. Francis off of University Avenue onto Brooks or Conklin. Leja responded that they have looked at many different iterations of design and this one makes the most sense to them, brings the buildings together in the best way and fits on the site.

Huggins asked for clarification on where the front entrance is located, how people will move through the site, how do the residents get there, what's going on there. Bruce displayed a site plan showing the residential building entrance on the corner with a slight preference towards Brooks Street to keep as much of the front lawn space uninterrupted. Vehicular access comes in off of Brooks Street. The space between the buildings is a hardscape area for bicycle parking and allows for pedestrian communication from one end of the block through the site if necessary.

Rummel asked if the developer has ever approached Porchlight about their parcel. Leja responded that when they've talked about that site, he has several issues with it so they have not discussed it yet. The financing structure of Porchlight is very difficult to untangle. Locating their function is not easy; they fight an uphill battle every time they open rooms. Relative to secondary entrances, there is one on Brooks Street and at the rear of the property. Huggins asked what happens to the shadow if the building comes up at one point, but that's the method they used to reach where they are. Putting the building closer to University Avenue would not have as great an impact on the lighting, but would affect the streetscape view from University. O'Kroley stated that the curve is an interesting way to do a curve elegantly. If that curve has even more dialog with Grainger Hall it pushes the curb element and could help do a lot for the site. Bruce thinks the curve really frames this space, and the light and glass elements provide a very airy, elegant backdrop for Luther Memorial. Looking at the tops of all the buildings and how they speak to each other would be worthwhile too. Barnett had no objection to the curve, understanding the need for the concave rather than convex space to define that space, which might actually draw you in more. Barnett mentioned the parapets and why there and not the flat iron piece that's the hallmark of the project. He feels some of the vertical is lost with the spandrel panels and makes the building more horizontal than vertical. Bruce responded that the balcony recesses were their way to define the vertical nature of the mass. He agreed that Barnett's comments regarding the parapet as something they should look into. O'Kroley suggested maybe there is a way to rotate the curve so it's more perceived. Because the curve isn't successful on the ground plane of the neighboring property, the curve could go around the upper levels. Rummel complimented the four-story piece relationship to University Avenue, the addition of greenspace and the curve, but she sees a fundamental contradiction between the economic feasibility needed to make this work. She still struggles with its compatibility with the physical nature of the area, and thinks the circulation of Conklin Place will be a big issue. There was some discussion about the possibility of landmark status for both of the buildings on the site. There was some discussion about referring this item but it was decided that the Commission has received enough information to make a decision.

Barnett reviewed the PUD standards so the Commission could go through them one by one to be sure they are met. Further discussion revolved around what kinds of conditions the Commission could attach to their motion, how the PUD standards are met or not met, and how the concerns of Luther Memorial could be dealt with. Slayton indicated that the problems with the project are beyond the scope of the Urban Design Commission. The question of the density of the use and the effect on the neighbors is beyond the design issues. Wagner suggested the developer and architect present some alternative ideas.

ACTION:

On a substitute motion by O’Kroley, seconded by Slayton, to **GRANT INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-3) with Handy, Barnett and Smith voting no. The motion noted that this body is expressing its concerns about retaining the religious corridor and how the massing of the building can support that, allowing some flexibility in the change of massing but deferring to the Plan Commission’s opinion on maintenance of the religious corridor. The motion further noted support for modern architecture here but don’t know the level of compromise for the religious building and where to find that balance to address the concerns with the maintenance of the religious corridor.

A previous motion was made by Smith, seconded by Rummel, to grant initial approval. The motion was replaced with the substitute motion. The motion provided for the following:

- The applicant maintains the current setbacks for the building mass on Conklin Place.
- Maximum of 10-stories on North Brooks Street and a maximum of 6-stories out to University Avenue.

A motion was made by Handy, seconded by Barnett, to refer. Discussion revolved around what additional information was necessary beyond that already provided for the Commission to make the decision. The motion failed on a vote of (4-3) with Rummel, O’Kroley, Slayton and Huggins voting no.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 5, 5, 5 and 8.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 1001 University Avenue

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	5	6	-	-	-	5	5	5
	5	6	-	-	-	6	5	5
	8	8	-	-	-	6	9	8

General Comments:

- Oh.
- Too much building for site – 5 stories better, unfortunate that not “economically feasible.” Applicant has addressed architectural/site concerns but fundamental issues of preservation of potential landmark not resolved.
- Lower by 2 stories and add 3 or 4 on University Avenue – trade view for more east light!