

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** September 27, 2017

**TITLE:** 2901 University Avenue – Mixed-Use  
Development of Approximately 10,700  
Square Feet of Retail Space and 52  
Residential Apartments with Below Grade  
Parking Located in UDD No. 6. 5<sup>th</sup> Ald.  
Dist. (48877)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** September 27, 2017

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, John Harrington, Cliff Goodhart, Tom DeChant, Michael Rosenblum and Rafeeq Asad.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of September 27, 2017, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use development located at 2901 University Avenue in UDD No. 6. Appearing on behalf of the project was Randy Bruce, representing Flad Development. Appearing neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak were Anthony Lathrop and Julianne Dwyer.

The site currently contains Party Port Liquor, parking and a series of residential buildings facing Harvey Street to the south for a total of 4-5 existing structures. The site slopes from a low spot up to a high spot with about 10-12 feet of fall across the entire site. They will be requesting a rezoning of the site to CC-T to allow for this mixed-use development. In addition, they will be submitting a CSM to combine the four lots into one, with dedicated right-of-way expansion areas or an easement to allow for relocation of the public sidewalk. The proposed development plan shows 10,700 square feet of commercial space fronting University Avenue with a 15-foot setback, which increases as they present a crescent shaped plaza space out front for restaurant or other uses. Behind the commercial space is a parking field on the main floor level with 42 parking stalls. Below that is underground parking for 71 stalls to handle the residential uses, employees of the commercial spaces and visitors. Going up the building to the first floor on Harvey Street, residential space with individual entries as well as entries to common corridors and lobby space help activate that street face. As you move up the building turns into a full “L-shape,” with the third floor piece dropping off, stepping back on the fifth floor to create an outdoor terrace space. The base of the building is a stone veneer that would go up the residential portion. A short knee wall will separate the commercial from residential.

Anthony Lathrop spoke to concerns with the density exceeding the Comprehensive Plan and the Neighborhood Plan recommendations of 26-40 units per acre. The first floor stepback is nice, but the density needs to be lower on Harvey Street. The Hoyt Park Neighborhood Plan specifies that the highest scale for this block is at the University Avenue frontage and should scale back to two stories throughout the Harvey lots. This design peaks in the middle, not on University and puts too much mass on the Harvey Street side. It could be reduced by one

story which would better scale into the neighborhood of small single-family homes. The neighborhood plan also categorizes this as a “neighborhood in a forest,” which is very meaningful to the residents. Any design should enhance and preserve that unique character by preserving as many trees as possible, or by using woody or green colored materials. They would like to maintain the existing character as much as possible. He distributed photos of the neighborhood.

Julianne Dwyer spoke about the neighborhood character and scale. The area is urban bucolic, less cosmopolitan than the appearance of this proposed development. Across the street is the historic Finley House. Maintaining the current tree canopy height is important. She emphasized the residential scale of the neighborhood. The neighborhood plan specifically talks about the scale on Harvey Street being in context with the existing residential scale. There is an incredible amount of mass in one area of this development facing the residential neighborhood; lowering stories could help with that. They also need to see more views from the neighborhood perspective. The Corey Arts building has nice details; the smaller development next to West High School fits into the scale of the neighborhood.

Alder Bidar-Sielaff noted that they held a neighborhood meeting in early August that was very well attended. The letter the Commission received from the Rocky Bluff Neighborhood Association summarizes those comments. This is a prominent corner on University Avenue.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Did you explore ideas of putting more mass on University?
  - It’s important to the developer to have a recognizable independence to commercial space for it to be successful and to avoid the commercial space being lost. We can look at other ways to address it. We thought the Comprehensive Plan, the neighborhood plan and the UDD No. 6 standards talked about densities of about 60 units per acre and was trying to push densities up in this area because it’s on University Avenue. We want to be sensitive to the neighborhood, that’s important, but at the same time we owe it to the City to get a reasonable amount of density on this site.
- We’ll review that when we get a Planning Division staff report, but it’s really more of a Plan Commission issue.
- There’s a new development in Shorewood just a few blocks away that looks like the commercial is going to be pretty successful with apartments above it. This site to me looks like a two bar building with a taller building facing University, and then your other building facing the residential street, then you end up with this parking lot courtyard. What’s really appropriate for this site is two buildings: a tall building facing University and a smaller building facing the neighborhood, and residential over retail can be successful along University as demonstrated with other developments both to the east and west.
- The interior court could have mature canopy trees that can help that transition of the forest to the urban edge, and if you are committed to the one-story piece on University you could see over that to a large canopy at some point. That would really break up that mass.
  - We’re limited on the Harvey Street side to height there.
- If you are committed to that height, and you fill that parking field with canopy trees, it’s your west bar, I don’t know how you would soften the west façade and reduce that scale without losing density or unit size.
- Structured parking.
- This is like a lot of buildings I’m seeing around. I’d like to see something architecturally that is more in tune with its context. It doesn’t feel like this neighborhood, and I’d like you to look at how you can make it draw back into the neighborhood. The architecture itself.

- I would echo that. This is an urban forest; we need to see in your renderings because it feels very stark currently.
  - Our yard space is the strongest on Harvey Street, we have street trees available to us and plantings. On Ridge it's tighter, we've got a 6-foot setback, but we are going to be creating an improved streetscape with curb and gutter, sidewalks and terraces.
- But recognize large canopy trees. You're not really creating what the neighborhood is looking for.
- You're using clapboard on this relatively large building. I'm not sure the heavy masonry on the Harvey Street side is useful either. It needs some rethinking all around in terms of how it presents itself. It seems heavier than what it needs to be.
- It would feel to me like the Harvey Street side would begin to have some prairie style elements there, you could take that and make it much more residential on the two-story component, and move towards a truly urban expression if the larger mass was more towards University. You could have to related yet distinctive styles of architecture.

**ACTION:**

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.