

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** April 10, 2019

TITLE: 4706 E. Washington Avenue – New Multi-Tenant Commercial Building in Planned Multi-Use Site Located in UDD No. 5. 17<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (54428)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: April 10, 2019

**ID NUMBER:**

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

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of April 10, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a new multi-tenant commercial building located at 4706 E. Washington Avenue. Registered in support of the project were Steve Doran, Steve Shulfer and Mark Sheskey.

Doran presented updated plans for a multi-tenant building, agreeing with the Commission’s previous comments that the building have street frontage and not have back-of-the-house facing East Washington Avenue. This site is very unique because of significant grade issues from front to back (more than 40-feet), which presents challenges to construct a building without massive retaining walls or burying the building into a hill. There are two access points very close together; the first plan showed shared access but this newer plan would not allow truck deliveries without both access points. It also becomes too cost prohibitive to build into the hill and would change from a 6,000 square foot building to only 3,000 square feet. Putting the parking field in front comes with significant challenges. They looked at parking to the west, but the grade change is too challenging and would lead to minimal visibility for storefronts. They designed new elevations, embracing the bus stop in front by putting bike parking there as well, adding a connection from E. Washington and extending the patio that now wraps around the building. They added awnings in front and made it all storefront glass, restricting spandrel. They came up with a building design/plan that tenants would want to use as their front entrance. The 14 or so stalls in the back of the building then become more for employee parking. The trash and recycling will be placed in the rear of the building. They limited the amount of EIFS and addressed the elevations to be less monolithic.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I appreciate the examples of other layouts and explanation of why they don’t work. Would we be able to make a request that staff review the floor plan when the space is leased to be sure they’re not putting a kitchen or storeroom right up front?

- There are two possibilities for triggering a staff review: if they change anything on the façade, or if there is an addition of a conditional use. They will have to get permits for each build out. Part of the final approval could be conditions that the tenant cannot block the front windows.
- You're asking can there be a condition that triggers it being looked at? We can offer that as part of our motion. That means when they pull that permit they'll see that it has to be checked.
  - What if it's a situation where a tenant couldn't block any more in the front than they did in the rear? They could operate as two entrances but they wouldn't be able to block any more glass. But we don't want to make the building too difficult to lease.
- We want a way to have staff notified and raise concerns if somebody comes in with something that gets past you.
- This is an evolving experience because we've seen how other buildings do it. We don't want to approve any more things that don't face the street.
- If you have a functioning door there that they aren't allowed to block then they're forced to incorporate it into their floor layout.
- That's why I'm suggesting we ask for a staff review and have it be a judgment call versus saying what you can and can't do, and give them all these conditions when they sign a lease.
- All you have to tell your tenants is it has to be a two-front operation.
  - But they can use just the E. Washington Avenue front and not the back. I'm just unclear what staff review is. What is it looking for? Does this make it a less valuable asset?
- You could revise the plans that show that as an egress door that must be maintained because you cannot egress through a storage or mechanical room.
- I would not want to dictate the size of the room or anything like that. We want public activities and street activation facing E. Washington Avenue.
  - And that's what we've done with the building design.
- And you're going to have to communicate that with prospective tenants. They would probably want their primary signage facing the street.
- It's virtually square and I suggested you turn it 90 degrees to face the parking lot. You'd have one entrance and all three signs facing E. Washington Avenue.
  - We looked at that. We have that 40-foot grade change from front to back.
- Just turn the building and all the tenants face E. Washington Avenue and the parking stays where it is. Then you do have signage for all three somehow on that façade so people can identify the businesses but you have one main entrance. The units are now divided east-west instead of north-south.
  - I can't lease interior end-caps or any space that doesn't have frontage on the road.
- It could be a judgment call to ensure mechanical and storerooms aren't blocking E. Washington Avenue.
- I applaud the move to bring it out to the street, holding the urban edge like this as long as the tenants can make it work. The 90 degree rotation is a decent compromise that could work but really in an ideal world this is what I'd want to see, the parking in the back. You're providing the amenities on the streetside. I would like to discuss the segmental block and materials.
  - This is split face block material looking at 3-4 feet in height.
- There are a lot of product options out there, and the cheapest does not contribute to other things you're trying to do. I'd want to see what that is or maybe know it's a natural stone wall. I wouldn't be happy if this was your standard segmented retaining wall that we see all over the place.
  - The rest of the property has boulders.
  - I could envision boulders on the back of the site being doable. The plinth on the front, we're looking for something more uniform than boulders. I could come back and show you options.
- Something less rustic, something smooth, contemporary.
- Your renderings show stone mulch but the plan says wood. It needs to be wood mulch. It looks like the railing stops about the midway point of the building, I would point out the way you have the sidewalk

leading up to all the stores on the E. Washington Avenue side, if people can cut across where you have those Hydrangeas and bushes, they will.

- Maybe some sort of landscape fence at 2-feet in height. We want an open feel with the sidewalk.
- Would you consider putting stairs up like you do on the west side, centered on that façade?
  - We could line up a stair with the bus stop.
- Stair also helps signify the entrance.
- A wider stair would be more inviting.
- The two serviceberry trees at the top of the hill, I think Maple or Oak would be better to act as shade trees.
  - We can do Oak.
- If the doors and punched windows get pushed over to one side rather than have a bit of well on each side of tenant space, you would have enough of a wall to build against and less likely to block any windows.

Staff agreed to confirm the percentage of glazing allowed by code on spandrel glass. The applicant suggested a condition stating that no more than a certain percentage of glass could be blocked from view. The Chair responded that they need to confirm with Building Inspection/Code Enforcement and see draft language.

**ACTION:**

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Goodhart, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (8-0). The motion provided for the following:

- Encourage not allowing tenants to block windows (acknowledge 20% code);
- Encourage Planning staff to watch this and enforce other projects on E. Washington Avenue.
- Add a stairway on E. Washington Avenue, widen the side stairs and use Oak trees in the back rather than serviceberry.