

Urban Design Commission Meeting 10-4-2017 Agenda Item 5 Legistar File 46483

1004 and 1032 South Park Street Redevelopment Plan Comments

Building Setback and Greenspace

The proposed building setback from the sidewalk of only 2 feet along Park Street and 3 feet along Fish Hatchery Road is still not enough to provide adequate openspace and real greenspace along the perimeter of the buildings. The UDD #7 requirements allow for a 1 to 10 foot setback. Yet, the requirements in UDD #8 along parts of East Washington Avenue call for a building setback of 15 feet from the sidewalk. Why is there such a wide discrepancy here for these two major traffic corridors? A recently constructed building at 1200 East Washington is only 3 stories tall and has a [15 foot setback on East Washington Avenue](#); an 8.33 foot setback on Few Street; a side yard setback of 11.33 feet and a rear yard setback of 20 feet. Why can't this project have setbacks closer to numbers like that? Is it because the city planning department is bending over backwards to help the developer create the largest and most imposing human sardine can on Park Street yet.

In comparison, [Wingra Clinic](#) has a setback of about 11 feet along most of its perimeter on Park Street; the [parking ramp for the Wingra Clinic](#) has about an 11 foot setback from the public sidewalk along Fish Hatchery Road and a setback of about 11 feet from the sidewalk on Midland Street. The [Wingra Point Residences](#) across the street have building setbacks of 5 or 6 feet from the public sidewalk along Fish Hatchery Road and about 10 feet along South Brooks Street.

The Peloton buildings should be set back more from the sidewalks to allow for a wider greenspace buffer along Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road that will support a larger tree canopy and more vegetation along the public sidewalk.

The interior courtyard greenspace is misleading. It has a lot of hardscape and I don't hold much hope for the sod or planting areas. This courtyard will not get much direct sunlight except mid-day during the summer and dearly none during the other seasons when the sun is lower in the sky and the four story southern building blocking the rays. Real, healthy, and happy greenery will be lacking here no matter how many times they re-sod or replace the plants with new ones.

The shadow studies would have been better if done as video time lapse sequences from dawn to dusk. Also, the projected shadow should have been a darker shade of gray to more closely resemble the shade of the real shadows in the Google map view that was used. It is difficult to make out the projected shadows. The triangular courtyard appears mostly darkened by shadows much of the year. A much more open and inviting space could be created by eliminating the entire five unit live-work space building so sunlight can get in at least half of the day.

On the south side of the project site along the shared private road, the previously approved 2015 plans for this project had a building setback of 15 feet from the road, comprised of a 5 foot wide sidewalk and a 10 foot wide terrace area with real grass and trees shown growing there as landscaping. But the building now proposed is only five feet from the road, the width of the sidewalk, with the green terrace totally eliminated. This shared private road is only 21 feet wide and has no sidewalk at all on the other side, just a 3 foot wide landscaped space between Wingra Clinic and the road. This stark, narrow corridor will become the entrance to the secured parking area for this project for both vehicles and bicycles. It will be a difficult and often congested area to navigate through, especially when the trash and recycling trucks are blocking half of that road to empty the dumpsters.

Developers love to build these mixed use buildings because they know the city lets them get away with providing the most pitiful amount of openspace and or greenspace imaginable. It is getting to the point where an open spot on the plans is called greenspace when it is mostly concrete and landscaping gravel or shredded bark with a couple sad looking plants trying to grow in that dismal spot. With the towering buildings surrounding the central courtyard in these plans, I predict that the developer will eventually have to rip out the proposed sod that will refuse to grow due to lack of sun and too much foot traffic and replace it with AstroTurf. But hey, it will still be colored green!

Why is it that the city is so bent on trying to redevelop much of the older urban areas of Madison with the tallest buildings that can be fit into the space but having little regard for providing adequate openspace and greenspace. City officials keep saying that we need to build up not out to prevent urban sprawl. Yet out in suburban areas of the city the city allows rampant sprawling construction projects that use up huge amounts of greenspace with roadways and huge surface parking lots. Look at the [University Research Park on Mineral Point Road](#) as one example. The city even created a TIF district in this area (TID #46) and is now even [planning to expand the boundaries of TID #46](#) to help even more high tech companies build grand campuses with expansive surface parking lots. They even include way more openspace and greenspace than any apartment building will ever have in downtown Madison. The city is even working on creating a new TIF district ([TID #47](#)) even further towards the edge of Madison to help even more companies build their dream campuses with expansive surface parking and beautifully landscaped greenspaces with the help of diverted tax dollars in the form of TIF funding.

Parking and Building Access

The math does not realistically add up with the ratio of one parking stall per residential unit. There are 162 units and 159 vehicle parking stalls however, there are 198 bedrooms, many of which will be occupied by one or more adults with transportation needs. Also, the revised plans show only 154 bicycle parking stalls on the property. Yet, with 198 bedrooms one would expect there should be at least 198 bike stalls. A previous version of this project approved by the UDC in 2015 had a total of 173 vehicle parking stalls and 207 bicycle stalls. The developer has previously indicated he may consider putting in additional hanging bicycle storage. However, most hanging bicycle storage areas are located within a vehicle stall area and may require moving the vehicle out of the way each time the bicycle needs to go up or come down. Also, even with a multiple pulley system, raising and lowering the bike is cumbersome and time consuming compared to the convenience of a lockable bike stall or locker at ground level.

The revised plans have eliminated the separate bicycle ramp to the parking level. However, this will not stop bicyclists from using the vehicle ramp instead of the proposed bicycle elevator. The proposed ramp is problematic due to the 90 degree turn required for all vehicles at the bottom and the 270 degree turn at street level for vehicles entering or exiting the ramp to or from Park Street. A suggestion would be to install motion activated flashing warning lights to let vehicles know that someone is coming from the other direction. The proposed larger elevator for bicycles at the south end of the building has a wider lobby area on the first floor to help in getting bicycles in and out of the elevator but a much narrower area in front of the elevator door on the second through fourth floor. Most bicycles are about six feet long so a five foot wide hallway seems too small. This also presents a problem with furniture moving.

This project needs to have a large commercial presence at street level to help create a vibrant and pedestrian friendly corridor. However, there is zero off street parking provided for employees and visitors to the commercial areas of this redevelopment project. All of the provided parking is in the basement secured parking facility and is reserved for tenants of the residential units. The previously approved 2015 plans had 10 visitor parking stalls and 54 shared parking stalls at ground level that were available for use by employees and customers of the proposed 11,000 square feet of commercial and live-work space during the day. The current plans show 12,287 SF of commercial space and 11,301 SF of live-work space with NO off street parking provided at all. The developer has indicated that some of the secure parking in the basement level will be available for customers of the commercial areas during the day. However, I find difficult to believe this concept will be adequate or even doable. First, the secure garage door at the ramp entrance would have to be programmed to open during the day for anyone, not just apartment tenants. This will cause security problems for the parking area. Also, how will the commercial space customers find their way walking out of the parking area in the basement to the commercial areas? The elevators and stairwells need to be secure for apartment tenants at all times. People won't want to walk up the entrance ramp and around the buildings to get to their destination. I just don't see how this concept can be doable without causing security and safety concerns.

Other Plan Details

Why don't the plans show the square footage of each living unit and why are some living units not filled in with locations for the kitchen area and bathrooms? Do those units just get a hotplate on a card table and a chamber pot? I think that the size of each unit should be shown on the plans before they can be approved by the UDC and Plan Commissions. That way the commissioners can better realize that the majority of the building is really a four to five story human sardine can.

The two elevators on the north end of the building open to a hallway that goes nowhere on the fifth floor except to the stairwell.

Sixth floor elevator opens inside commercial area instead of in a tenant hallway or lobby area as on other floors. This does not make sense as the rooftop public area is also listed for use by building residents and handicap access is necessary directly to this level for residents as well as for the commercial area on that level.

There is only one trash and recycling collection point at the south end of the project. Residents of two of the three proposed buildings and all of the commercial spaces will have to carry their trash and recycling out of their buildings and outside down a sidewalk to enter the third building where the trash/recycling collection area is located. This is highly inconvenient and impractical for the majority of the project occupants.

There are no brows or canopies along Fish Hatchery road that might protect someone on the public sidewalk below from being injured by an object falling from one of the apartment balconies above. Something would have to be light as a feather not to hurt falling from 4 or 5 floors to someone's noggin below. The same issue exists for the sidewalk along the south side of the property.

The colored perspective drawings do not seem to correlate with the plans in depicting the apartment stairwells and porches along the public sidewalk on Fish Hatchery Road. Also, the various perspectives of the courtyard and the various plans seem to differ as to whether or not there are stairs to the first floor apartments in the western building along Fish Hatchery Road leading from the interior courtyard to the apartments. All plan pages need to be updated to show the various plan details correctly.

Where will the exhaust fans be located for the parking exhaust? These fans tend to be quite noisy as they usually have one speed (fast). Hopefully the fans will be located away from any first floor apartments as otherwise the drone of the fans and the exhausted stale air will make it impossible to open the apartment windows. I suggest variable speed fans that are programmed to react to carbon monoxide sensors in the parking area. The higher the carbon monoxide reading, the faster the fans will exhaust the air.

I like the use of the top floor for commercial space, perhaps a restaurant and use of rooftop space for an outdoor space with a fantastic view. But where will these patrons park their vehicles? Bay Creek residents don't want them filling the nearby residential streets lined with single family homes. The city is proposing a requirement that any restaurant on the property will need to have a conditional use permit, however, the plans show what looks like a space only viable for a restaurant on the top floor so does that then make a restaurant there a done deal?

Conclusion and Recommendations

I strongly believe the developer and the city need to rethink what is wanted and what is necessary to make a large multi-use building or set of buildings work at this location.

- There needs to be significant commercial space at the pedestrian level to help create a vibrant and walkable Park Street corridor.
- However, there needs to be adequate off street parking for residents of the proposed residential units and visitors to this area coming by personal vehicle or bicycle. The commercial space proposed in these plans must have reasonable off street parking provided. The current plans provide no off street parking for the proposed commercial areas. The proposed redevelopment should be rejected by the Plan Commission for this reason alone. On street parking is very limited in this area and commuter and commercial customer parking is already imposing on many of the streets of the nearby residential areas.
- Every effort must be made to create adequate green space at the first floor pedestrian level. I am talking about real green space here not some planters or pots with plastic plants and wood chips in them. I do not believe this is possible with the currently proposed building footprints. The proposed redevelopment should be rejected by the Plan Commission for this reason alone.
- Pedestrian/bicycle safety must be the top priority here and along the entire South Park Street corridor. Both Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road are extremely difficult to cross as there is a lack of safe pedestrian crossings. Even the few intersections controlled by traffic lights are dangerous during the rush hours. The Park Street/Fish Hatchery Road intersection is dangerous all the time because south bound Park Street traffic veering right onto Fish Hatchery Road often fails to stop for pedestrians waiting to cross even when the flashing pedestrian light has been activated by pedestrians waiting to cross the street. The [2006 Wingra BUILD Plan](#) called for safer east-west pedestrian and bicycle connections across these major arterial roadways. The Wingra BUILD Plan also called for better internal pedestrian-bicycle connections within the Wingra BUILD Plan boundaries. These priorities are being ignored with the current proposed project plans. The proposed redevelopment should be rejected by the Plan Commission for this reason alone.

I believe that the developer is trying to put too much into the limited land area of this triangle of property facing two of the most heavily traveled streets in Madison. I do not believe this density is doable with the current proposed 3 to 6 story set of buildings. To accomplish the density the developer is proposing, a portion of this land area needs to be devoted to higher buildings as high as 7 to 10 stories. This would free up land area at street level for more parking. The pedestrian level needs to provide a safe environment for pedestrians with plenty of green space.

The city wants to have an iconic building at the tip of this flatiron parcel but this building does not quite do it, especially when just down the street a few hundred feet the city is proposing to change land use zoning to allow 4 to 12 story buildings. We need a taller building that has a smaller footprint and more greenspace at this location.

I propose that the developer and the city scrap these plans entirely and start over. Why not separate the pedestrian-bike level from street level by ramping up the sidewalks on Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road along this property to create a pedestrian level high enough to connect with the other side of Park Street and Fish Hatchery Road with pedestrian/bike overpasses at the tip of the flatiron property that would connect to new redevelopment on the nearby properties on the other side of these streets, also accessing those new redevelopment projects at the overpass level rather than street level thereby eliminating the dangerous street level crossings at this busy intersection. These elevated pedestrian levels would then ramp down to street level on the other side of the road. There is room to do this on the SSM parcel at 999 South Park Street and along the West side of Park Street in the 1000 and 900 blocks. Much of the 1000 and 900 blocks of the west side of Park Street are in blighted condition and could be acquired under a single ownership to create a similar multi story mixed use structure on that side of Park Street. This would allow for additional room for parking at street level in this entire area. The elevated commercial/pedestrian/bike level would be an inviting environment above the hustle and bustle of the busy roads below, with plenty of greenspace and views of Monona Bay and Madison's isthmus. I believe tiered multi-story structures interconnected by ped/bike overpasses in this area would be the best way to solve the existing issues of lack of vehicle parking and the lack of a safe and enjoyable pedestrian and bicycle corridor through this area.

I look at the entire land area within the Wingra BUILD triangle and see the potential for something more. The new Cannonball ped/bike corridor is planned to extend through parkland behind Bowman Field; cross Wingra Creek; and connect to the Wingra Creek ped/bike trail. Why not make plans to extend a new ped/bike trail from that point through the middle of the Wingra BUILD triangle and then around the south side of the Wingra Clinic parking ramp and continue north along the east side of Fish Hatchery Road ramping up as it continues north to the tip of the flatiron parcel. From there the two overpasses would divide and carry this corridor across Fish Hatchery Road and Park Street. From these locations the two corridors would ramp back down to street level to continue at grade to the St. Mary's Hospital area and the South and West Shore Drive areas.

I think the best way to accomplish a multi parcel master planned concept like I am proposing is for the city to purchase the subject properties at 1004 and 1032 South Parks Street as well as all the other properties needed and master plan the entire area as a unified redevelopment project. This area is within the boundaries of TID #42 and TIF funding could be utilized to help fund a large multi-parcel master-planned redevelopment like I am proposing. And the newly approved [Connect Madison economic development strategy](#) calls for projects like I am proposing here. The Madison Department of Planning, Community, and Economic Development

needs to do a better job of planning for the future of this city as it continues to grow. Less piecemeal redevelopment and more master planning of larger blocks of properties for redevelopment is sadly needed.

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