

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: November 9, 2016

TITLE: 8102 Watts Road – 4-Story, 106 Guest Room “Tru Hotel (by Hilton).” 9th Ald. Dist. (43729)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: November 9, 2016

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Sheri Carter, Lois Braun-Oddo, Dawn O’Kroley, Cliff Goodhart, Richard Slayton, Rafeeq Asad, Tom DeChant and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of November 9, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a 4-story, 106 guest room “Tru Hotel (by Hilton)” located at 8102 Watts Road. Appearing on behalf of the project were Andy Inman and Jennifer Koester, representing North Central Group; and Matt Breunig.

In review of comments received from the Commission and from staff, Inman summarized changes to the project. The access point for circulation has changed for right-in/right-out. Significantly more durable materials are being used in combination with EIFS. Paul Skidmore discussed the landscape plan, incorporating some of the themes from the neighboring Princeton Club, concentrating on the streetscape and in front of the foundation. The screening around the dumpster has increased. Additional screening will use roses and a number of larger trees, where the masses will take your eye away from the foundation. The treatment of the south end of the building facing Watts Road has been made to look more entrance-like, addressing the street. Additional glass has been introduced and the building shifted slightly so you would see some delineation rather than a flat façade. The masonry has been increased all the way across the front façade all the way to the roof; on the rear of the building there is all masonry, and primarily masonry on the side to the east. There is still EIFS, in two accent colors. On the east elevation (facing the Princeton Club) there is a modular block wall behind their building along the Princeton Club parking lot; they brought the masonry up through the corners and middle. Some of the banding is now more of an architectural statement. There is still EIFS in the rear that comes all the way down to the ground in areas not trafficked by the hotel guests and works well from a performance standpoint. The Secretary noted that the Commission has not supported the use of EIFS on the ground level since 2003. Building material samples were shown.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- You have those ventilator units that are spaced around and grouped. I assume those same units exist on the other units and are hidden by a screen?

- We looked at that too. We don't want to make those units bigger than they need to be. We felt in the EIFS you could hide those better. They certainly look pronounced here, but the design intention is they would disappear into the EIFS.
- I'm not sure that they do. Maybe a faux panel to match the functional panel and runs the same length.
- What is the material for the wall?
 - An engineered masonry.

Jessica Vaughn of the Planning Division discussed staff's position on the project. The applicant has made some strides to address some issues, but she noted the following items the Commission should focus on:

- The building orientation to Watts Road as the primary street: this is a private drive that serves the properties, but is not a primary street. Think about how this building elevation is oriented, emphasize what that orientation really looks like, and are there opportunities to shift internally to get additional glazing and make that more of an entry, a level of activity in the building other than a stairwell.
- The site access and the landscape plan is moving in the right direction.
- The HVAC units: what they look like today versus what they could be.
- In terms of the building design, clarification on the amount of EIFS. This has a really tall wall on this elevation; is the EIFS shown down to the ground acceptable or not?

Discussion amongst the Commission in response to the issues raised continued as follows:

- You're going to need more islands in the parking lot to meet code.
- These islands are too small; make sure the trees in there can tolerate the impact of the situation they're going to be in.
- The trees in here, if this island could align with that. Normally I like to see them spread; either do that or align them.
- You've got space here for the plants/trees to be more substantial. If there's a rhythm to the Crabapples, make sure there's a workable rhythm, or group them to make more of a statement.
 - (Skidmore) I spaced them out purposely because it's more of a canyon in that area. Maybe it would make more sense to use a columnar plant instead of Crabapple. If you would consider something columnar so that as you look out here you don't see that wall, it starts to break up that wall. Make sure you don't want more of the same species for a bold look.
- Use mulch instead of stone.
- Is there any outdoor space at this hotel?
 - Yes there is. There's a fire pit with seating, and an opportunity anticipated for lawn games. Millennial mindset. There's a lot of fun space in the lobby itself too.
- On the Watts Road side of the building, is that the side that has your sign on it?
 - There is one sign there.

Is there a stairway there that is glass?
Yes.
- If you're going to have outdoor space and you have this massive change of grade, and it's on the north side; wouldn't it make more sense to have it on the south side of the building? Which goes back to having some kind of feature on Watts Road.
 - We'd rather not do that. There are three hotels on the property, and the project that was approved for Fred Rouse at the last UDC meeting. There are some efficiencies in having the front door there, if we spread out the doors to the far corners of the site, they've got to walk across two parking lots. It's a better guest experience if they are sharing those parking areas.

But again it's creating a feature that makes it more usable at the streetside. If the building doesn't have prominence on Watts Road, and you're creating an outdoor area that's partially usable because it's on the north side...

- Once you check in, you can use your key to get you in on this side. There's so much opportunity with the entrance, and there's an office here that doesn't even have a window. You could get another row of parking by moving the entrance; it is a Watts Road address.
 - None of the buildings on Watts Road address the street, it's all back to the street.
 - We studied it, we looked at flipping it every different way. From our perspective, operationally it just doesn't work. We had some real concerns about the lobby and public spaces down here. There was nothing we could disassociate from the main entrance, it just doesn't work with a building of this scale. The office needs to be here, the GM from a security perspective, with ready access to the lobby. The other thing to point out as far as accessibility and how the guests will arrive, very few of them will come on Watts Road, they're going to come in on Commerce.
- What about just flipping the outdoor space?
 - Again the connection we want the lobby and the guests to see that, we really felt the best way to address that was landscaping, some of the treatments Paul talked about to enhance that. The glazing, we don't have a need for glazing in the stairwell but we felt that was the best way to address that, it's a significant improvement.
- This is not like Park Street, Watts Road isn't really going to be an urban space.
- Right now we have a building turned sideways because of site impediment. Some of the other Tru buildings are longer and wider and are parallel to the road. This is a site impediment because it's being squeezed between two other buildings. It's a site selection choice.
- (Staff) Some of the more recent development in the area is also more oriented to the street. On the other side of the Princeton Club we have units coming where we worked with them pretty in depth to get a better street orientation. Over here we have a more urban setting with a mixed-use development which includes retail, office and some residential above. Then over here is an assisted living facility which also has a really good street orientation, especially at the street and their commercial pieces too.
- The door from the stair tower is narrower than the light tower above it, why can't it continue that so it seems like a design element going all the way down?
 - We toyed with putting a small canopy there that makes it more entrance-like.
- A guest could use it with a pass key.
- I'm not sure a canopy is the correct answer.
- Why is there a door at the end of the corridor?
 - For pedestrian traffic, if there would be any, to get in or people exiting from the first floor. You can't go through the stairwell? I think it's confusing, especially if now you're going to highlight the one into the stairs, it's confusing of which one to use. It doesn't have an air lock. If we have a couple doors opening and closing at night it would help buffer the sound into the space.
- Just a simple canopy over the stoop is going to look like service kind of place. Something that makes it look more prominent.
- Have you looked at trying to nestle that dumpster enclosure into the retaining wall?
 - We've tried to put it in many different places. The way the site is oriented there's really no great place to put it.
- There's issue with your dumpster location. It's not a very welcoming front end piece.
- Going back to your materials, the medium gray, that's the white marble stone you brought? Whatever your materials are they're not in sync.
 - This is an EIFS color.
- I'm not there. The contrast on your massing versus your elevations just doesn't work.
- The rendering shows more contrast than what the materials in your hand show.

- The rendering is more interesting than what's in your hand.
- Those seem to blend, rather than have the differences that your rendering shows.
- There's something with your materials, having very rigid spacing of your windows, you kind of need a beautiful material around that to make that interesting, and what you've brought I don't think does that.
- I think using gray on that retaining wall would work better.
- See if there's something you can do about the EIFS coming to the ground, because normally our policy doesn't accept that.

ACTION:

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Slayton, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-2) with O'Kroley and Carter voting no. The motion provided for address of the above comments, and specifically:

- Need to resolve issues relative to landscaping, site design, building architecture, building materials (especially EIFS), dumpster location, the Watts Road elevation's address of the street, etc.