

AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: October 2, 2019

TITLE: 636 W. Washington Avenue – New 5-
Story, 50-Unit Apartment Building with
Underground Parking and Ground Floor
Commercial Space. 4th Ald. Dist. (57114)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: October 2, 2019

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad, Lois Braun-Oddo, Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau and Craig Weisensel.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 2, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new 5-story apartment building located at 636 W. Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Kirk Keller, Michael Brush and Jeff Lee, all representing Greenway Real Estate, LLC; Robert Lewin and Ron Luskin.

Keller reviewed the updated site context and overview of the site. Building design changes were based on comments from the last meeting to create a stronger presence on W. Washington Avenue. They have added circular elements to the two corners, created a deeper façade on the sides of the building to make the historic portion of the building larger and more prominent, added semi-private areas along W. Washington for lower activation, removed hanging balconies in favor of recessed balconies, which is much more in tune with the historic building and what the neighborhood has requested. They brought the stone to the roof to break up the façade with the brick selected to fit into the existing neighborhood (samples were shown). The back of the building will use a cement board shake material to be neutral to emphasize the historic side with a glass slot that separates the two. Windows have been added on the lower right to avoid a blank façade facing the U-Haul property. On the backside the balconies will be largely suspended for an industrial look. They wrapped brick around the backside, with flat stone over the top and rusticated stone along the bottom. The canopy pieces will define some of the signage under separate submittal. They continue to develop the fifth floor walk out.

Public Comment:

Ron Luskin spoke on behalf of the Mifflin Bassett Neighborhoods Steering Committee. He thanked the design team, noting thus far meetings regarding this project have been held by the Mifflin Neighborhood, Bassett Neighborhood, Ald. Verveer, and the steering committee. The committee feels good about the design and feel there has been great care given to include energy efficiency in the design. Areas of concern include safety, particularly not enough lighting in areas for pedestrians, and cars exiting could be blinded by the building. Balconies should be enjoyed by the residents but these are still somewhat bogus as there is not enough space for

two people, a table and chairs. The Washington Plaza signage looks beautiful, but the project will have a couple different commercial and condominium owners; the neighborhood wishes to know what the signage will be on the front of the building so it doesn't get too crowded. As an example, he cited the signage on The Depot as being approved at the same time the UDC gave the project final approval.

Robert Lewin spoke, having previously served on the steering committee. Regarding the issue of lighting on the street, that is up to the City not the building owners. The entrance and exit for the building was dictated in part by the U-Haul on the other side and the City. The issue of visibility coming out, especially turning left towards the Capitol, is a City Traffic Engineering question. The sidewalk will be widened to give even more visibility; most pedestrians are looking at their phones rather than driveways but that's not the developer's bailiwick. The developer was charged with making this look old and industrial at the same time; the front looks like it could have been there for decades, and the backside transitions to industrial very nicely, it's well done and will be a terrific addition to the street.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I don't think I understand the scale on the front that were commented on, that they aren't a livable space or depth.
 - Since we met with the steering committee we have modified our interior floor plans. The building looks the same but we have taken living space out of the interior to increase the balconies.
 - The minimal depth is 5-½' clear; the minimal depth as we go to the other side of the building ranges from 6.5' to 7'. The idea of putting tables and potted plants out there, most certainly.
 - The ones on the side are almost 70 square feet.
- I caution about the color of the mortar between the bricks. If you're trying to look historic I would look at historic buildings. Even how it's scored and the joint is created, that will be important. You're going with rusticated brick, you might as go all the way with those details. I like the other back of the building than having the red brick come around; it starts to confuse old and new and feels odd to have that as your plinth. The other option may be to go with a burnished block instead of dark brick and embrace that whole loft feel, new construction. Was the intent for the front of the building rooftop to be accessible?
 - Yes, when we come in for Initial Approval we'll show the fully developed roof plan.
 - Is your suggestion to have two different mortars?
 - Maybe some sampling of true historic, I won't dictate with tones but you'll see the difference of how they used to complement the color of the brick more than contrast.
- Have the parapet wall be your wall and try not to have guardrails up there. It looks nice as it is and when you start adding guardrails to stone it doesn't work.
 - There will not be railing out at the edge, it won't be visible along W. Washington.
- I like where the balconies are on this one, but it still wants to have this break between the new building.
- The rusticated brick is really more mid-century, I don't know that in the 19th Century they actually used nice smooth brick.
- Something I liked better in the submittal versus what's on the screen, on the W. Washington side, the vertical piece highlighting the entry, I much prefer it without that coming up fully vertical. The arch signifying that entry was enough and a much stronger composition, more simple and classic in general. Is this still commercial tenant space at the street level?
 - Commercial on this side, commercial on this bay and then apartment lobby.
- I like this being activated at the street level more so than just foundation plantings, this is stronger and I would advocate you keep that. The glazing for that first level, is it transparent?
 - The glazing we'll be selecting will be purposeful to the commercial, a more translucent glass with a good energy rating.

- The white part that goes up is not as successful as what's in front of us now. I also think if you made your cornices all the same thickness you wouldn't need a guardrail. Give it that crown or top piece.
- This is so much better than the first iteration. I really like what you've done with the cornice, it's a nod to the old Washington Hotel. It would be nice to see this and the old bank building across from CVS create a rhythm (The Baxter). I like the banding across and the little eyebrows above the arched windows, I wouldn't mind seeing more of that type of accenting in other places.
- When you come back please provide a site exhibit that shows the view angles for cars.
- The south elevation on W. Washington, with the proportions and language going on there, I think the curves over the tops of the windows are a little in competition with the strong horizontal lines. Sometimes your white bands reinforce the horizontal but sometimes they're broken and then the vertical of the brick is reinforced, and where that brick is vertical it lands on windows on the base, you might want to look at that.
- I'm hearing comments on subtle refinement and subtle simplification.
 - Do we have a consensus that the center white piece should be removed?
- Think about the spacing of the lintels and how it relates to historic buildings.

ACTION:

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