

City of Madison, Wisconsin

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REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** December 11, 2019

**TITLE:** 6225 University Avenue – New  
Development of a Four-Story, 53-Unit  
Multi-Family Apartment Building with 48  
Underground Parking Stalls in UDD No. 6.  
19<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (57764)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** December 11, 2019

**ID NUMBER:**

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

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of December 11, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of new development located at 6225 University Avenue in UDD No. 6. Registered and speaking in support was Kevin Burow, representing Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Kevin Yeska, representing JSD; and Ben Altschul. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak were Beth Falkos, Desta Cogan, Danny Wedel and Richard Chenoweth.

Burow gave some background on the project and the rezoning, site layout, context, parking and building locations close to University Avenue, site and vehicular access, landscaping, an overview of site tree locations and the stormwater management plan. Building materials include masonry with hardiplank composite siding and some wood veneer accents between windows. Basement parking is located around the corner with landscaping screening. The fourth floor steps back at the corner to create an outdoor plaza for the community room. They introduced a stair at the corner main entry. They will provide an 8-foot tall cedar fence at the back of the property. He showed multiple views from adjacent yards towards the development.

**Public Comment:**

Richard Chenoweth spoke as an abutting neighbor. He had sent a letter for the record. He is pleased to see the renderings of the property, giving him a better idea of what this will look like. He shared views from his master bedroom window to the site, asking will they be able to see into his bedroom from the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> floor. He doesn't know, and neither does the development team. It would be useful information for a property owner affected by the height of the development. What information was provided to make an informed decision about the wisdom of this project? The building will likely increase visual access to his backyard and home, thus reducing privacy, blocking his views of the sky both in daylight and at night. He wants more information on the impact to his property.

Danny Wedel lives in the neighboring property with the fire pit. He has had a good working relationship with the development team. This is something of concern, a natural reaction to how this will impact his privacy and

backyard. How will this affect his property values? They have a 10 month old son and want to ensure his safety. He has spoken with Kevin Burow about landscaping being used to protect privacy. Both he and Mr. Chenoweth are not against the development but want to voice their concerns and be given more detailed information. It's important to maintain the integrity of this neighborhood. Braun-Oddo inquired if there was any concern about the residents of the building being taken down. Wedel responded that he is excited for that property to come down, it is in bad shape and needs a facelift. He wouldn't necessarily have voted for a four-story building to replace it. He had asked the owner to shield his lights and he did. Other than that there hasn't been a lot of interaction with them.

Desta Cogan spoke as a new resident of the dead-end street. When they bought the home they had a view (she shared photos). Their house sits up and their porch will look directly at the apartment building, trees won't do much to screen that. She walks past there every day and cannot fathom four-stories here. She is concerned about privacy, pedestrian traffic, and the increased dynamics of having 75-85 neighbors behind them. She is not opposed but very concerned about the construct noise, her dogs and her privacy.

Beth Falkos spoke as a resident behind the property. The property is commercial right now, not residential and has been empty for a while. Her concern is quality of life, they live on a very quiet and peaceful street and that the new building will allow views into her yard and windows. They also have a raised deck and people will see right into their area. She is concerned about lighting at night, noise, and would prefer three stories. There are plenty of other buildings with for rent signs, to squeeze that many people into this size lot is a concern. How is this property going to affect her property values? The Chair responded that this Commission cannot assess the value of her property.

The Chair reminded public speakers that this body deals primarily with design, but this project is slated for review by the Plan Commission on January 13, 2020, and he encouraged them to bring their concerns to the Plan Commission.

The Commission discussed the following:

- What is the “by right” height limit for NMX or TR-U2?
  - NMX has a 3-story height limit, higher by conditional use.
  - TR-U2 is zoned for up to six-stories.
- How will the building be lighted?
  - We are complying with dark sky fixtures, all direct down and a couple of poles around the perimeter. But no outward lighting from the property to the neighboring properties.
- There's no neighborhood association?
  - Correct, we met with the Alder and he encouraged us to meet with the neighboring properties behind us, and separately with the church but he did not request a formal neighborhood meeting.
- You did not meet with other neighbors around it? Is there any effort from your group to reach out to those residents as well?
  - We'd be happy to, it just wasn't advised to us to seek every neighbor down the block so to speak.
- How fast to Arborvitae grow?
- Could you go back to the views with Mr. Chenoweth's backyard? Those are existing trees on his property?
  - Yes.
- If you put something on the other side of the fence?
  - Yes we added a Heritage River Birch, a Black Hills Spruce and a Ginkgo.
- I would suggest in this case here to consider a type of Arborvitae that are hybrid species that are very narrow and grow very fast, green giant would be one. They grow fast, they're skinny and can be put in

tight places. You can shield a lot of these views given the distance of the neighboring houses from the top floor of the building. Any concerns they have about people being able to see down might be alleviated in a short amount of time. I don't know all the angles as you come down from north to south and without seeing all the adjacent properties or the legalities of putting landscaping on their properties, I'd look into that. I appreciate the concerns about views and privacy, I've lived on upper floors and my perception is that people who live up there are not necessarily looking down on their neighbors. We live in a city that's growing up as well as out, I understand the concerns and there are ways to block it with evergreen materials but a year round solution might be more appropriate.

- At the corner with the 24/30" Oak, the contours and the way the site dips in back into the tree canopy drip line, it seems you could pull those out so as not to disturb that tree. Kudos to the plant material in back, you could add more and place it incrementally between the parking lot and this corner, to layer up the screening effect. On the same topic if you go to the next property over, the driveway that runs parallel is right up against the line so you can't get more plant material in there. Is it possible to bring that down to 22?
  - We might be able to narrow it but we'd have to work it out with the City.
- Even if you had three-feet of landscape space behind the back of curb you could start to get narrow evergreens and build up that screening.
- Looking at the ADA parking stall on the site plan, I know it's there because of the grading, I'm wondering if it also makes sense to continue striping to the curb ramp on the other side as a visual marker when crossing.
  - We could certainly do that, that's a good suggestion.
- There are a lot of retaining walls, what are you thinking of in terms of materials?
  - The northeast wall is 7-feet, it's a fairly tight space with the sidewalk, so modular block to keep it narrow.
- I would suggest that it is not just cheap modular block, but that it relates to the building materials.
  - It will definitely tie in aesthetically and visually.
- Staff comments regarding an accessible route from the northwest driveway, is that something that's possible?
  - We tried but there is a 14-foot grade from University Avenue, we were pinched.
- I'm reminded that by ordinance the maximum fence height is six-feet. I didn't see a detail of your fence in your packet here.
  - It's intended to be cedar, the request is for an 8-foot tall. We'll have a conversation with the City to have a taller fence.
- Regarding an 8-foot fence, can we make that decision? I think that's something the City has to allow. I don't know if that's appropriate to the motion.
- We could say we're not opposed to a fence that is taller than what ordinance allows.
- (Tucker) You can make a recommendation but the ordinance is controlled by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

### **ACTION:**

On a motion by Weisensel, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-2-1) with Abbas, Klehr, Bernau, Harper, DeChant and Weisensel voting yes; Braun-Oddo and Asad voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.

The motion provided for address of the following:

- Suggestions for the Arborvitae along the south neighbor lot.

- Suggestions for ADA striping extending through and along the south access road, narrow up the asphalt paving and include additional Arborvitae.
- Look at the grading around the 24-inch Oak tree to save the tree.
- Bring a sample of the retaining wall material when you return for final approval.