

AGENDA # 10

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: March 31, 2021

TITLE: 849 E. Washington Avenue – New
Development in UDD No. 8. 6th Ald. Dist.
(64507)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

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ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: March 31, 2021

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 31, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for new development located at 849 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 8. Registered and speaking in support were Jeff Davis, representing Angus Young; Nate Helbach, representing The Neutral Project, LLC; and Ashton Stare. Registered and speaking neither in support nor opposition were Candice Nichol and Michael Green. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Matt Brink, representing Bakers Place, LLC.

The project proposes an 18-15 story building with up to 241 multi-family units and the same amount of current commercial space. An amendment to the Capitol Corridor Gateway Plan would be required to allow multi-family on the site, and to address requested bonus stories, and changes to setbacks and stepbacks. The area has industrial neighbors and newer projects, the existing building contains office and commercial space and parking on E. Main Street. They looked at sun throughout the year and how it affects the site, how much shadowing comes from neighboring buildings and how much shadow effect this building would have. It offers opportunity for views out of the site towards the Capitol and both of the lakes. They are looking to continue to develop the project and refine how to meet the provisions for bonus stories, requesting 28,000 square feet in bonus stories out of possible 75,000 square feet. On E. Washington Avenue they have a 15-story massing that steps down on E. Main Street from 10 to 8 with a thoughtful addition behind. 225-241 units are proposed with parking wrapped in commercial and residential program. The commercial space and preservation of the existing building gives texture and heritage to the project; the green roofs, internal courtyard and small front yards for townhouses along Paterson Street activate the streetscape. The residential entrance at is located on Paterson and the parking garage entrance is located on E. Main Street. The project includes a mix of units including studios, one beds and range of 2 and 3 bedroom units. They are showing stepped massing and clear articulation of those separate massings. The full length of the building on Paterson Street at 244 feet is broken down into three different massings and heights, while also seeking a 15-foot setback and stepback on Paterson, as one clean line to provide sufficient front yards for the townhouses and to allow sufficient space for street trees. The proposed muse space, located between the existing building and new development, is designed as a narrow intimate street

that bounces double sided commercial spaces and public interaction. The building steps down on E. Main Street to address lower height buildings on this edge, maintain a 15-foot setback but avoid the 15-foot stepback to meet the desire for larger family units they want to provide. They have reduced on-site parking through bus stops, future BRT stops along E. Washington, access to a bike share program, and an on-site car share program. The development fits within the airport height restrictions, is well under the Capitol Height Preservation Limits to match the Galaxie across E. Washington Avenue, and is well placed with neighbors.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I'm really excited about this project and followed with a lot of interest the building going up in Milwaukee as a mass timber building that will be the tallest of its kind in the entire world if I'm not mistaken. What are your thoughts?
 - We're really excited about those projects as well. We have projects upwards of 30 stories tall. Our practice is entirely mass timber, we think it's the future of building for carbon neutral buildings.
- I know the notion of mass timber is largely a structural concept, but in some of these projects around the world they pull a lot of the exposure of the wood out into the surfaces. Do you have any thoughts about that?
 - It's very important from sustainability and fire code point of views, we see this as a way to showcase how that can be done really well. Not only because it's beautiful but because it's the more sustainable way. We think it's important, we think it's possible and want to showcase that in this project.
- They are asking for relief in the setback and stepback requirements for more dwelling units when it's called for employment in this area. Does the plan really need to be amended before we go too much further into reviewing design?
- (Firchow) From a land use perspective it's recommended for employment uses. If there is support from the Alder that would likely come concurrent with the full formal development proposal.
- (Secretary) As far as the UDD 8 text amendment, the plan set guidelines for what became UDD No. 8. Along Paterson Street the minimum setback is zero and the maximum is 10, they're showing 15. That would require an amendment to allow a 15-foot setback, the current stepback is 15-feet, so in theory there would not need to be an additional stepback. Above the 5th story, this is a requirement for developments that are longer than 200-feet, this is shown as 240-feet, it would need a 45 degree stepback. The additional stories would be cut back significantly angling back from Paterson Street. Five stories at the zero setback line, then 45 degrees above five stories. Along Main Street the setback is 15-feet, however there would be a stepback above the 5th story that is not shown currently and that would need to be amended.
- Seems like a huge ask for relief on all these well considered stepbacks and setbacks in order to accommodate a use that's not even in the adopted plan on the East Main block.
- It does say on one of the plans that the existing building is going to be used for offices, so that's job oriented.
- Changing it from employment, didn't we do that up the block at the back of the Archipelago, are we doing this project by project or block by block?
- Yes the WHEDA building and the other half was an apartment building. There was a considerable amount of employment included in that development. We continue to see lots and lots of residential, we have to think about the long view of what the City wants to do along Main Street. I'm not advocating to deny this but before we get all excited about timber frames and green roofs we really needs to think about the core uses and adopted plans and the zoning implications in terms of stepbacks and setbacks.

- Your parking ratio is a concern to me because there's not a lot of parking. I don't know if you'll get that many people forgoing the owning of a vehicle. People that work downtown will often park this far down so it's often congested.
- I'm excited about the ambition of the project. Focusing on the asks, can you tell us why the larger bedroom units are a must be on Paterson Street? On the chopping block to achieve the bonus stories.
 - We have the capacity to move those, the intent was never to say if we can't get that we won't do it. The goal is to also maintain the existing bakery and give back that public muse space, in making some of those moves it is restrictive in how we can allow for setbacks, especially on East Main as it pushes back. It's also our intent to meet the neighborhood desire for larger units.
- Overall share the sentiment that your goals of doing heavy timber framing definitely pull on our heart strings, its core to what we believe in for sustainability. Forest Green is here in Madison, where a lot of your technology comes from. Trees, carbon dioxide, also the alternative of concrete, specifically cement is one of the worst thing we do to the environment. Choosing a building system for a project that is sustainable doesn't relieve the design team of staying within ordinances and codes we go through, specifically for equity for future sites. While some exceptions are made there has to be significant justification given to show why exceptions have to be made. To the design team, I would say if you're looking for relief from certain elements, there has to be real plausible justification for that so we can see what it is and why this project has to give into some of those reliefs.
- What's the verdict on the use and the zoning?
- In terms of the use it would be a concurrent application that we could recommend what they're proposing in conjunction with an amendment to the plan. Bonus stories in addition to violating some of the setback and stepback requirements. Those are all right now in play.
- I think that determination needs to happen or none of this conversation matters.
- UDD 8 gives us guidance on the bonus stories but not so much on the setbacks and stepbacks or amending the Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan. It's more than just a building design right now, it's this three-headed monster we have to tackle and ultimately make a recommendation to the Plan Commission.
- The City Council ultimately will decide the land use. The physical design of the building is ultimately UDD No. 8 which is what the Commission would be approving.
- (Secretary) John Strange will talk more in detail on sustainability, enforceability and qualifications for the bonus stories.
- I'd like to ask the design team to speak the reason for the order of the stepping in the massing, why 15-stories on the E. Washington Avenue side and 8-stories on the Main Street side?
 - One of the advantages of the sun orientation and the courtyard allows the sun to hit that courtyard for a much longer period of the day and has less implications of shadowing on other buildings. The other issue is that setback off Main Street was in part that off-set of creating the muse, which we liked as a way of creating a clear gap with the bakery building.
- To comply with the stepback on the E. Main side you'd need to find a way to put that volume somewhere else, it seems the likely place is in the 10-story middle section. I asked because I wondered if the courtyard is driving that, I'd encourage an hourly annual analysis on that. I'm skeptical that having the shorter 8-story does a whole lot to improve the solar gain in that courtyard. I've been proven wrong.
- This project is talking about sustainable in a way most of the projects we've seen have not talked about. I would hope that as a Commission we're encouraging and welcoming to this project because that's exciting for Madison to get. Stepbacks vs. setbacks, I'm struggling to understand how an increase in setback could be bad, it means more greenspace and shade trees along this street.
- We need all the answers and justifications in order to make an overall recommendation one way or the other.

- If we're looking at shying away from some of the UDD guidelines for the setbacks and setbacks, specifically on the Paterson elevation, what's shown on the massing is one big flat façade, so as far as bonus stories those are typically given to those projects that include some pretty significant architectural façade design, specifically this corridor as an entry point into Madison. Having one whole vertical facade when we're looking at the design, I understand you have maybe some green areas in there, urban activation, how are you activating the street front if the residential? You're losing that vertical articulation so we'd want to see pretty detailed design elements to give it some character.
- If we gain a little in setback but the setback is not its full depth, it could affect the amount of sun that hits the street and sidewalk. Comparative sections for us to make a more educated recommendation.
- I'm not opposed to the added setback on Paterson. My caution or concern would be that right now to the southwest is a parking lot and as we've experienced you're counting on that clear sunlight coming through, what if the next site is developed with a tall building, now you don't have that sun in the courtyard or that heat gain. Your eggs are all in one basket, I'd caution that dependency on the parking lot next to you.
- The setback with this massing model seems weird because it's a blank wall. If you look at the Constellation and some of the other buildings, there's a required setback of sorts from E. Washington down into the surrounding neighborhood, why it goes from 15-8-10 to mix with the context of Main Street.
 - That's exactly right, along the 12a parcel the maximum stories is 12 with 3 bonus and on parcel 12 b the maximum is 8 with 2 bonus, so that's also informed the massing.
- The courtyard, it's fine until somebody else goes right up onto the property line and you have a canyon.
 - Purity in forms does require a clean element form making.
- The muse is a super cool concept that should stay no matter what.

Ald. Rummel thanked the Commission for looking at this from all sides and agreed with everyone that the sustainability program is exciting and interesting. She liked that it doesn't appear to be all one solid building, but appreciated the Paterson side comment looking blank and the staff report identifying the setbacks and setbacks. She liked the muse too, appreciating retaking this commercial corridor and reusing it. To the employment question, that's what she struggles with the most. Having been involved in this Capitol Gateway Corridor vision since the beginning, she bought into having employment here. It does seem a little cherry picking where others worked hard to put in the employment but this doesn't meet that. The new alder will have to decide what he thinks about this. Generally there's enthusiasm for the sustainability but the ordinance needs careful attention.

Discussion continued as follows:

- Why can't that courtyard be used to gain the setback requirements on Paterson?
- It's important that we ask the tough questions now and hopefully the proposal will be the better for it. You'll need to involve the new alder and the neighborhood, and that will go a long way for us to put together a recommendation as well.
 - (Brink) A lot of consideration was put into the post-COVID office uses. The WHEDA building, the ULI project on the Square, The Arden, there's a lot of flux in the market and lot of other locations. Family supportive housing was brought up a lot tonight, this provides that. This provides efficient design using mass timber, while also providing needed and unique housing

ACTION:

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