

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** April 29, 2020

TITLE: 36 West Towne Mall and 7301 Mineral Point Road - New One-Story 83,000 Square Foot Retail Building at West Towne Mall. 9th Ald. Dist. (59184)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary **ADOPTED:** **POF:**

DATED: April 29, 2020 **ID NUMBER:**

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of April 29, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a new one-story 83,000 square foot retail building located at 36 West Towne Mall and 7301 Mineral Point Road. Registered and speaking in support were Sameer Kulkani, representing Shive-Hattery Architecture; and Matt Kocourek, representing CBL Properties. Registered in support and available to answer questions were David Burke, Ken Wittler, and William White, representing West Towne Mall. Kulkani reiterated that the building is 83,000 square feet single-story retail with a single focal entry point with quite a lot of architectural features to guide people into that spot. The Commission’s main concern was about the landscaping around the building and window openings or glazing for the building itself. Other comments had included making the landscaping more playful and less symmetrical. They are now showing more asymmetry, they have added a bike rack by the main entry and one down on the south by the employee entry. They added another set of windows on the south façade, staggered the building plane and added sconce lighting around the windows for a more residential, parklike feel to the façade.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I was advocating for more windows as we get away from the fortress mall building type and see shopping centers opening up more to the outside. I was hoping we could see more activity along the elevations versus just maybe Conifers. I see you added a couple more windows.
- I share a similar feeling about natural daylight, adding that into the design, which means having windows and making it more welcoming. That would be beneficial for energy saving as well. I would like to see a better design which reflects more daylight coming into the building.
 - I think from a standpoint of practical issues with regards to the operation of retail, we have fitting rooms that are skirting along the exterior wall; it would be difficult to have any meaningful daylight coming in. Also direct sunlight is not recommended with the type of merchandise that’s in there. We are also trying to maintain some brand identity.
- Does that preclude display windows facing the outside?

- In a scenario of this kind, the main traffic of customers will be drawn into the main entry. That more appeals to a strip mall. This is more inward looking than outward looking when it comes to displaying of merchandise.
- I think I had put in a bid for more playful landscape. I appreciate how handsome this building is and I hope it brings rejuvenated movement around the mall, so I think it's a great opportunity to try something new and make the mall more popular again. If you need to look inward then you're left with the landscaping. You have this great entrance that just spills onto the parking lot. Could different pavement help that to give it a sense of place? I think the message is to get people to come to the malls more than they are now, so the entry is a pretty important thing. Could you be the first department store that put big trees in front of the entrance?
 - I think we made a big gesture with the entrance, that's our standard brand identity from a brand standpoint. When it comes to paving we use a special type right in front of the main entry doors where you see those bollards.
- I echo what you said, I'm struggling with that elevation. I understand your branding and entry, but for such a long elevation there isn't much interest there. The horizontal striping doesn't seem to add much interest to that elevation at all. If you can't do windows, adding some other design element to break it up, or add some interest along that elevation.
- I actually don't have a problem with this. It's not what I would do, I understand the window comment. It's not an unattractive project and if it's their branding, I don't know if that's what I would get hung up on. I don't know if it's worth trying to redesign all of that just to make some glazing additions to the façade, when I don't think most stores have that in a big mall like this. It's unfortunate but you get big boxes. I think this is a good attempt to make a big box look better. Maybe the crosswalk striping is different? I could see something added to the parking lot to give it a bit more something. It's sophisticated in its simplicity.
- If this building were sited differently I would probably feel more strongly about the window issue. I do feel it's a missed opportunity for the retailer, I know this is their brand, but it really doesn't speak to what's behind that wall. Anyone who isn't familiar with this brand isn't going to know. It's a handsome building that is, for good or bad, out in West Towne Mall so it's mostly for vehicular traffic and not pedestrian.
- I understand other Commissioner's comments. I understand if windows are not an option, doing something else so I will suggest looking to other cities for design ideas.
- Thinking of the project at Grandview Commons, the grocery store, down the center of the parking lot they did a landscaped walkway that led to their front door and built on the entrance procession. If there was some hardscape and greenspace that led up to that door, that would be a way to break up that big façade.
 - I think the ordinance requires us to have trees in all those islands so the site plan shows more landscaping.
 - We provided a sidewalk to JC Penney and helps tie that area together with the bus stop and two community spaces there. The second request was to explore additional landscaping to screen the loading dock and that was beefed up considerably. There's been a significant amount of landscaping put throughout this parking lot that doesn't show up on that front image everyone was looking at. There's more islands than the minimum required, it has been beefed up and is going to break up that parking lot quite a bit.
- (Kevin) The UDC is limited to those four conditions outlined in the staff report because this has been approved by Plan Commission. That's the scope of what UDC has to work with.

ACTION:

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0) with Asad, Braun-Oddo, Klehr, Weisensel, DeChant, Harper and Bernau voting yes; and Abbas voting no.