

## AGENDA # 7

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** August 28, 2013

TITLE: 425 West Washington Avenue – Mixed-  
Unit Development in the UMX District  
Known as “The Washington Plaza.” 4<sup>th</sup>  
Ald. Dist. (29495)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: August 28, 2013

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Lauren Cnare, Acting Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, John Harrington, Melissa Huggins, Henry Lufler\*, Tom DeChant and Cliff Goodhart.

\*Richard Wagner and Henry Lufler recused themselves. Lauren Cnare was Acting Secretary on this item.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of August 28, 2013, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a mixed-use development located at 425 West Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project was John Sutton, Erik Minton and Jonathan Cooper, representing the West Washington Steering Committee, Bassett District, Capitol Neighborhoods. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Lupe Montes.

Kevin Firchow discussed his Planning staff report and the issues the Planning Division has with this project. The bonus story requires “exceptional” design. The comments in the report are based on what was submitted to the Urban Design Commission. There was concern with the front yard setback, one of the recommendations made was to pull the above grade mass of the building so it’s in line with the dental offices in old homes immediately to the west, which would make it consistent with the Downtown Plan recommendations.

The building was described as “flat.” They looked at changing the mullions to tie the first and second floors together more strongly, with an awning over the top of the second floor rather than the first, in order to define the commercial area more strongly and creates more shadow lines. The wing wall has been taken out and metal wrapped around and flows much better. In addressing the criteria for the bonus floor, Sutton mentioned additional costs for additional parking, two elevators rather than just one, the material palette is very strong, the protection of the terrace trees, replacement of one street light to a more retro style in keeping with the rest of the neighborhood. From a design standpoint he feels this is as good as “Aspen Commons,” which is earning him accolades. There is currently a monument sign for the dentist; they expect their signage package to also include a monument sign for the corner. Staff is concerned about the monument sign being consistent with the existing urban context along West Washington Avenue.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I like this composition better, without the tacked on “eyebrows.” This is where I would expect an awning.
- As it has evolved it has improved. I particularly like that it doesn’t have the big rusticated base anymore. These planes and layers are interesting, maybe continue it more to bring more continuity to the design as with the upper façade of the stair tower element. This corner is OK but it’s not something I see as exceptional in terms of the design. I’d encourage you to keep going.
- This isn’t Aspen Court. And you again do not show context on your drawings. We’re charged with protecting West Washington and that deep terrace, and the setbacks. It still reads as though you’re forward from those buildings.
  - I believe we’re pretty much in line with them, based on the measurements that I took. In this context, exceptional merit and design is relating to that context and protecting that deep street front.
- Would the renderings have had context we would be able to see whether or not it meets that challenge or not. They’re just sitting out there floating in space.
- I would strongly recommend in your presentation materials to allow us to see what you’re talking about.
- I think there is still work to be done on the planting plan, the green roof planting plan needs to be specified, I’m concerned about some of the trees surviving. I’d suggest working with the City to try and keep/maintain some of these trees within the right-of-way.
- The perspective on the upper left and on the right, those two are the ones that you should feel, and this building should activate the street and I just don’t think the architecture of those two pieces support it yet.

Jonathan Cooper spoke in support of the project. He presented an advisory statement from the steering committee. The committee doesn’t think the project has yet reached an “exceptional” design. As far as what it accomplishes for the area, the stated goal for the extra story is to make the underground parking economically viable. That parking has no public option; the neighborhood gets more traffic but no parking. Where is the value added for the extra story other than allowing them to add more parking? This is the first project proposed under the new Zoning Code and as such sets the bar for the West Washington Avenue corridor. This will set a precedent.

Erik Minton spoke in support. The genesis of this building is trying to be something more than anything else around it. Having two elevators is a substantial livability issue; more than that, the mixed-use concept that we started with is about bringing life to these blocks and to the neighborhoods. That takes a commitment that’s far greater than most people understand. We not only are expanding an opportunity for a great quality of life, but for businesses that will serve this neighborhood in exceptional ways.

**ACTION:**

On a motion by Huggins, seconded by O’Kroley, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of the item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0-2) with Wagner and Lufler recused. The motion required address of the landscape comments and building design enhancements necessary to make a finding on “exceptional design” with signage requiring future consideration.

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 rating for this project is 6.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 425 West Washington Avenue**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	6

General Comments:

- Stronger green roof planting needed. Introduce context drawings.
- Good and much improved, but not exceptional.