

AGENDA # 1

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: August 8, 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:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: August 8, 2018

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of August 8, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a new 5-story multi-family apartment building located at 555 West Washington Avenue in the Downtown Core. Registered in support of the project were Sean and Brandon Baxter, the property owners; Randy Bruce, Kevin Burow and Nik Swartz, all representing the property owners; Ron Luskin, representing the Bassett District Neighborhood; Kathleen Ferrero and Mike Herfling.

The applicant presented photos of the surrounding site, the amount of landscaping that has been developed within the yards and 9-foot setbacks to allow for key features of the site. Swartz of Saiki Design discussed the landscape plan in more detail with a review of species and locations at ground level. Bike parking is located at the main entrance and at the garage. Ornamental pylons and fencing surround the property. He further reviewed the roof level terrace plantings, species and locations, pavers and flow. Bruce reviewed the proposed building massing and architecture, referring to 3D aerial views of the site within the West Washington Avenue context showing a livable residential environment within an urban setting. The 3-story façade faces West Washington Avenue, stepping back 15-feet at the fourth floor and another 15-feet at the fifth floor. The building is traditional style development with a transition to warehouse type design along the side using masonry with fiber cement panel and glass. He reviewed changes to the design in response to comments from the previous meeting. The projecting bays on the side have been removed, they've simplified the 3-story element on West Washington Avenue, reduced the amount of building materials and gone to a simpler material palette (precast limestone). The cast stone product will be smooth face (except for the roof pieces) that has some variation in the stone itself, both in color and depth of color, making it relatively lively. The parapet will be a fiber cement product painted to match the stone. Images from various angles of the building show an easily identifiable entrance, vertical articulation, and a response to the scale of adjacent properties. The West Washington Avenue façade is more articulated with smooth cast stone and detailing. A split face band will go across the third floor level. He reviewed floor plans and the exceptional outdoor environment the roof terraces have allowed them to create.

Public Comment:

Ron Luskin spoke as a neighborhood resident and Chair of the Bassett District Neighborhood Steering Committee. He has met with the design team five times, is comfortable with a 5-story building and is pleased with the differentiated design. He likes the setbacks, remarking that the streetscape provides setback and street experience. The bike rack locations are good. The development team has been a good steward of the environment.

The Commission discussed the following:

- W. Washington elevation – stone façade: overhang needs detailing.
- W. Washington elevation – stone façade: The second band on the bays needs more definition of a sill.
- The scale doesn't match the surrounding residential. This is not a brownstone as it does not create an edge or complete the corner. Exceptional design benefits from single architectural style or expression. I have objections to the height.
- The two architectural styles are very jarring.
- The design is improved from the last one but it doesn't honor the other ones. If you had showed the other side relating to the warehouses that would have strengthened your argument.
- The rhythm is solved but I have a problem with the articulated bays and stone.
- The entrances are competing with each other.
- The terrace on West Washington is not a garden space. I question if it's appropriate to that level.
- Part of our decision is approving the height, depending on the design quality.
- There's a lot of good elements, but we're not sure it's what we would make judgment on.
- It's tempting to read as two separate buildings, it is one building, but it's a stretch. I like the stone material but it doesn't read successfully as two separate buildings.
- The style does not work, it's not common to Madison. It's a revival style and I don't know why you'd go with that in that location.
- The juxtaposition of what's on top and behind doesn't relate. Taken out of context it is a nice design. Looking at it along the Bedford Street side you can really see that it should be two different buildings.
- I like the height of 3 stories on West Washington, but it's only in height that it relates to anything in the area.

ACTION:

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Harper, to grant initial approval. The motion failed on a vote of (2-4).

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Rosenblum, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item to the meeting of August 22, 2018. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0).