

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: June 1, 2016

TITLE: 425 West Washington Avenue –  
Modifications to Previously Approved  
Plans for a 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: June 1, 2016

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair\*; Richard Slayton\*, Dawn O’Kroley, John Harrington, Cliff Goodhart, Michael Rosenblum, Lois Braun-Oddo and Sheri Carter.

\*Wagner recused himself; Slayton acted as Chair.\*

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of June 1, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **MADE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION TO THE PLAN COMMISSION** on modifications to an existing development located at 425 West Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Erik Minton, John Sutton, Bob Downing and John Bonsett-Veal. Registered and speaking in opposition was Jonathan Cooper, representing the Bassett District Steering Committee for 425 West Washington Avenue. Four items changed during construction on this project.

1. They have agreed to remove the wood pergola on top of the fourth floor rooftop garden.
2. The green roof. There was an approved railing that was to be 5-feet from the parapet. At the Urban Design Commission’s urging, more green and a seating area were added; the railing was pushed to 3-feet from the parapet in negotiating with City staff. Subsequently, the 42-inch off the planter railing was installed. When they discussed a green roof (sedum), they would not have required any gardening. Now a heavily landscaped rooftop garden, it makes more sense for a gardener not to work on the outside of the rail, but to be on the inside.
3. Concern with safety for the ground floor apartments (because of the relationship to abutting parking) necessitated installation of a 6-foot fence that was not in the original plan.
4. Pavers were installed in the backyard area.

Sutton noted that City staff have issue with the fence being too tall and not matching the architecture. He proposes to take the top 2-feet of the fence and replacing it with metal lattice to match the existing decks already on the building. Everything would be dark bronze to match all the trim on the building.

Kevin Firchow noted that there were 15 alterations that were requested in the packet with staff noting the few they were most concerned about. The 6-foot fence is too suburban for this location and staff is concerned about how combining materials to modify the fence will be viewed from the street and be integrated. The changes to the landscape plan and pavers does not increase the impervious surface as most of it is already over a structure.

Jonathan Cooper spoke in opposition to the modifications. The advisory statement provided from the neighborhood has a number of significant items with which they have issue. When this building was approved, it was approved as an exceptional design and given bonus stories. None of the things they have done to the project since its original approval would never have been approved by this Commission. Secondly, the March 23, 2016 letter of intent from the developers that stated “all items have been reviewed by the steering committee and modified to satisfy their concerns” is not true.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- My concern is that we granted bonus stories based on the finding of a higher quality building being provided, and there appears to have alterations to it that are in conflict.

Erik Minton commented that the opposition to this building is unbelievable. He stated that Jonathan Cooper had an opportunity to have a meeting last summer, and read from a note: “I for one have no intention of discussing or agreeing to any item larger or small without consideration of the issues.” Three notices have been sent to this neighborhood group when only one is required. There isn’t any decision that wasn’t done with an intention to excellence. One of our fences actually protects the neighboring parking lot. This steering committee that has offered so much assistance has not accepted one invitation to view my gym. It’s not the hysteria that shows up at the Plan Commission. Mr. Verveer was furious and upset that we gave no notice; I have that notice here. This is the way we use our rooftops and you can see the level of green, we invested nearly \$200,000 on this roof. He reminded the group that he worked hard on this building and garden and is proud of it.

#### **ACTION:**

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Harrington, the Urban Design Commission **GAVE AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION TO THE PLAN COMMISSION:**

- Need more information and details to recommend approval of the rooftop and ground level fencing.
- Provide more context on the fence appearance, primarily from the street view.
- Reduce the height of the rooftop fence

The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0).