

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** November 7, 2012

TITLE: 145 Iota Court and 619 & 625 Henry Street
– PUD(SIP), Deconstruction of Three
Buildings for a New 8-Story Student-
Oriented Apartment Building and the
Addition of 2-Stories to an Existing
Building (Cliff Dwellers) at 140 Iota Court.
2nd Ald. Dist. (27553) **REFERRED:**
REREFERRED:
REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary **ADOPTED:** **POF:**

DATED: November 7, 2012 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Tom DeChant, Cliff Goodhart, John Harrington, Richard Slayton, Dawn O’Kroley and Marsha Rummel.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of November 7, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a PUD(SIP) located at 145 Iota Court and 619 & 625 Henry Street. Appearing on behalf of the project was Brian Munson, representing Palisades Apartments. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Stephanie Stender, representing Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority; Colin Bowden, Tim Morgan, Ledell Zellers and Fred Mohs. Munson presented updates to the project on this downsloped lot within the Langdon Historic District. Bruce talked through changes made to the architecture which include decreasing the footprint to assure a 20-foot wide fire lane through the development while still maintaining appropriate space for landscaping around the perimeter. It has been opened up more on the corner to give more room between buildings. The architecture has changed from four pods around the outside of the building to something much more cohesive and consistent architecture that is more compatible with the neighborhood as a whole. Surrounding views were shown. A highly detailed masonry façade was mentioned to include red and buff colored brick to respond better to the scale of the surrounding buildings. A whole new front and entrance is proposed for the Cliff Dwellers apartment building. Metal panel and shingle in a neutral color will be used along the top of the building.

Fred Mohs spoke to improvements made to surrounding buildings and the effect that the proposed demolitions would have on encouraging the maintenance of structures in the area versus allowing demolition for lack of maintenance. He raised concerns raised included the proximity to a local and national historic district. Plans for this neighborhood have mostly included 2-3 story buildings that are unique; once they’re gone Langdon Street is not what it used to be. He mentioned the high density student housing area on University Avenue/Dayton Street (La Ciel) that was planned to take away the need for high-rise housing in areas like Langdon Street. The Downtown Plan names this area as reserved for low density and this would be a huge precedent and a negative to what Langdon Street is.

Ledell Zellers spoke to the Langdon District in the Downtown Plan that recently passed two out of four recommendations related to preserving and rehabilitating historic buildings. It calls for development that is compatible with the historic nature of the neighborhood. The building being proposed at nine stories is too big and does not seem to meet the design qualifications for a PUD/PD district. She talked to Daina Penkiunas at the Wisconsin Historical Society and there is some question about whether demolishing these contributing buildings would jeopardize the listing of the National Register of Historic Districts. She indicated there isn't a specific number or tipping point, but that this is quite a number to be demolished, combined with one demolished due to fire and another demolished to put in a new development. If it were to be delisted, other buildings would not receive the tax credit option which would also be a detriment to the area.

Tim Morgan spoke as a neighbor in the area. With this development, his driveway is proposed to be turned into a public path, and would affect three sides of his house. His biggest concern is the easement and how it would affect the driveway to the house that fits eight cars. The conditional use standards clearly indicate that neighboring properties shall not be negatively affected.

Stephanie Stender spoke on behalf of the group representing the sororities on campus. They are concerned about the dissolution of the unique historic character of their neighborhood. Many of these homes are by architect Frank Riley. They are also concerned about the increased traffic and safety issues in the neighborhood accompanied by the density and mass of this building. The height is extremely troubling with the massive wall between Langdon Street and the lake. It also breaks up many existing houses in a neighborhood of 3-4 story houses.

Colin Bowden spoke as the vice president of the Langdon Neighborhood Association. His concerns include the two impromptu meetings held by the neighborhood Alder (Maniaci); his feeling is the association/neighbors should be the ones to organize and facilitate these meetings and that has not happened. The people who own this project gave \$250 each to the Alder. There has to be some sort of barrier there. He hopes they at least get the chance to give their full input. The meeting they had two nights ago, people were cut off and did not receive the answers they were asking. There are issues with the structure and the demolition of contributing buildings. None of the buildings proposed for demolition looks anything similar to what is being proposed.

Tim Parks of the Planning Division stated that an application was filed on October 17th for a rezoning to Planned Unit Development, specifically requesting PUD zoning under the 1966 code. It will not be reviewed under the new Downtown and Urban Zoning in the new Zoning Code; it will be a PUD in the old code and roll into the new zoning map after being approved. Ald. Rummel inquired about why these Commissions were asked to hurry up and approve changes to the Downtown Design Guidelines (almost for this project) and now it isn't even going to follow those standards. Information regarding the demolition of these buildings has not yet been submitted to Planning staff for review. They are looking for the renovation details for the 150 Langdon Street building which is incorporated into the PUD. They are also requesting floor plan layouts to address concerns with the number of bedrooms and windows. The site plans submitted do not clearly reflect the inclusion of 150 Langdon Street and 140 Iota Court within the boundaries of the PUD. He pointed out that this is a 9-story building (8 stories of residential) in a Downtown Design Zone that maxes out at 5-stories. The Downtown Plan points to five stories with the opportunity for two bonus stories; this project is one residential floor more than the bonus stories that can be granted under the Downtown Plan recommendations. Factor in also the 9th floor for the open space common element being proposed. Regarding the Langdon Lane concept, the Langdon District of the Downtown Plan encourages this idea. It's clear this project is relying on some formalization of the Langdon Lane idea. The Downtown Plan has quite an emphasis on the contributing structures in the Langdon National Register District and as mentioned before, staff feels that the bar must be exceptionally high if the demolition of three contributing structures is to be considered. Planning Division staff have determined that the entirety of the development should be reviewed by the Landmarks Commission so

they can make their advisory recommendations to this body and the Plan Commission regarding visual intrusiveness and a possible negative impact on the local historic district.

Ald. Maniaci asked for a sense of where the Commission sees this project going. The Chair reminded her that care needs to be taken so as not to violate the open meetings law. Bruce also stated that they would appreciate comments for a baseline. The Chair replied that this body is charged with design issues. Maniaci gave a brief update, starting with the informational presentation on this development in which she believes that the Commission gave “contradictory” comments. The neighborhood meeting was held two days prior to this with about 60 people in attendance, further stating that “in doing this the last 3 ½ years the alders usually call the meetings on development proposals and act as an intermediary between the development interests and the neighborhood interests.” Overwhelmingly traditional architecture is very much where the neighborhood wants this to go. She hoped the Commission could give them 10 minutes of discussion time to move this process forward.

Slayton replied that it is important to him to hear the Landmarks Commission comments because when he looks at this proposal he thinks “one of these is not like the others” (proposed building as designed compared with existing adjacent structures). He needs Landmarks to comment on how they feel about how this fits in because he cannot see how it does. It’s not intimate, there aren’t any openings in the streetscape. The necessity of hearing recommendations from the Landmarks Commission was supported by other Commission members. O’Kroley remarked that the contributing buildings are the key factor; to discuss those first before the new proposal. She did comment on the proposal for the refacing of the Cliff Dwellers; if it’s a building inappropriate to its neighbors when it was built, putting a false historic façade on it is not any more appropriate and probably further inappropriate.

ACTION:

On a motion by Slayton, seconded by Goodhart, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0).

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 4 and 4.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 145 Iota Court and 619 & 625 Henry Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	5	4	5	-	-	4	4	4
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4

General Comments:

- Too much mass for context. Cut-off 3 stories.
- Nice looking building but doesn't fit location and national historic district.