

AGENDA # 4

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: February 27, 2019
TITLE: 1954 E. Washington Avenue – New Development and Alteration to an Existing Development for The Avenue, Options in Community Living and Graaskamp Park. 12 th Ald. Dist. (52598)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: February 27, 2019	ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of February 27, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **Recommend that the Plan Commission approve** the proposal for a new development and alteration to an existing development for The Avenue, Options in Community Living and Graaskamp Park, with conditions. Registered in support were Kevin Burow representing Knothe & Bruce Architects & Madison Development Corp; Ron Trachtenberg, Randy Bruce, Lorrie Heiremann, Abbie Ela Wallhaus, Harry Irwin, and Kyle Kopplin all representing Madison Development Corp; David Taylor, Anne Morrison, and Heidi Wegutner. Registered in opposition were Dawn Sabin, Chris Sell, Natasha Fahey-Flynn, Sheri Rein, Rich Zietro, Tess Camacho, Mary L. Ward, and Benjamin Sabin.

Kevin Burow reviewed existing conditions and recapped the previous design proposals and site layout. A new proposed site plan with new building to the west of existing building fronting E. Washington was presented. The proposed landscaping plan, including new beds and tree locations, was reviewed. Work is still needed with Fire to coordinate fire apparatus access for trees. Reviewed proposed program and space uses for new building. We are matching the details of the existing building, but stepping back the fourth floor. Adding a canopy to the front entry. Team reviewed existing building photos and 3D views looking up East Washington Avenue at street sidewalk level. Goal is to maintain same level of detail as the existing building. Team shared Shadow study & Vehicular circulation study. There is a ratio of 1.2 stalls per unit. Existing demand is 28 stalls. Completed study-proposed development , the 1.2 stalls/unit exceeds the need for this site. Team reviewed building materials including cream brick, and proposed dark siding at fourth floor.

Public Comment:

1. Dawn Sabin provided a handout regarding the visual character of the neighborhood and said that she is concerned about the size of the proposed building. She said that they will likely be losing the large tree, and referenced an aerial view that shows current green space and how it will be changed dramatically by the construction of a four-story building. She also described the current privacy of backyards along E Washington Ave, and said that nearby residents will lose their privacy if the proposed building is constructed.

2. David Taylor said that he has facilitated the neighborhood committee charged with monitoring progress on the proposed redevelopment. He thanked the Commission and architects for working to respond to comments raised at the December UDC meeting. He said that residents want what is best for their neighborhood in terms of quality of life and viability of the neighborhood as a safe and desirable place to live.

3. Natasha Fahey-Flynn expressed concern about the size of the proposed development, saying that 44 units is a lot, and asked if anyone would be excited about a four-story building going up next to their bungalow. She provided a handout showing the current view from her backyard and explained that if the building is constructed, that is all they will be able to see from their yard. She said that they will also lose their privacy because residents of the building will see into their backyard. She explained that Emerson East is one of the last affordable neighborhoods in this area, and they specifically chose a house with a large, private backyard to raise their family. She mentioned that with a 44-unit building, it will also be difficult to get to know her neighbors. She pointed out that MDC tenants and MDC board members submitted letters of support, but she thinks it was inappropriate for MDC to ask their tenants for letters of support and question their authenticity. She said that residents in the neighborhood aren't opposed to having more people or more diversity in the neighborhood, it is purely the scope and size of the project, which doesn't fit with their 1920s neighborhood.

4. Ron Trachtenberg, chairman of MDC, thanked the Commission for their original review, which made them think outside the box for this project. He said the MDC Board is supportive of the current proposal, which preserves open space near E Mifflin St. He mentioned that they are starting to raise funds and design Graaskamp Park, which will be open to the neighborhood. He stated that he thinks this project meets the Commission's goals as outlined in their previous report, specifically in terms of architecture, open space, and setbacks. He said that they need the proposed number of units in the building in order to make the numbers work. He pointed out that this will also provide needed housing for individuals with lower incomes. He said that the project shouldn't adversely impact the neighborhood, and is a good match for the site.

5. Chris Sell thanked the Commission for the work they do and provided a handout that includes a letter and comments from 21 neighborhood residents. He summarized their main concerns, which include building size, distance from their backyards, and the loss of privacy that will come from people in the apartment building being able to see into their yards. He said that he has expressed concern about the size of the building from the beginning, and now it is even larger in the current proposal. He said that putting all of the density against the E Washington Ave neighbors is concerning, and he would not have purchased his home if this four-story building had been there. He questioned how this will affect his property value, and said that his family may consider relocating. He pointed out that there are no other four-story buildings nearby, and he thinks this large building would be out of place. He said that his experience as a stakeholder has not been positive, and while MDC has taken the feedback from UDC seriously, they have not done the same for area residents. He said that they need more time to review this significant redesign. He explained that they need more transparency from MDC, and would like to see the traffic and shade studies that were completed. He ended by saying that he hopes the Commission will consider the concerns of neighborhood residents.

6. Anne Morrision, board member of MDC and member of the City Housing Strategy Committee, explained that Madison is facing an affordable housing crisis, and the MDC board is trying to help solve this housing issue. She said that she understands the concerns about size and safety, but this is an appropriate building for this site and is an ideal place for affordable housing. She pointed out the City's investment in this corridor and resources nearby, including a future bus rapid transit system. She stated that this isn't about fitting in as many units as they can; rather, it is about how many households they can house on the isthmus fairly so that more people have access to the investments the City is making. She said that in the scheme of Madison and the housing crisis we are facing, this is a relatively small project. She said that this is the best solution to create an attractive, high-quality building that adds diverse housing options in a neighborhood that is highly sought after.

7. Sheri Rein, a neighbor of The Avenue for 28 ½ years, said that she would like time to review the traffic and shade studies, which she hopes will be shared with neighborhood residents. She said that given current traffic patterns, it is unlikely that E Washington Ave will be the main entry for vehicles, and they will likely use side or back entries to the property. She said that adding 80 cars to this scenario will create a tremendous amount of traffic. She expressed concern about a four-story building encroaching on a residential neighborhood, and said that a three-story building with a 3rd floor setback would be more appropriate. She said that her family moved to this neighborhood because of how inclusive and diverse it is, so the issue is not bringing more people into the neighborhood itself. She explained that the issue is the number of people being added to a long-term problem property; over the last 28 years, she said they have dealt with many issues related to the management of this property, and MDC needs to make a better effort in managing this property before adding more to it.

8. Rich Zietro said that he has worked with Porchlight and currently works for Dane County, assisting people with finding affordable housing, but his comments are related to building design. He explained that buildings have an impact on the health and well-being of people and the planet because they use resources, generate waste, and are costly to maintain and operate. He described green building practices, noting that they use fewer resources and reduce waste and environmental impacts. He said that MDC's proposal to demolish a building from the 1980s is contrary to this practice, and reflects a poor commitment to maintaining their current buildings. He said that a four-story building is too large for this neighborhood and suggested that a smaller, two-story development would foster a greater sense of integration into an already-existing neighborhood and allow residents to get to know one another, creating a healthy city. He compared the development to Cabrini Green and Greenbush, which focused on density and created areas of poverty and isolation. He said that there are many interacting parts in neighborhood design, including traffic flow and environmental concerns such as noise pollution and shade. He voiced concern that a building of this scope would drive up rent in the area. He said that if a new building were built, it needs to keep in tune with the character and size of the neighborhood, and should meet LEED standards to help protect our environment.

Questions from Commission:

- Looking at the conditional use standards and the intended character of the area. This is a rezone application – how does this project work with proposed zoning?
- We understand that all future development on Mifflin is off the table, correct?
 - Correct, existing 2 story office building remains, but in the future it will be taken down.
- Will the Existing parking in back remain?
 - That would remain, it serves visitors for park
- I like the direction of the architecture. Like tying the campus together. More coherent.
- The landscape plans shows to protect existing trees. The new building encroaches the tree canopy. You might be cutting it back and it will die. Misrepresented that protecting the trees. Is there another option for screening and protecting adjacent neighbors?
 - We would be willing to meet with neighbors to brainstorm ideas. We want to protect trees as much as possible. Constructability may impact the trees.
- Is it possible to do more upright trees between development and houses?
- The arbor vitae is fast growing and columnar, it creates a living green wall. Spaced appropriately, they can block views. I Question whether the two big deciduous trees will survive.
- I agree with Tom. This is an Improvement, more cohesive. It is a Unique property that is surrounded by residential properties, but E. Washington it is more commercial. Appreciate moving the development more toward E. Washington. Improvement. More cohesive.
- Assuming that with the 3 bedroom units, you anticipate families. What is the route for a family to get to park? Are they cut off by the main drive – is there a safe direct route?
 - There is a stairwell at end of building where they could go down and be out at park

- Ditching the pitched roof and going with flat is a good change.
- Is that a 3 story house direct adjacent?
 - 2 ½ story.
- Do you have images of this building from another side?
 - We don't have images from park side.
- Staff comment – reminder that the UDC is “advisory” to the Plan Commission. Summary of comments helpful.
- Are condensing units on roof – screened?
 - They will be located in center on a flat portion of roof, not visible from street.
- Provide additional screening for sound for residents.
 - Yes, we can look at that.
- What is happening with the existing main building?
 - Building will be evaluated. Possible maintenance on exterior – preserve for future
- We appreciate effort to tie this in with the existing.
- Will there be a stormwater management study? Sensitive topic for neighborhood. Pursue LEED?
 - As much energy efficiency as possible. Not doing LEED. Will recommend LED lighting, energy star fixtures/appliances.
- I have seen a lot of new buildings come close to my house. Encourage neighbors – your concerns valid. This is rezoning a specific parcel, not rezoning neighborhood

ACTION:

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Weisensel, the Urban Design Commission **Recommend that Plan Commission approve** the proposal with the following conditions:

- Recommendation for a darker color on the fourth
- Request that the team protect the tree root ball as much as possible.
- Provide additional rooftop unit screening for sound to protect residents.
- Provide landscape screening for neighbors. Suggested arbor vitae trees, they are fast growing and columnar, it creates a living green wall. Spaced appropriately, they can block views.

Also noting that the UDC reviewed a prior plan that was not satisfactory, but the current team responded to comments by both the UDC and neighbors. The design team has been responsive. Upon conditional approval, recognize that this development is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0).