

AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** July 1, 2020

TITLE: 2902 E. Washington Avenue/2812 E. Johnson Street/401 North Lawn Avenue – New Mixed-Use Building in UDD No. 5. 12th Ald. Dist. (60546)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: July 1, 2020

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 1, 2020, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a new mixed-use building located at 2902 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 5. Registered and speaking in support were Anne Morrison, Jacob Morrison and Joe Porter, representing Urban Land Interests. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Brian Reed, representing Potter Lawson; and Ed Freer. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Tom Neujahr. Morrison discussed the site context, with E. Washington Avenue being a vibrant, bright, loud street, while North Lawn is quieter residential. To create an attractive project while being responsive to the neighborhood they have decreased the form to a four-story piece with setbacks from the neighborhood on North Lawn and five-stories on East Washington connected by a piece not visible from street. The team showed buildings using murals as examples and looked at what Zoning would allow. Plans showed underground parking, floor plans, and roof deck with greenspace. The north end sets back per Imagine Madison and Zoning. They resisted making the mural too large around the corner so it doesn't lose integrity. Renderings showed the brick details. All first floor apartments will have stoops.

Joe Porter: The landscape plan is a diverse range of native species that are urban tolerant, chosen for multi season interest. On the west side they used trees that get as large as possible in a narrow space (Honey Locust), woody shrubs in the foreground with a backdrop of taller perennials. The north and east sides tried to reinforce the buffer with a tightly spaced grove with an understory of fern and Yews. Within the courtyard area itself, knowing it's on top of a parking garage they have elevated planters that reinforce separation between the building and the open space. This provides passive flow from building entries and egress points down connecting to East Washington Avenue. Taller ornamental grasses and upright evergreens are used to reinforce between the two properties. The large Swamp White Oak on southeast corner of site will remain. The service drive created as much landscape as possible.

The Chair reviewed the staff report key items for discussion: the mural and its appropriateness, the relationship of the proposed buildings to the East Washington Avenue corridor and residential character on North Lawn, and

compliance with the façade articulation. The Secretary noted that it does meet the façade articulation requirements.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I really like this project. Do you have a palette of exterior finishes in the packet?
 - I can take a picture and show you.
- I'm looking at the close ups of the renderings, are they relatively accurate? I know it's screen-dependent.
 - We're going for a relatively light true gray, not too dark, not too blue. Fiber cement panels will be a custom color, it's not a standard color.
- It still looks a little institutional to me, I'm seeing a gray and tan and the contrast to the mural is pretty stark. It seems washed out to me.
 - We expect that side to be obscured by future development.
- It's very subjective.
- Overall I really like the project. I personally like the mural and look forward to seeing specifics of that come back. Its presence on East Washington Avenue is going to be awesome. On the East Washington commercial frontage it doesn't appear like there's any bike parking in that location. Was that intentional or could you find a home for some bike parking in that space? I saw floodlights in the cut sheets, just wondering where those were and if they were pointed up, want to be conscious of dark sky requirements.
 - The floodlights are at the entrance of the parking garage and all pointed down. There is bike parking on East Washington and we will spread it out so it's not concentrated in one spot. This is just a block from the Starkwather Creek bike path and we have indoor bike parking for all our residents.
 - We have bikes on both façades at the entrance along North Lawn and right in front of the commercial as well.
- Ald. Abbas: There is good support for this project, the community likes the mural. Some people have concerns regarding traffic and how it will impact North Lawn. A traffic study was conducted and satisfies those concerns.
- I like the overall project, the articulation is sophisticated, not overbearing. Some of the materials seem to be a little institutional based on the rendering. I don't know how to comment on that without actually seeing what the materials are. I do have a concern about the mural, I love murals but I don't know about the placement of this mural as it relates to the overall design. Looking at staff comments it asks UDC to give careful consideration to a five story mural, there's no similar precedent as a primary façade. I think we need to know more, right now it's an abstract piece. The precedents you provided are all one story, not major facades. I don't know that it supports the architecture or takes away from it. I'm not opposed I just don't know if this is hitting the bullseye on this particular project.
 - We're going to work hard that it isn't slapped on a side and doesn't conflict with the architecture. We do have three different artists that we're working with, and looking at apprenticeships with local folks. We know we'll have to come back for that. At first we were hesitant to breaking up the mural but because of the brick piers there's an option for a trip tick treatment. I don't think it will be as abstract as it is here. It is the one thing that people are super excited about. With the materials we can certainly work with staff, in real life they are warmer than this rendering.
 - It's a warmer look, we were resistant to red because it's tied to more commercial buildings and we want to distinguish this. This provides a nice contrast with commercial, nice and elegant but not too loud that stands out on East Washington.
- I don't think the mural was adequately addressed. I need you to explain the justification for the location and size of the mural. Why isn't it over the main entrance or the other side?

- We're reflecting a bit of the history of the site. This is exactly where the carousel was at Ella's. We want to make a vibrant statement in the neighborhood. It also is something you discover as you drive by. We feel the size is one of the most important aspects of it.
- I struggled at this particular site, it's really high speed and has some massive signs. We're not really keen on having big signs but we are keen on art and we feel like this was a more flexible long term thing that could change with the moment. When we looked at it wrapping the corner we felt like when it faced Moka it hit you in the head. They're going to see it from the sides and passing by.
- It's really not a canvas at all for a mural, it's mostly windows. Somebody's going to be living there, depending on the subject matter, maybe that's part of the artwork, that you'll be living in a mural.
- You mentioned taking a picture of the finishes, can you do that and just email them to Janine and she could post it? To the mural, I see what you're trying to achieve and I'm wondering if the small attempt of coming around the corner is really going to do much for you. Would it be more effective to have a more full frame and not try to come around the corner? A frame rather than the trip tick and try to make it look like a framed piece then, it's not coming off as that now. Overwhelmingly you see the punched openings of the windows and I'm wondering if you frame it as a piece of art would be more effective. I'm just not seeing that it's a framed piece right now.
- The image from the other angle might be more realistic as you're coming up and down the street.
- I personally really like that it's not a framed mural piece. I like that there's people almost living in the art. I would agree that eventually it's going to be critical to see what it is for its content. The fact there's not a precedent for it in Madison is fine by me. I like the gesture, that it's different, the scale that is broken by the fenestration in the windows.
- What is the material of that wall that would be under the paint?
 - It will be brick. Painters we've been talking to prefer it as a surface and it keeps the integrity of the building. All three of the murals shown in the presentation are the specific artists we've been talking with.
- It is possible to approve it contingent on the mural coming back?
- The punched opening mural looks like a 3-story structure. If it's not an abstract mural whatever that concept is would be disturbed by 2 x 6 openings.
- It could make or break the project. Typically they're on a somewhat solid surface so the art speaks for itself. The holes takes away from the piece itself and my concern is that may happen here. You don't really have a solid wall to display the art on. Right now it just looks like paint on the wall because there's so many punched openings.
 - It is a placeholder that we do expect to be back to you with.
- This is a major part of this design. How do you approve it or give initial or final without really knowing what the specifics of the major elements of this piece are going to be?
- If we were to take the signage analogy we know where it's intended to be in general, the signage would have to come back. Knowing the brick behind it should it stand on its own, that would allow the project to move forward without the mural through the rest of the development process and refine that mural design.

Motion discussion:

Ald. Abbas: Friendly amendment for final. If they come back it will still be a placeholder.

ACTION:

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).

The project is approved with the mural as placeholder that will come back to the Commission for approval.