

## AGENDA # 6

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION      **PRESENTED:** January 24, 2018

TITLE: 502, 506 East Washington Avenue & 7, 11 North Franklin Street –  
Demolition/Relocation of Four Existing Homes and Construction of a New 5-Story Hotel Building in UDD No. 4. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ald. Dist. (48451)

**REFERRED:**  
**REREFERRED:**  
**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary      **ADOPTED:**      **POF:**

DATED: January 24, 2018      **ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Rafeeq Asad, Cliff Goodhart, Amanda Hall, John Harrington, Tom DeChant and Michael Rosenblum.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of January 24, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a hotel project located at 502, 506 East Washington Avenue & 7, 11 North Franklin Street in UDD No. 4. Appearing on behalf of the project were Joseph Lee, representing McGrath Properties, Michael Metzger, Lance McGrath and Taylor McGrath. Registered and speaking in opposition were Janelle Ramsel and Mariah Renz. Registered in neither support nor opposition and wishing to speak were Bob Klebba and Rick McKy. The application distributed context photos and supplemental images from the surrounding area. There have been questions about what is in the neighborhood; there is a lot going on with mixed-use buildings and office buildings a short distance from the subject property. There have been questions regarding height and zoning within this area. Regarding zoning around property: UMX and the height limit for the area identifies up to 8-stories and additional stories with approval. There have been questions about venting for the exhaust from the garage; the air intake is at the back by the entry to garage, the louver opens when needed and there is no noise. The exhaust fan is on East Washington Avenue through a ground well. They will take extra precautions to mitigate that sound. The scope of the building hasn't changed – the use, size and height remain the same. The design team worked on issues regarding articulation and materiality, worked with Zoning Division to come up with solution. Before the building was a white pure box on a plinth, but now they've created some ins and outs in different colors of metal panel. Dark charcoal color set in 6-8 inches to creates a shadow line. The ground floor had a wood material, exotic hardwood, which is not allowed. The ground floor is now proposed to use a smooth face burnished block. Scaled block will be CMU sized.

### Public comment:

Mariah Renz spoke as a nearby homeowner, 3 houses from proposed building. She loves the neighborhood; it's very unique and walkable. In the time she has been here the City has encouraged people to buy and fix up the houses in this neighborhood. She has a very hard time imagining this hotel integrating into the neighborhood she knows. This isn't a good photo from Franklin Street in the packet materials; you don't see the view toward

the lake, there are no houses over 3-feet tall. She is disappointed with what came back with, it looks like nothing nearby, not what the neighborhood looks like.

Bob Klebba spoke as someone who helped coordinate a steering committee for the neighborhood. He gave credit to the developer for coming to the neighborhood meetings and providing information. The Charles Quagliana report did not include that Leonard Farwell owned two of the buildings on the site at 504 East Washington Avenue and 7 North Franklin Street. It would be difficult to justify saving those buildings. He is excited that the building at 502 will be preserved by moving it. There was some concern about the loss of affordable housing. Parking is an issue with this development; they are proposing 20 spaces for 45 hotel rooms. There was discussion on the use of public parking like what is done at the A/C Marriott, getting hotel guests to use the Brayton Lot or North Capitol garage. There is great concern in the neighborhood regarding traffic, guests will be entering and leaving the site on North Franklin Street, which is a one-way street and will send a significant amount of traffic down that street. Noise and quality of life issues are significant. As a whole, the group generally liked the concept of the hotel, it does have some interesting features. They do recognize that it is an allowed use under the existing zoning. When you look at the proposal from across the street, you are removing two residential structures on a block dominated by residential structures currently. What you're looking at from this perspective is not exactly inappropriate for East Washington Avenue, and we recognize that, however, the people on the steering committee have major problems with integration of this development along North Franklin, and how it proceeds into the James Madison Park Neighborhood. The James Madison Neighborhood is unique to have single-family residential structures within two blocks of the Capitol; it's a downtown neighborhood that is dominated by residential homes. The transition is awkward.

Janelle Ramsel spoke as the author of a 40+ page study and neighborhood responses. She based her comments on a memo from Tim Parks, highlighting that based on these talking points and the concerns raised by the neighborhood steering committee, this project cannot move forward as it has been presented. The building does not integrate with the community that has brick and porches, not metal panels and dark windows in a residential neighborhood. It stands out like a sore thumb, this is not exceptional merit. The design has not significantly changed, it looks worse than it did before. It still looks like a hospital, only less fancy now. The developer is trying to move forward without working for the needs to the community. The mass and placement completely dwarfs the buildings around it. There is a difference between what is allowed in the Zoning Code and what is responsible building for that community. When a previous developer on this block for 20 North Blair Street proposed residential buildings at 6-stories, they were turned down and they were told they had to go to 3-stories. Why is one person told maximum is told 3-stories and now this developer is being told 5-stories is the appropriate. If you're going to set those limits on a builder on this block, it should be consistent. Ideally this hotel should not be built at all, especially if it's going to look like this. No details of proposed fencing has been presented. The developer is going to erect a fence and the property owner at 15 North Franklin could give up some of their land to transition this wall; that's nonsense! You should be bending over backwards to fit this into the neighborhood that already exists. HVAC and other penetrations "shall not" face East Washington Avenue or North Franklin Street, but the team just stated that the penetration is going to be on East Washington Avenue. "Shall not" is not permissive, it means it cannot happen. Again, as this is stated, this project cannot be approved.

Rick McKy spoke as a property owner on the block for 25 years. He gave a brief history of the block where 10 years ago he developed a 3-story building and shared an aerial image of the current block. This neighborhood is mainly 2-3 story structures. He wanted to build a 6-story building, but built one a 3-stories because that is what integrates with the neighborhood. The block has changed since he built that building and there are now several owner-occupied single-family residences. He owns real estate surrounding the proposed hotel site. If a 5-story structure gets built here, he feels there's an opportunity for him sometime in the future, to build something 8-10 stories, which would change the entire fabric of the neighborhood. From a profit standpoint, he'd like to see this get approved. From an overall neighborhood perspective, you have to go with the people who live on the block,

and they do not wish this project to move forward. Consider shadowing, density, vehicle traffic, noise, air quality, etc. What's at stake tonight is the health and welfare of this block, and the future of East Washington Avenue on this block.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Question for Janelle: I want to help our developers and designers understand a little bit better what you are asking for. You're not expected to be a designer, but because I've heard from you that the design doesn't fit in at all, I wonder if you could offer any pointers, guidance, as specific as possible what you would like to see look different so that it would fit.
  - 20 North Blair property is a good example. First, you should have a lot of things that are off-set, such as porches indented and recessed. Using brick instead of metal. Instead of going straight up in boxy lines, paying tribute to what the rest of the neighborhood looks like and using the same materials that our homes are made out of. I don't see any pictures of my street in this packet so I can't give any examples. If you're familiar with the new Villas by Festival Foods, that design is not quite appropriate because of the building materials, but the shape with a lot of recesses and porches is much more appropriate than a straight up box like this. Lastly some sort of overhang (setback) so that the side that's closest to our homes isn't quite as high as something on the streetside. Right now it's a huge box that looms over our homes, if it were setback a little bit then it wouldn't look like such an intrusion on the neighborhood. I appreciate the question, and I would point out that we've given these suggestions at neighborhood meetings and nothing has happened.
- Mr. McKy's handout lets you see his building which has a fair amount of shift in its massing, and has sort of a rowhouse effect on the street.
- We're stuck with the difficulty between what the zoning and height plan for downtown, and yet the design guidelines for downtown create a tension there in terms that they recommend reference to the context, which the zoning map ignores.

Alder Zellers was interested to hear the Commission's conversation, noting the significant disconnect. She has gone through multiple proposals in District 2, with a number of them in UDD No. 8. That is not the case for this particular location, and while she does understand and believes that development on East Washington Avenue is going to happen, she has concerns about the integration with the neighborhood and that transition is pretty stark now. She was struck by the Quagliana report where he talked about architectural context; it is her opinion that the architectural context of all these properties is quite good. She would hate to see the City blow up that neighborhood look and feel. People have been encouraged to move in and rehab homes in this area. A small cap TIF program allowed a number of people to utilize those funds to rehab some of these homes. She appreciates that the developer has done some things, but this is a small piece of land, and perhaps we're trying to fit too much there. Concerns continue regarding how it interfaces and interacts with the neighborhood.

- Do you anticipate that there would be single-family housing on East Washington?
  - (Zellers) No, I don't really. I do appreciate the developer's commitment to moving 502 East Washington. If this does go forward I would like to see 7 North Franklin be moved also.
- Question for Janelle – if the building is stepped back at 3 or 4 floors, but went up further to make up the lost square footage, do you think the neighborhood react?
  - (Janelle) It would be better, but still not well received. It still transitions a residential family neighborhood and young professionals into a downtown hotel. I don't think that there's any support for that. It's not just about the size of this building, it doesn't integrate, it removes housing, there's not enough parking, it's very multi-faceted concerns.
- You understand our concerns, all of East Washington is zoned for larger buildings.

- But it's not zoned for any design. The question before us now is whether this design works for the Downtown Design Guidelines, not just whether the zoning permits this. You could have a larger building that relates better to the neighborhood.
  - (Janelle) I also think the biggest part of the concerns are that the largest part of the mass is on Franklin Street rather than East Washington Avenue.
- I think by right he's only allowed to go 4-stories with a conditional use for anything above four. The technicality of the zoning requirement was a huge sticking point, and I thought it was mentioned maybe facing Franklin Street you could begin to articulate the building in a rowhouse configuration that might help the building relate, at least vertically, to the patterns of development along Franklin Street. Now with what I see here, I'm wondering if the building should be a head facing East Washington with the tail down Franklin. The primary design expression is now on Franklin Street. When I look at the rendering it reinforces that for me. I'm wondering if we get further from the concept of pristine white box and have more of a primary façade facing East Washington with some less stark contrast and possibly some other materials as it tails off back into the neighborhood. The height would be the same. It could be more successful with softer materials, less stark contrast and real presence and focus on East Washington.
- I do see a difference between what we saw before and what we see now. I want to make it clear that I see a difference, and I appreciate the effort on the part of the developer.
  - Design is so subjective. One person's exceptional design is another person's dog, right? We're talking here about the evolution of a city, and we're in the central core five blocks from the Capitol. The discussion of smaller scale buildings on East Washington is valid, but it's not going to be the development pattern. What's appropriate contextually? Do you design for the past and what's there now, or what will be happening in the decades to come. Materiality is all in the eye of the beholder. To us this is a high quality materials, very appropriate for the location. We understand the neighborhood has a different perspective, they want clapboard siding and brick and a traditional design.
- You go to extremes with your characterization.
  - I'm just giving out my thoughts. Our client wanted a modern, contemporary design. We think it's an appropriate design, we've worked with, despite what you've heard, we have been working with the neighborhood to express their concerns within the parameters of our design goals. We like this concept, but we're at a crossroads.
- The design could substantially be the same if the focus was on East Washington, if the articulation picked up more rhythm of the neighborhood, not gable roofs, turrets, not making it look like a Victorian bed and breakfast, maybe tone down the contrast a little bit. Subtle things.
- (Ald. Zellers) I don't think anybody is saying that this is a bad design, I think the question is does it work with the neighborhood in fitting in in some way, better integration.
- I think a modern design that works is the one behind Pinkus McBride, it's a very contemporary design but it has context that fits with the neighborhood.
- I liked the building before this one. I don't like dark insets because I do think it was a pure form. I said previously the face, if you could take where you have the common space before the studio suites, if that became your pure box and it faces more East Washington. Then at that point where the studios start you start an articulation that is more vertical or brings it across to the neighborhood. It is a good design, but there's a lot of interests here and I appreciate that you've been participating. I think it's almost there, in my mind, if you could just focus on the facing on East Washington. The building across the street, it has a certain depth to it and then it's residential. If you cut it at that point and turn the building, just something that pushes the base back slightly. I know the massing is still a bone of contention but this might do a lot to solve that.

- Lois is on to something there. It's appropriate to develop East Washington, but to have the mass read more like it is East Washington facing, and try to address that transition into the neighborhood. Whether it's through recessing more, setbacks, it might go a long way.
- The question before us is what action we might take. We could refer the matter, let the applicant re-think, we could deny the request for initial approval, which might let them go to the Plan Commission. But they can't go forward if we deny initial approval, actually take an action rather than refer.
- I noticed facing east, you do have inset balconies. Is there any reason you couldn't turn it 180 and have the balconies face Franklin?
  - Those are for the percentage of window openings.
    - This concept was mine from the beginning. This was the direction that came together, a modern building, a hotel, not an apartment building. If you look at hotel design, what would you find? Walk-up is not a normal hotel experience.
- You didn't hear us asking for walk-ups. Don't put those kinds of things on the table.
  - Integrating a hotel use into this space is going to be difficult. The design of the building is to be active. The recessed portions, we wanted a modern design but we needed articulation, so our idea is a white box and let's carve into it to look like a box within a box. It's a peeling of an onion, with the idea of wood on the base to tie into the neighborhood. Well they told us we couldn't do that, so going to this softer warmer brick for a residential level, I think this design is a five-story building protects the neighborhood more than kicking this down the road for some other future development because if you look at this area, there's a 2 acre parking lot a block away, there's a Klinke's Cleaners site. The neighborhood is a total architectural all over the place; continuity is non-existent. To say that we didn't work with the neighborhood, there were so many false statements about that connect to the fence. Nobody wanted to work with us on the fence.
- I know you're trying to vent right now and that's not a helpful exercise.
  - We're 10-feet further away from the property line which is further than we need to be, which is also a concession.
  - I think if you refer us, we'll look at the design and come back with something that meets your...I think we have to relook at the white box.
- It doesn't have to change that dramatically, you're just turning it so it has East Washington. It's not changing the look.
- While there certainly is a lot of variation along East Washington, there is still an integrity to Franklin and Hancock Streets as residential streets, and that's part of the context that this gives no credence to whatsoever, and maybe you think you don't have to do that, but some of us find that is something that ought to be weighed.
- We're not asking you to go and do something fussy, historic, something a bit more regular, something that again picks up some of the rhythms of the pattern of development along Franklin Street.
- I think it's very clear that East Washington is a prize of design in Madison. I hope we are able to come to an agreement and you are able to do something with your project here, but understand that for this committee and the City to trust you with a building that faces East Washington is really a gift that is not to be taken lightly. This is not the place that you come in to vent, so I would strongly encourage you to get that out before the next meeting and to bring an attitude adjustment when you come and talk to us again.
  - I apologize if comments were taken the wrong way, it was meant to be a discussion to stir the juices.

## **ACTION:**

On a motion by Hall, seconded by Rosenblum, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-0).