
From: Stouder, Heather
Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2018 6:52 PM
To: tdegen@tds.net; 'Justin Frahm'
Cc: Clear, Mark; Firchow, Kevin; Parks, Timothy; Glaeser, Janine
Subject: 5133-5237 University Ave

Good evening, Tom and Justin-

As staff, we have taken a closer look at your preferred site plan for 5237 University Avenue (the “North-South” version with predominantly residential), and would like to share feedback as was requested when we met late last week.

First, as per our discussion last week, we think that the land use you are proposing would be easiest to support following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update this summer, assuming that the recommendation to change this area to “Community Mixed-Use” holds. That said, so long as it does not necessitate a rezoning of the property, the proposed use is one that may be supported even before the Comprehensive Plan is adopted. If you decide to move forward with a proposal prior to its adoption, you would be taking some risk, since the Plan Commission must consider recommendations in adopted plans as part of the review of demolition and conditional use requests.

Second, we feel that the more significant issue to address is the site plan. On the whole, we do not feel that it has changed in a meaningful way since we met last fall, and several significant changes would need to occur in order for staff to support the proposal.

The eastern building in the back of the site is not appropriate to pursue at this time, given its relative isolation and position behind existing commercial buildings. Thus, we focused most of our follow-up staff discussion on the western portion of the property. We still feel that the three main site plan-related items included in the October 31 letter need to be carefully considered in a redesign of the site.

- **Maximize the University Avenue frontage** – We think there are multiple ways this can best be achieved and would ask your design team to look at different options. For example, look at options such as with an “L-shaped” building or a building parallel to University Avenue. Relocating the access drive would be a good option to consider, but you may also want to consider a “pass-through” driveway through the first floor of the building, with several floors above it. The portion of the building oriented to University Avenue could be taller than the current concept plan, but should be set back a comfortable distance from the street and should not have a level of parking visible from the street. A large L-shaped building, or two separate buildings arranged in a L-shape, allows you to eliminate the isolated residential building in the back of the site, which we recommend.
- **Create quality usable open space** – There may be good usable open space opportunities both integrated within the building itself (balconies, rooftop decks, etc.), in large shared patio spaces adjacent to the building(s), and in the southern portion of the site, but quality usable open space should not be comingled with stormwater management facilities, surface parking, etc. Please pay careful attention to the usable open space requirements in the SE Zoning District if you decide to move forward in this district.
- **Create adequate pedestrian circulation** – This has been slightly improved since we last met, but please think about how the site design can make this a great place to live, now and in future decades. We think a major aspect of this involves the need to either reduce the overall parking ratio or to accommodate more parking underground, with less of the site dedicated to surface parking.

Staff also note concerns about the architectural direction and offer the following based on the current massing concept:

- **Ground Floor Activation Orientation-** To reiterate a point we raised at our meeting, staff remains very concerned with having the ground floor of the buildings devoted to structured parking. This is atypical for similarly scaled projects and is problematic in staff's opinion. In concert with the above points, buildings should have active (residential/office/commercial) ground floor uses. We would encourage you to work with your design team to develop options that improve the orientation of residential buildings towards streets, open spaces, and possibly private drives with a more street-like character. Staff remains concerned about the building orientation now that is primarily to large parking lots.

Thank you for the opportunity to take another look and provide feedback as you continue to shape this proposal.

Best-

Heather

Heather Stouder, AICP

Director, Planning Division
City of Madison Department of Planning &
Community & Economic Development
126 S Hamilton Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
P: 608-266-5974
F: 608-267-8739
hstouder@cityofmadison.com