

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: April 28, 2021

TITLE: 222-232 E. Olin Avenue - Planned Multi-Use Site Located in UDD No. 1. 14th Ald. Dist. (64920)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: April 28, 2021

ID NUMBER:

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

*Asad recused himself on Item No. 4.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of April 28, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a Planned Multi-Use Site located at 222-232 E. Olin Avenue in UDD No. 1. Registered and speaking in support were Joseph Lee, representing McGrath Property Group, LLC; and Lance McGrath. Registered in support but not wishing to speak were Mary Giblin, Chad Ruppel, Daniel Zutter, Taylor McGrath, Matt Long and Michael Metzger. Registered and speaking in opposition were Helen Kitchel and Janelle Munns. Registered in opposition and not wishing to speak were Daina Zemliauskas-Juozevicius, Colleen Potter and Cynthia McCallum. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak were Erica Bouska and Kurt Stege, representing the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation. Registered neither in support nor opposition and not wishing to speak were Andy Meessmann, Susan Matiak and Joe Vande Slunt. Staff noted this was before the Landmarks Commission for the demolitions on April 19, 2021.

McGrath and Lee presented the plans for what they noted is a prominent site in a gateway location, unique in that it can handle the scale of this project. The site is adjacent to a rail corridor, bicycle and pedestrian paths, bus lines, tennis courts, dog park, and City parks, while being ¼ mile from the nearest residential home. The development will require demolition of the Coliseum Bar and Wonder Bar for an 18-story mixed-use building containing 450,000 square feet including parking. The first floor parking ramp is wrapped with three-stories of commercial at the eastern end, with a large residential lobby along Olin Avenue. Atop parking is 13 levels of residential with the 18th level housing the mechanical penthouse and a lantern feature. Proposed are 290 residential units ranging from studios to three bedrooms, 15,500 square feet of commercial space, 343 covered parking stalls with dedicated spaces for the retail and visitors (no surface parking proposed), and a turn-around feature as an amenity for delivery drivers for off-street access. The building would use a high efficiency water source heat pump system for heating and cooling. The Comprehensive Plan calls out this site for employment but also talks about changing the land use for this property in conjunction with the Alliant Energy Center Plan. The Destination District Plan calls for high density residential as lakefront park-oriented living; this would be a catalyst for future development in this area. The development team is talking with WHEDA to create some affordable units within the building. The site plan shows the footprint aligning on the site as an L-shaped building with varying masses to address surrounding contexts. Building materials include masonry, brick,

translucent panels, metal panel and glass. A rooftop terrace is proposed as a common amenity space with a mixture of softscape and hardscape, as well as covered and uncovered spaces.

Helen Kitchel spoke in opposition. Concerns include height of the building as inappropriate in this area, traffic at the intersection of John Nolen Drive and Olin Avenue, and preservation of the Wonder Bar. She recommended consideration to incorporating it into the bottom level design for a unique feature, or moving it to another location as it is worthy of landmark status.

Erica Bouska spoke neither in support nor opposition as a Bay Creek resident. The project is nicely laid out but is very dense. Would like to see increased opportunities for renters in this area, but the Wonder Bar should be preserved or moved. Blend old with new (Hotel Indigo, for example).

Kurt Stege spoke neither in support nor opposition, representing the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation. They acknowledge that the Urban Design Commission does not have jurisdiction over the fate of the Wonder Bar, but the Trust does. There is also a very significant public interest in the fate of the bar. They hope to engage with the development team to see if something can be accomplished.

Ald. Carter spoke, noting she thinks this parcel next to John Nolen Drive is a perfect location for high density residential and the number of stories proposed.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Nice presentation, like seeing all the views. The building will be a nice beacon at night. Questions include: opportunity for some green roof area, particularly above the retail space and overhang above the entrance; access from the commercial space to the trash and recycling; the amenity space on the roof has almost no sunlight. Could go with more vertical landscaping along John Nolen Drive, at those vertical brick walls, they are a little plain.
 - There will be some planting on the green roof on the 5th floor tenant areas, the canopies and retail space would be nice places for lower intensity sedum plantings. Trash and recycling will need to use the building collection area on the other side, however, these will be predominantly office uses and perhaps a café, not significant refuse generators. We do have some space inside the parking if they need their own collection area. Sun on the terrace, there's give and take on that. It's going to be shaded at times but it's also a great vantage point to see downtown Madison. We'll look at our planting schedules to be sure they can handle the shade.
- The building is very attractive, it'll be an asset.
- Thank you for all of the detail in this informational presentation. Is there anything from the Landmarks Commission meeting we should consider?
 - Janine outlined our purview in the staff report, as well as paraphrasing the Landmarks action.
- Roofs – second the opportunities for green roofs. It's looking like a lighter colored roof, I would advise to consider that carefully, that could cause a glare condition on the lower levels. Readiness for solar power? Encourage design team to consider that. Didn't see louvers articulated in any of the elevations for the unit ventilations.
 - The 18th floor is the mechanical penthouse which will have louvers facing inward. There are no louvers for the units. We will have bath and laundry exhaust to deal with, right now the plan is vertical venting for those. Keeping it clean, contemporary and sleek looking. We are evaluating solar panels on the top roof which will present some challenges, more aesthetic issues.
- I really like the design, the exterior of the building is nice. Reminder that post-tension construction is going to be integrating vertical openings through the slabs and will be a significant coordination effort.
 - This is our fourth PT building and our contractor has a lot of experience with these.

- Stormwater, it doesn't look to be really creating any more of a challenge related to stormwater than what's there today. Are you considering any improvements to have better water infiltration and deal with stormwater in a responsible way?
 - Yes, we're a little early in the design aspects for that but I do think it'll be an improvement over what's there existing. Plan for retention basin along railroad setback.
- Positive project overall, a surface parking lot being replaced with density is a good thing. Appreciate thoughtfulness of drop-off and circulation. Encourage you to think about bike connectivity, multiple directions and desired paths. That intersection can be a tricky spot to cross on a bike, think about how to connect to trails around you, or how the volume of people heading downtown would navigate to some of those spaces. As an impervious redevelopment you're in a good position to make an improvement on the stormwater management. The scale of the buildings demands a landscape response of a similar scale, a lot of these spaces need tree canopy to support the mass and scale of the building. build up some planting density in the commercial plaza space, ornamental tree scale and higher to really make it a successful space. Might get your landscape points but don't otherwise make an impact, concentrate those in larger masses.
- Succeeding with a sleek design, has a nice vertical rhythm that leans towards elegant. Your night renderings are gorgeous, I think as Madison grows our nightscape will change, since this is so far away from the Capitol I don't find it competing. I'm hoping families will move in here, it's near the pool and across from a park. That said I wonder about children in this area. I would hope it's activated a lot because there's a lot of outdoor activity around this site. Lovely design.
- General reaction, it fits in with the surrounding context, but this feels like a big ask for the nearby neighborhood because the height is an exception. You can show aggressive accommodation with affordable housing, the sustainability features of green roofs, solar, creative stormwater management, HVAC system, the more we hear about that and the more aggressive you are that would be appreciated. To the historic preservation, couple of examples of buildings that are respecting old historic structures: 849 E. Washington Avenue proposal and the Pizzeria Uno project on Mineral Point Road. Creative things can be done with historic structures incorporating them into contemporary projects.
- Potential impact on traffic volume specifically on Olin. Transportation demand management, show us how you'll connect to the Wingra bike path related to your indoor bike spaces, would tenants be offered bike passes or any incentive to not have a vehicle? Four elements would help in terms of a neighborhood welcome to this building: affordable housing, sustainability, stormwater and historic preservation.
- I overall like the project a lot but I really dislike the beacon. I like seeing the activity and life in the nightscape, seeing the glow of individual units in our city, but the beacon to me is more of a signage piece, which would be the exact opposite, something you see from a distance that does not denote life and activity. I don't think it contributes to the project, the lighting images would be more beautiful without it. A strong vote of opposition to that feature.
- My reaction is there being a functional need for that mass for mechanicals and you're trying to do something aesthetically pleasing. Opportunity for something else? I'm 50/50 right now. What's behind the translucent panels on the first and second floors?
 - The lower four levels house parking.
- On the north elevation (train track) I would definitely encourage careful study to be sure lighting from those panels is very close to the lighting of the lantern. If they're much different it might be pretty distracting.
- Are you proposing translucent glass with illumination from the parking levels shining through?
 - Yes, parking would cast through those panels. It wouldn't be entirely uniform but give it a sense of activity. We're trying not to call the feature on the top a beacon, more of a soft lit lantern.
- Do the translucent panels allow natural light into the space for the benefit of facilities staff working on the mechanicals?

- Probably not, we don't want any shadows cast up there. The amount of time spent in that penthouse won't be very significant. The panels in the parking garage are the same material but those will allow daylight into the parking area.
- How are you balancing the amount of glass and your design approach to keeping this building operating with a reasonable footprint?
 - Trade-offs with that also, it will definitely create challenges with heating and cooling the units, but it's a great amenity for views around the building. The water source heat pump system is forced air but the pumps take energy out of the water loop that goes through the building. During different times of day some parts would want heat while others may want cool. Some of the nature of apartments, they're not huge footprints and don't have a lot of exposure.
- Kudos to the team for a centralized approach on this building, there's a significant benefit for doing that, particularly in ventilation.
- I don't like the idea of the lantern at all, it's a glaring "here we are." Could be convinced it might be an asset to what the building looks like at night, but a large glowing white blank space doesn't even come close to what would be aesthetically wowing. Thumbs down in its current form.
- Very balcony-heavy building. Like the fact that despite the size there was effort in making them look more interesting and tying into the overall design of the building.
 - The bottoms will be painted or we'll extend metal panel across to create that box effect.
- Concur with having some columnar narrow evergreens up against the masonry on the John Nolen Drive side. Not averse to the low foundation plantings but they won't have an impact. You have a row of deciduous trees along there but on the plan you're limited by the railroad right-of-way. Do you anticipate any problems planting those there?
 - The landscaping shown is really the architect's preliminary vision. Our civil team will have a fully developed landscape plan when we formally submit. There will be challenges for planting along the north area due to activity, utility work will be pretty deep.
- I'll be anxious to see the final landscape design. Also concur with comments about patio space, you should really invest some plant material into that spot, wrapping around the front to the Olin Avenue side too. This building deserves something above and beyond some of the run-of-the-mill plantings. The terrace sun exposure challenge, invest some significant effort into having somebody spec plants that are going to do well, as well as having multi-seasonal interest.
- Great presentation, great design. The canopy in the framed balconies are nice visual interest. The sun on the amenity space, I like the canopy but maybe it turns into an arbor or trellis structure. The lantern itself, it's a creative thing to do but when you put in the surrounding spaces, this isn't a dense skyline we're trying to add more interest to. I think with a nod to the pretty close park and residential areas, I don't see more light pollution as appropriate and I would just take it away.
- Have you thought about darker glass or glass with any color?
 - We've been exploring the possibility of using slightly tinted glass in certain areas that would correspond to the different panel colors.
- Opportunity with the amount of glass, it could add some interest.
- Should we infer that these are inoperable window units?
 - There will be operable components to them. Not every window but a fair amount.
- Staff report asked us to comment with regard to public and commercial entrances. Agree with all the positive comments, but bothered by the lower canopy where cars are driving in and out, it feels like a hotel. Losing that canopy would make the entrance much more visible, particularly at street level.
- I would second that there's a lot of interest in that façade under there. I did wonder if that canopy is hiding things more than it is expressing "this is an apartment entrance."
- The part specifically where the drive turn-around is at the garage entrance.

- It does kind of feel like an institutional or hospital entrance, maybe it's looking for something softer or more inviting.
- I think you make a good point, but the functions they've described are necessary. I've seen this handled very nicely in other projects where the key is not designing for vehicles, it shares uses with people and other functions.
- Not arguing against the layout, just the roof over it. More urban without his huge drive-under like you'd see at a hotel, exposing more of the building entrance?
- Agree, wondering if shifting the canopy to just the commercial space would help simplify that and give you better queueing to where that entrance is? Needs a bit more finessing. Beacon – agree the lighting from the fenestration of all the units are enough for the illumination quality that would be desirable from this building at night. The lighting at the penthouse is not required or desirable.

ACTION:

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