

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: May 23, 2018

TITLE: 555 West Washington Avenue –
Deconstruction of the Existing Two-Story
Office Structure and Construction of a
New 5-Story, Multi-Family Apartment
Building in the Downtown Core District.
4th Ald. Dist. (51507)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: May 23, 2018

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Cliff Goodhart, Dawn O’Kroley, Tom DeChant, Christian Harper, Michael Rosenblum, Rafeeq Asad and Amanda Hall.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 23, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new apartment building located at 555 West Washington Avenue. Registered in support of the project were Randy Bruce, representing Brendon Baxter/PJB II, Inc.; Brendon Baxter, Sean Baxter and Kevin Burow. The site was home to Heartland Credit Union, which has been gone for about one year. They are proposing to demolish that building and replacing it with a 5-story apartment building with a total of 44 units with 44-46 parking stalls planned within the structure. Photos of the existing site showing property lines were shown. They are proposing to locate the building on the corner with a small setback to create a private yard buffer to the sidewalk. Zoning requires a 10-foot setback; they are proposing 9-feet and will accommodate private outdoor landscaped areas for those units. The main entry would be centered on West Washington Avenue. An existing large Ash tree would be preserved. The first floor would contain four apartment units and the entrance to parking on the first level and the ramp to below grade parking. Bike storage and repair will be located on the first level with bike parking below. The 2nd and 3rd floors are identical and range from efficiencies to one and two-bedroom units with each unit having its own balcony. The building steps back at the fourth floor 15-feet in order to create larger rooftop patio areas for the two-bedroom units on the corner. They step back on all three sides of the building at the 5th floor to allow for common outdoor space. The building comes up three stories on West Washington Avenue and steps back on the fourth floor level, then again another 15-feet at the 5th floor level on both sides of the building to create the massing and capitalize on the rooftop views. Predominantly the building will be masonry materials: brick, cast stone, a dark bronze metal panel and a lot of windows. They have just begun their initial concepts on the landscaping with Saiki Design. They have met with the Parks Division about maintaining or replacing certain trees. They will introduce green areas along the Bedford Street and West Washington Avenue frontages and maintain the street terraces. The backside of the building also has a greenspace area and an existing Maple tree that will be maintained. They are considering introducing some green roof elements on the rooftop levels. They have held several neighborhood meetings with one more planned in the future. They are requesting a bonus story and will need to demonstrate exceptional design. They have worked hard at creating a building with good street presence and exceptional

roof terraces. Rather than have a 4-story block, they step it back more than once on all three sides to break down the scale and integrate better into the neighborhood.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Right across the street there's a very successful building called "The Depot" that represents the industrial nature.
- The entrances remind me of Boylston Street in Boston. Brownstone-like, neighborhood oriented. Unfortunately the color palette says more like Tuscon, it doesn't quite agree with the rest of the architecture of the building. I love the architectural design, getting the parking and setbacks in but I need for the style and palette to agree on things.
- When I looked at the plans I liked it. But when you started to present, every picture has a different material color and the more you show the building, it doesn't look like this anymore. When I look at the roof it doesn't say exceptional design, it looks like a bunch of unnecessary space. It doesn't show any green roofs or details, you need to show consistent detail and coloring when you come back. Every elevation has a different shade/hue, making it very difficult to read.
- The one thing that's so unique about this site on the Isthmus is that wide terrace. The Ken Saiki sketch puts your transformers in there.
 - They're existing. We're going to landscape that terrace area. The best we can do is really mask those.
- You're on this boundary between residential setbacks and zero setback for commercial. Once you start putting octagonal bays on the building it becomes too much. Either it needs to be a more commercial setting with a setback more like The Depot, or if you want it to look like a great big house then back it up 20-feet like the rest of the houses on West Washington Avenue, which I don't think is the direction you want to go.
 - We've got maximum setbacks of 10-feet by Zoning Code.
- Then get rid of the "big house" architecture.
 - We're trying to get a bit of that brownstone look on West Washington.
- There's no brownstones on West Washington.
- If you want to have a classic apartment building I don't know what that means. Every elevation is like a different building. Really ornate with a lot of stuff thrown at the corner, with the sides calmer. The southern ¾ of the building has continuity and interest, but that northern 25% of that building is...the thing about The Depot is it had restraint and nice proportions and a strong corner entrance. If you're not going to introduce commercial into this building, having someone's bedroom or living room right on the corner, you'd think that should be an entrance or a protected space.
- This is the warehouse district and you're either part of that or the residential district. The size of what you're building can't really be part of that residential district. It can be a residential use but it's part of the buildings more in the warehouse district.
- You could use some simplification. Aside from the corner elements, the metal panel bump-outs seem really foreign and could almost go away. The backside of the building that is a lot simpler appeals to me. There's no fussiness there. I do like when you're receding, it's appropriate to have that dark panel there. It seems too applique, like it's looking like another building entirely. The darker brown cap, what is that?
 - A built up cornice line, either metal composite or wood.
- When I saw the initial plans there was no green roof, so I'm really happy to see it being worked into the process. As we build these kind of buildings around town there's really no excuse for not having a green roof. You're taking a big chunk of acreage, but you don't have much room for ground level landscaping,

so all the more reason to put something on top. A bit of caution – if this is an apartment building the green roof will need maintenance; the owners shouldn't rely on the tenants to take care of those.

- Make sure when you come back that all the images are cohesive and included in the final submittal.
 - We were working to get a masonry palette and these are some options. A softer tone, but certainly not “southwest.” Maybe tumbled brick, we think it looks really rich. We've got Renaissance stone in a warm color palette.
- The staff comments noted the main entrance needs to be more prominent.
- Don't simplify it too much.
- Are we convinced this is exceptional design? They should know that moving forward. Maybe it is, but you haven't shown it on here. If you have those roof terraces and greenspaces, show them on the plan so we can see why this stands out and deserves an extra bonus story.
 - What's important at this stage is building form and the idea of terraced design. If we know that that is workable then we can continue to work on the skin.
- The terrace design, massing, minus the bays is OK.
- I think it's the form and material as well. If you did a little stone bay that followed up from the entrances that would be more appropriate to the style you're going with. These seem foreign to something kind of warehouse-like or traditional brownstone.
- The brownstone idiom is really not appropriate at this scale and site. It doesn't work from a design point of view. Warehouse is more appropriate.
- Do one elevation with your back to the Capitol and then look at your first bay. That could be a very lightweight bay and a modern take on a screen porch.

ACTION:

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