

## AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** June 11, 2014

**TITLE:** 330 East Wilson Street – 6-Story, 35-Unit Residential Apartment with 878 Square Feet of Commercial Space. 6<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (33110)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

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

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** June 11, 2014

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Tom DeChant, Lauren Cnare, Richard Slayton and Cliff Goodhart.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of June 11, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** the proposed 6-story residential apartment located at 330 East Wilson Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Kevin Page, Josh Wilcox, Mark Landgraf, John Kothe and A.J. Robitschek, all representing Palladia, LLC. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Mark Kueppers, representing the Hancock Court Homeowners Association Board; and Richard Engel, representing the First Settlement Neighborhood Steering Committee.

The commercial space has been increased from 800 square feet to 1,300 square feet, and the residential units are a mix of all unit types. The neighborhood has asked them to look at their setbacks, but keeping in mind the size of the units the footprint of the building hasn’t changed much over time. The parking has been reduced to five spaces with elimination of the egress point on East Wilson Street. Bicycle parking has increased to 13 stalls. The trash has moved to utilize internal trash chutes. Smaller French style balconies are proposed to maximize space and the views. The roof plan has evolved to a smaller patio with the parapets low, with key views from the patio being uninterrupted. A bench and planting bed is also proposed. Playing off the modern feel for the smaller footprint of the building, materials are simple with relief elements incorporated throughout. More glass has been incorporated at the first floor level. Frosted glass will be featured in the parking area with track light lighting through sculpture elements. In discussing the Downtown Design Guidelines, Wilcox addressed the following:

- They feel confident that the placement is in the right spot, with the entry at the corner, glass at the corner and terminal views create a strong corner. The staff report mentions viewsheds associated with the orientation of the building; Wilcox felt it was better to discuss that as they go along. In terms of letters received from the neighborhood, they looked at a lot of different options in terms of moving the building. They explained at the neighborhood meeting why those were not feasible. They also looked at the potential of different setbacks along the façade, particularly along Hancock Street. It is not financially feasible to lose that many units. Other properties being built in the area create the same viewshed issues.

- Access and site circulation. Vehicle parking is important to the project. How they address that on the street is what they feel is the most critical aspect for them to discuss tonight, not so much whether the vehicle parking is something that's the right fit for this project or not.
- Usable open space. The balconies have been reduced so are no longer applicable towards that. They do have a rooftop amenity that they feel is a strong element of the project. They will look at different things at the street level to address this issue.
- Landscaping. They addressed what they are doing on the rooftop and at the street they do have a unique opportunity in two areas along the corner on Hancock Street (one existing tree) and along East Wilson Street (three existing trees). Forestry has indicated the tree on the corner will be removed, with the three along Wilson Street either staying throughout construction, or replaced if necessary.
- Lighting. No uplighting or down-lighting will be added to this building, there are no parapets to capture light. They will have lighting associated with the balconies in small step lights.
- Visual interest. That boils down to what everybody's opinion is on the parking area.
- Building materials. Staff is recommending masonry or darker metal options that were previously submitted.

Mark Kueppers spoke as a First Settlement Neighborhood resident. The First Settlement Neighborhood Steering Committee released a statement and he shared those concerns. The context of the neighborhood and needs of the community should be put first. The current design will radically compromise the view towards the lake from Hancock Street. The developers have not been willing to yield on the height of the building, even though 6-stories is out of context with this historic section of downtown.

Richard Engel spoke as a member of the First Settlement Neighborhood Steering Committee, asking the Urban Design Commission to not approve this project. Their three main concerns with the development that have been consistently expressed are the proportion and relationship of the building context with surrounding buildings, the building's effect of the viewshed down South Hancock Street, and the building's visual interest and palette of materials given its location on a highly visible corner. Through substantial progress has been made regarding the materials, little or no progress has been made regarding the other two concerns. They requested both a shadow study and corridor study to help the neighbors better understand the impact of the proposed building on their neighborhood. The development team said these would be presented at a recent neighborhood meeting but neither was. They have also requested early on in the process that renderings that include images of the surrounding buildings rather than simple white boxes, which have yet to be provided. Without these, they feel there is insufficient information for the neighborhood to form a clear understanding of the proposed building's proportions and relationship and context with neighboring buildings, or its effect on the viewshed down South Hancock Street. Such studies are extremely helpful when comparing the existing condition with the condition resulting from the proposed building. Hancock views should also show the views with and without the street trees since much of the year the trees don't have leaves forming a screening canopy. These issues are critical to both the adjacent neighbors and the neighborhood as a whole.

The Secretary noted that several neighbors had submitted written concerns. Alder Rummel, District 6 spoke, and inquired about the parking issues. And the fundamental viewshed question – the neighbors haven't had a chance to absorb what those impacts are, on more than just this neighboring building. The Downtown Plan says 6-stories, but how that is articulated in mass on this site is important.

Heather Stouder spoke in reference to her Planning Division report. Staff is in support of demolishing the existing building at this location and do support a mixed-use 6-story building at this location, consistent with the Downtown Plan. From a land use perspective, it is a perfect fit for the site and the Division is especially happy to see a mix of residential units. They do have design concerns according to the Downtown Plan and Urban Design Guidelines. Parking was and remains a major concern. The new Zoning Code has quite a few strong

requirements about keeping the ground floor active and that essentially boils down to the 50% window openings requirement for any street facing façade. The Zoning Administrator has interpreted that to mean clear vision glass, so the proposal for frosted windows would not meet the code. If this parking goes through as proposed, it would actually be behind vision glass. It is recognized that a few stalls may be necessary, but 5 stalls for 30-units, they almost unanimously have thought from the beginning that the parking element should be removed entirely for more active space along that long East Wilson Street façade. The commercial space is fantastic right on the corner. Secondly they support contemporary architecture at this site, and with this being a unique stretch of buildings this corner site should be in a masonry design. The staff perspective is that if metal is used, that it be in a warmer color rather than white. The third issue is the viewshed and the setbacks. They recognize that providing setbacks is a major impact on the program for this building, but perhaps there are better ways of protecting that viewshed.

The Secretary then noted that based on the Zoning Code requirements, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines were evolved to reinforce what those zoning requirements were. The issue about activation of the first floor level has been there since the first time the Commission saw this project. Under the “Site Design and Building” placement provisions, the street level of the building should be designed with active uses and architecture that engages the street/sidewalk in a contextually appropriate manner and integrates the building architecture and the landscape architecture. This whole issue about parking on the left-hand side of the front façade doesn’t do that, never has, even with frosted glass. Under the “Access and Site Circulation” provisions, parking facilities beneath the building shall not be considered a valid reason to establish an occupiable first floor more than 3-feet above the grade on the sidewalk or along any street, nor to include long segments of blank wall on any side of the building. It’s not blank but it’s not articulated, it’s not real space. Lastly, “the guidelines” noted that the lower level of the street facing façade shall generally incorporate a higher level of visual interest in richer architectural detailing. One of the ways to achieve this is to locate active use areas on lower level street sides and spaces within the building that could be reflected in the exterior architecture of the corresponding facades; parking doesn’t do that. These are in addition to the Zoning Code requirements that we are charged with using as guidelines for approving projects in the Downtown Core.

The Chair inquired, in terms of glass, there is a type of etched glass I’ve seen used, where they basically acid etched leaves and twigs so that it’s not real see-through but it’s clear and it’s not frosted. Does that meet the code if they could find something that in essence masks the parking but is still clear? Stouder responded: That’s a great question for Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator. It can be clear or slightly tinted, is the way the code reads, so I think it does have to be transparent.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Can you defend to us why you need to have these five parking stalls?
  - We do have commercial spaces on the first floor, we need a few spots for that. We need some spaces for short-term parking, and we need spaces for some of the residents in the building. By no way are we going to meet the parking demands if each resident had a car, but we need to have some.
- In terms of using some setbacks or setbacks on the building to mitigate any interference with the viewshed, had you proposed back to City staff to give up some of those 3-bedroom apartments to help accommodate that?
  - We ended up going from 35-units to 30-units once we created this 3-bedroom. We looked at the footprint of this building and programming it differently, but the units are already very small and we’re trying to hit a specific price point that’s affordable for people that work and live downtown and that don’t need a car. Because we’re trying to meet that price point the units are already pretty small.

- Because we are land-locked our core location is set by street grades, so we really only have these units to work with and right now they're one and two-bedroom.
- On the first floor, what is the floor to floor height in the commercial space?
  - Because it's depressed in that area, it will have 12-foot ceilings.

So the parking is below the sidewalk.

- Yes. We did go back and get an extra 18-inches to the windows on that first floor level.
- (Alder Rummel) What if we said you could exceed the 6-stories by a ½ story on one side and make up the space by setting it back. That would be another trade-off, is that some way to find our way forward?
  - That would require a Planned Development because we would exceed the height limits. You said it like oh that's dismissive. Is it worth a PD?
- I don't see where we're talking about preserving private views. I don't see anywhere the public viewshed is being impacted.
- In the case where the City has decided private views are important, like on lake homes, there is a standard written into the ordinance about 5-foot variance above the average of the building. There's nothing like that written for this particular area so it's not the policy the City has adopted for private views. I do feel the neighborhood ought to have a chance to see some of the shadow studies and the viewshed impacts that have sprung tonight, but I do think there is a difference between public views and private views.
- This notion of the building blending as a transition from one part of the neighborhood to another, why did you move to the metal panels, what's the downside of using the masonry?
  - From the very beginning we started with metal panel, we felt it was the right use for this application and the way it's structurally put together. From a cost standpoint the numbers are tight on this and we looked at opportunities to save money through that. Architecturally metal panels help reinforce the idea of a more modern form.
- How about moving back to a darker color?
  - That was one thing we heard at the neighborhood, we're certainly open to it. Take the white and bring some more gray tones into it. During the day even light gray will appear somewhat light but will darken once a shadow hits it. Staff is looking for much darker. With the darker panels, the vibrancy of the project to some degree is lost. It wouldn't be just one color changing because then accent colors would have to change also.
- On the tower, I'm not real crazy about the scalloped roof, I think just flat. I also wonder, why does the window going up in the stairwell break on the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> floor? Visually my eye doesn't like it.
  - Functionally it's not necessary, but we heard comments that it was too tall of a mass vertical here. We played with some different shapes and forms and in the end we felt this as close as we can get to providing some vertical breaks.
- I'd like to see as a study echoing the angled roofline.
  - One of the ideas we played with was to start flat and then go down at that same angle.
- Had you looked at pushing your elevator further into the core? Your upper level floor plans show you might have a little room.
  - Yes, the problem is the stairwell has nowhere to go.

Let's just say your façade remains the same, and you have a masonry read. You push your elevator up four-feet, you gain a nice walk-in closet for the units that would gain that, common space is reduced, now you look at how you articulate the architecture of the top of the tower. You could theoretically have a nice simple masonry cap at the street face and maybe there's another clip on that that's your override. You're creating an outdoor roof garden and what should be celebrated is something green up there, less about an architectural feature. I don't find the curve in keeping with the architecture. You have these planes, the idea of this masonry box set on this site, and you have these very lightweight planes. The glass corners on the upper levels is kind of weakening that concept you had brought forward. Even if it's not a balcony, if we could read that foot of the canted panel reading back, and then I would take the

entire floor plan and take the cant out of the first floor plan, take the glass on the upper levels and push it back, enter straight. If you can open up that corner to be a void now, you'd see your two outside wall metal panels more.

- This one was much more successful. This has the planes, the open balcony, it wasn't a box the way you had pushed and put the metal panel back there to recess that.
    - Do you feel the Hancock side, minus the corner, is successful with the way that larger balcony sits and the rectangular mass with the large mass in it is successful?
- I think it could be. If you were to rework that corner I don't know that you'd need the balconies there. I just thought this one was much more successful.
- The other issue is that stuff that has to be met because Zoning requires them is not a PD, they're going to have to change the design to meet the requirements, it's that simple, because they can't be waived. The glass and the parking. The parking is not condoned by the Downtown Design Guidelines as referenced within the Zoning Code; the 149 East Wilson project had to change for that reason.
    - It's not the parking it's the glass treatment on that.
  - The Secretary says it's the parking, not the glass treatment that is at issue. The Commission needs to have a discussion about that. The Downtown Design Guidelines say it can't be for parking. If we refer it then it gets clarified by Matt's interpretation of the code, where Heather's report states that the parking is the issue.
    - The way I read it and understand it, it's not the parking function itself that Matt has an issue with, it's the glass that's associated with the parking.
  - Even if it is a technical issue, and I'm not sure it is, it may well be, you haven't really presented enough design for us about how that's going to work to enliven the street. I think it can work as an "art thing," you've only talked about that conceptually, we haven't really seen the design of that to convince us it would work and I think that's something that ought to be on the public table before we actually send this on.
  - Initial approval is bulk, mass, the mixed-use...including the parking as designed.
  - I can't say that. Our own guidelines say that we shouldn't be doing that. The Commission would have to make a finding that the parking was not at issue based on some kind of superior design that justifies that, I don't see that we have that and I'm not advising that. If the Commission disregards the parking issue and grants approval, the motion would have to say why it doesn't have to meet the guidelines.
  - I think the idea of transparency is transparency to activity, and life.
  - In all the reports, every single time: screening was noted as problematic in regards to the guidelines.
  - If we did initial approval, contingent on eliminating the parking and remodeling that space, they can always come back for a re-initial approval?
    - Yes they can.

## **ACTION:**

A motion was made by Slayton for **INITIAL APPROVAL**, eliminating the parking and enlivening the streetscape. Cnare seconded the motion for purposes of a discussion.

- The issue is about where the parking is. Are you saying you could figure out a new place for parking, are you saying no parking whatsoever, or nowhere on that front façade? For the purposes of enlivening the street.
  - We won't be removing the parking. We can look at different ways of screening it.
- We need to see the other metal color possibilities as well.
- I don't know if getting it to Plan Commission helps move this forward at this point, there are some pretty big design issues.

- We're unconvinced that screening activates the street at this point. That's because one: you haven't proven that point and you want to keep saying it, I want to give you a chance but it's not here on this table and it's not here for the neighborhood or other City commissions to see right now.
- Look to the size of stalls you have, maybe you can minimize them.
- We've had conversations about how to put something in the front besides direct parking, and the screen. A lobby, a seating area, we have what we have. I've tried to encourage them many times to do something to address that (staff).

The motion failed on a vote of (2-3) with DeChant, Goodhart and O'Kroley voting no.

On a motion by O'Kroley, seconded by Cnare, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0). The motion noted the following:

- Continue to work with the neighborhood and Alder on viewshed and shadow study issues.
- Clarify parking at the street, screening, Zoning Code, Downtown Design Guidelines, etc.
- Reexamine architecture and building materials associated with the previous version.

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 and 6.5.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 330 East Wilson Street**

|                       | Site Plan | Architecture | Landscape Plan | Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc. | Signs | Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular) | Urban Context | Overall Rating |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Member Ratings</b> | -         | 5            | -              | -                              | -     | -                                   | 6             | 5              |
|                       | 6         | 7            | -              | -                              | -     | 6                                   | 7             | 6.5            |
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General Comments:

- Personally, like the light metal panels, modern look. Not terribly concerned about 5 parking at ground level.