

**AGENDA # 4**

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** February 24, 2021

**TITLE:** 12 N. Few Street - Addition and New Construction for 8 Commercial Spaces and 8 Residential Units Located in UDD No. 8. 2nd Ald. Dist. (64038)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

**AUTHOR:** Janine Glaeser, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

**DATED:** February 24, 2021

**ID NUMBER:**

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

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of February 24, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for an addition and new construction located at 12 N. Few Street in UDD No. 8. Registered and speaking in support was John Seamon, representing Jeremy Knudsen. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak were Jeff Reinke, Karen Banaszak and John Belknap.

The Secretary gave an overview on the potential text amendment to UDD No. 8 and asked for specific feedback from the Commission regarding the east-west street (Curtis Court) that runs through the center. UDD No. 8 Block 5b requires a 15-foot setback on east-west streets, including Curtis Court, which right now has varied setbacks along that street. Additionally, the potential UDD No. 8 amendment would create Block 5c that allows a flexible setback between 5-20 feet along this lot on Curtis Court. Off-street parking for new buildings shall be located behind or on the side of the building; however existing properties that do not allow for this shall make these areas more attractive. They would need to make these areas more attractive by adding landscaping, sidewalks and architecture. It is up to the Commission to determine if what they present meets that.

Seamon described the project, noting the intent to create small commercial spaces and a nice opportunity to have a business owner live above their business. Plans would demolish a portion of the existing building and add a new building next to it, while also adding a second story to a portion of the existing building that would remain. There are 8 commercial units below and 8 residential units directly above. They don't feel a strong need for parking in this location.

Jeff Reinke and Karen Banaszak spoke as immediate neighbors and asked to save the trees at the corner of Curtis and Few Street. He suggested permeable pavers as much as possible, low night lighting and as much brick and mortar for the outside of the building as possible. She supports Randy Knudsen and the idea behind this project, it's a terrific idea. They definitely want to preserve a small island of land on the corner of Curtis and Few that was planted by the neighborhood 30 years ago to have some greenspace. Along Curtis Court there is no street parking, she questions the metal panel as it faces the apartments across the street on Few Street,

wondering about reflection off of that for the people living there and whether it would increase sound. She liked the metal roof idea but is concerned about the front of the building. What types of businesses would occupy these spaces?

John Belknap spoke, noting that Curtis Court is over 100 years old and was an alley for horse stables before it was paved. There is no parking on Curtis Court. It has gotten so bad that Parking Enforcement is not enforcing the no parking rules in this area because there are so many violations. Every major construction along Mifflin Street and E. Washington all promise ground floor business and upstairs owner occupant. This one is even worse because they are so small, there's no parking for clients, the bus stops are at least two blocks away, there's a potential for 16 residents, 16 cars and no parking except for the four small spaces. Without some way of addressing parking it has to be redone. Redo the large new structure along the Few Street/Curtis Court corner; if it weren't so large there would be space for parking.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I live very close to this area so I'm familiar with it, it is a nice little tucked away street on Curtis Court. It's an interesting project, but I'm wondering how do you see the flow of the business end of this? You show four parking spaces on Curtis Court, are you envisioning that on the other four units that cars would completely pull in to the units?
  - The use of the "garage doors" is really not intended for garage parking, it's really a way to bring the notion of storefront and a familiar form in a neighborhood. They're not there to pull cars in but be seen as storefront for commercial businesses. Those are commercial spaces in the true mixed-use sense of the word. The four off-street spots, that front façade is an existing location and we certainly heard the neighborhood voice concern about that, so the idea is to bring at least those four off-street parking stalls to the development but not necessarily pull them into the garage. They would be dedicated to residential use.
- I'm curious, the tenant when they enter, if they use their parking spot they go around the building to get into it? The flow of the actual person occupying the apartment and how potential customers would enter, for instance the unit furthest south, if there's a car parked there how do people get into the building? There's no paving to that doorway, I'm trying to get a sense of circulation for both customers and apartment occupants.
  - Commercial uses will have front doors to their business off Curtis Court and Few Street. Most of the entrances for the residential units on the second floor would occur in the rear of the building but not exclusively. If you look at Unit G and Unit F, there are front doors to the second floor residential off of Few Street. If someone were to park in one of those off-street stalls they would have to walk around to their entry which is on the south side of the building.
- It's not intended for cars to park in those retail or business areas, there's not enough space to park but you have enough concrete and a curb cut to get in there with a car. What is the purpose for all the paving if you don't intend for cars to go into those spaces?
  - We want to remove a lot of that but keep enough so that if it's a small shop that has a delivery of whatever it might be, raw materials for their work, they can actually back-up into it as opposed to parking on the street. That's really the intent, not to be an access point to a parking stall inside the building.
- Where do you foresee customers parking when they come here?
  - We're seeing more and more people on foot, on bikes, hopefully using more mass transit. They would be no different than a lot of the other commercial or retail uses along E. Washington, they would have to find parking and walk to this small business.
- Have you developed a building like this before, and what are some of the examples of the type of businesses that run out of a small space?

- Not on this scale, we've done some of this before. We're finding a need for small businesses, small design, small craft custom carpentry, an artist that needs some type of small space. The rent associated with them is more approachable, yet they have a really nice opportunity to be in the heart of Madison and run their own small business.
- I'm intrigued by the proportions, the scale, how you've done the windows. It's all got a really nice Craftsman look to it, is there any flexibility to do a little less of the steel, especially on the Few Street facing side of the building? It's pretty industrial and there are some older post-war houses in the area, it's a little too much steel I think for the neighborhood.
  - Always flexibility, we always want to be looking at other ideas. We'd love to hear your thoughts on what some of those alternatives might be. The reaction the portion of Scooter Therapy, that CMU structure, keep as much as we can, build new on top of it, and the existing CMU would be a memory marker in a way. We thought repeating masonry on the two story portion took away from it and feels like it wants to be on its own but yet obviously related to the existing building.
- Maybe at the base, even a burnished block that had the same type of vibe while not trying to appear original. I'd keep it the same scale.
- What is the thought for the transparency of the garage doors, a frosted element or transparent?
  - We think that's going to be dependent on the business. Some small shops might really want to see the process of what they're doing, what they're making and be more transparent. Maybe in some cases they wouldn't want that.
- Can the second floor be classified as business as well?
  - We're seeing that as residential.
- I'm trying to understand the likelihood of cohesiveness between the two units. You can't always make multiple tenants do the same thing but that was the first thing that came to mind for me. I'm excited about the idea, it's a dynamic use and I want to support that.
- The vision triangle on Few Street and Curtis Court, is that required? What is the reason for removing the existing trees on the corner and adding that?
  - We're not proposing removing those trees. The vision triangle is something we were paying attention to relative to traffic, normally it's 25-feet, however they felt like there's reason for that to go down. Even at 12-feet like this we could still keep those trees. There are three primary trees there, two of them are outside our property line and the smallest one is within it. We like the idea of keeping those as long as they're healthy. Our landscape architect is just getting on board.
- The metal aesthetic and the trees might go a long way to break that up, soften that up perhaps. I like the proposed aesthetic, I do question the fit in the neighborhood but the trees might help you.
- As far as the garage doors, the condos behind the Galaxie have the exact same thing. There's not a lot of parking there, I don't think the parking is a huge issue. Maybe adding some sort of different material on the Few Street side but I would not go crazy with it. Overall I definitely like this building, this project.
- I like this concept a lot. The CMU, is that unfinished and will it remain or be finished?
  - It's painted right now. We're working through the infill material on door and window locations. It's leaning toward being cleaned up and repainted to give it that same color it's been for quite some time.
- I do think parking can be an issue. In that regard will residents be prohibited from taking their cars into their workspace?
  - From an engineering standpoint along Curtis Court the City would only allow us to have two of them be used for commercial purposes as a garage space, and the other four would have to be residential.
- I'm wondering for those four parked off Curtis Court, if that could be permeable paving as opposed to more concrete. The floor plan, the residents can enter from their workshop and enter their residential unit?

- Absolutely.
- If you can maintain those trees, they're pretty substantial.
- From what I'm hearing the first floor units will be rented separately from the second floor units. You do not automatically get the unit below you.
  - This is more of a mixed-use, it is not a live-work scenario. That said if you wanted to lease both spaces one could certainly do that.
- I assumed these were combined units that went together. That seems to defeat the purpose of having a development like this, that's confusing to me. The existing masonry, where the paint is coming off you can see the masonry underneath, it's not particularly attractive. I thought it was just concrete block. The backside of it is no more than a foot away from the back wall of the diagonal hatched garage on the far west of the adjacent houses that front on E. Washington. We see a walkway for this building but that's not where the back wall is right now, it's almost touching the back of that garage, I'm confused about that. I share the concerns of everybody with parking and the lack thereof. This used to be my neighborhood and I still frequent businesses nearby, at 3:00 in the afternoon it's really hard to find a parking spot along Few and East Mifflin Streets, there's definitely concerns about that. I'll piggy back on comments saving the trees on Curtis Court, that would be a shame if those were removed.
- Would it then be a tenant build-out if they would add a restroom and small kitchenette?
  - On the ground level yes.
- Thoughts on the requested setback zoning amendment?

**ACTION:**

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