

## AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** October 24, 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. 4<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (51507)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** October 24, 2018

**ID NUMBER:**

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Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Cliff Goodhart, Jessica Klehr, Tom DeChant, Craig Weisensel and Amanda Hall.

### **SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of October 24, 2018, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL** of A new 5-story multi-family apartment building located at 555 West Washington Avenue. Registered in support of the project were Kevin Burow and Randy Bruce, representing Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC; Brendan Baxter, the property owner representing PJB II, Inc.; Robert Lewin, Nik Swartz and Kathleen Ferrero. Registered neither in support nor opposition was Jonathan Cooper, representing the Bassett Neighborhood Steering Committee.

Kevin Firchow of the Planning Division provided an explanation regarding “advisory review” and the standards by which the UDC should review the project and give recommendations.

Previous designs were compared to the newest elevation views. The applicant reviewed the landscape plan for the front terrace, which has been cut back to just screen the utility box on the corner. They have adjusted the building form, added a stone base around the entire building, created some horizontal banding at the second and fourth floors, changed the parapet from bronze to stone and metal cap. Where the 3-story mass previously had a stone exterior, they have gone to brick and stone to have a consistent treatment around the entire building. Setbacks and stepbacks are provided on both streets, along with terraces, which resulted in a loss of 6,900 square feet of floor area. To get the relief on the street and get roof terraces, creating the living environment that makes this a fantastic residential location they chose the revival style. The double belt course on the taller portion and unaligned on the front portion draws a spot on the building for the eye to terminate and cuts down the scale. They reviewed the street perspectives, front/side elevation views, views of surrounding context buildings and a reference to the historic warehouse buildings nearby. The design team feels this fits into the context with holistic architecture.

Jonathan Cooper spoke as a resident of the Bassett neighborhood and member of the Steering Committee. They submitted a statement of support for the previous design. He spoke neither in support nor opposition, wanting to draw attention to the staff report and the criteria for bonus stories. The conditional use criteria as it relates to the

Downtown Plan states “intent not to allow taller building, not by right, tool to reward and encourage exceptional design.” He asked the Commission to consider if this is really truly exceptional design for this location.

Robert Lewin spoke in favor of the project as a nearby resident. He likes the fresh, urban design needed in this location because the existing building is outdated. He welcomes more downtown into the neighborhood.

The Commission discussed the following:

- This blends in better than the first design. I feel like the design team listened to our comments.
- I’m having difficulty with Item B. From a design standpoint a revival could be better achieved without the additional stories. It would be more in keeping with the revival style if it didn’t have the top two stories. Brownstones would be that high, but it’s the stories themselves. You’re trying to hide the essence of what it is. The other three criteria can be met. A revival style would be better achieved without the additional stories. The modern edition betrays the historic fabric.
- From a pedestrian experience I think they’ve fulfilled that with the style they’ve chosen.
- What is a demonstrative higher quality? Design is one component of that, which is primarily our business. We have to make these recommendations, can we come to a conclusion that this is a higher quality building?
- I liked the early versions and have been pleased with the changes, they’ve gone above and beyond addressing the concerns that some of us have had. I think it’s a handsome project and see this as a huge asset to the neighborhood. It’s worthy of going forward, and agree that the top level doesn’t really jive historically or architecturally with the bottom part.
- If it is a high quality building, tucking it away should not be the criteria. There’s a functional reality to it.
- Isn’t it to make the building more at a pedestrian scale? I don’t think it detracts from the building.
- I appreciate the scale at street level. As you pull away, how does that additional story fit it? Can you talk about the selection of materials and what your thoughts were?
  - There’s a significant amount of glass across all of that. The idea was we’re at upper levels where we can put more glass in and still have privacy. The remaining materials, darker bronze material, tie into the glass. The idea is uniformity, focus on the masonry materials and for this to become a backdrop material. There’s isn’t a lot of detail to it, it’s much simpler.
- If you want to make it look like an old building, that modern top to it does not enhance that. That’s where I’m not seeing it being exceptional design.

### **ACTION:**

On a motion by Hall, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL TO THE PLAN COMMISSION**, noting that the standards are met. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1) with Goodhart voting no.