

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: March 10, 2021

TITLE: 1858-1890 E. Washington Avenue -  
Planned Multi-Use Site Located in UDD  
No. 8. 12th Ald. Dist. (64302)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: March 10, 2021

ID NUMBER:

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

\*Asad was recused on this item.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of March 10, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a Planned Multi-Use Site located at 1858-1890 E. Washington Avenue in UDD No. 8. Registered and speaking in support were Adam Fredendall, representing JLA Architects; and Steve Doran. Registered neither in support nor opposition and not wishing to speak was Alison Lindsay Mares.

The project proposes seven stories with 334 apartments and 15,000 square feet of commercial space on the first floor with uses that support the neighborhood and new public market that will be built to the north. Townhomes are proposed along First Street with the intention to scale the project down appropriately to the neighborhood to the east. This does allow for a future connection to the public market at the discretion of the City. The project is sustainable, respectful to the neighbors and very environmentally conscious. The property is located right in front of a proposed BRT station and the project will encourage the use of public transit, as well as offer numerous car charging stations on site. The site plan, floor plans and entrances were reviewed, with building materials proposed to be a stone base, brick and dark metal panels. A terraced landscape level will enhance the pedestrian experience along E. Washington Avenue. The grade necessitates a retaining wall on the north and west sides of the building. They held a neighborhood meeting on March 4, 2021 that overall went very well. They are addressing concerns, including concerns about parking spilling into the neighborhood. There is a desire from some of the residents to perhaps increase from .9 stalls per unit to assure there are no parking issues in the neighborhood.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Ald. Abbas detailed concerns expressed at the neighborhood meeting, including concerns with parking (especially the commercial side), pedestrian and bicycle safety and how this design could help. We need a broader discussion on E. Washington Avenue. The townhomes should be redesigned to make them more engaged. There was quite a bit of discussion of resident gathering areas, play areas. They are proposing greenspace, but there was an idea to create a space still in the building. Very visible from east

side, west side, south side and public market on the north corner. The community really wants to see how this architecture could be much more engaging.

- I would agree I don't quite understand how the townhomes fit into that façade. That warrants some review, maybe because they're white, those railings look out of scale and out of place compared to the building behind it. The population that might live here, next to the City market, I sure wish there were larger units so families could live there. Madison is considering this to be a hot new spot in town. You broke this up into an "E" shape with green spaces in between, but with the height of the buildings, will they ever get any sun in there?
- I'm really glad you're thinking green roofs, this orientation of the spaces is east-west, at the summer solstice they'd get a lot of sun but that's only a couple months of the year.
- There are some setback concerns that need to be considered.
  - There is some language in UDD No. 8 that allows the Commission to make an interpretation. Given the traffic volumes on First Street, the proposed massing of the building, and the setbacks of the new market, those are things the Commission can consider if there's adequate landscaping and activation along that façade. The E. Washington side has been revised so the underground parking is within the setback.
- The townhouse looks very industrial, there's not a real clear connection, no windows on the floor level that would have a view out. It's doesn't look very inviting. That needs a little bit of work. On E. Washington I'd like to see some creative design other than a slab with a railing around it, which may not be as attractive in the winter. Maybe more of a continuation of a wall with the opportunity for some plantings. It looks really institutional and repetitive. I'm also concerned with the deep roof areas between the fingers of the building and what those will look like. You really do need to provide some exterior space for your tenants, it's going to be very dark. Is there a pedestrian connection to the park?
- A lot of people park in that lot to use Burr Jones Park. I'm not advocating for more surface parking but as a management strategy that could continue. Echoing some of the other comments, I really like the porch or the plinth on this frontage. Another layer of plantings at the top behind the railing would be beneficial and nicer. Overall I think this side is much more successful in the ways it feels architecturally, especially with plants layered into it. Equity and accessibility need to be thought of. Overall I like how it meets the streetscape. On the other side the amount of blank wall and that scale is not nearly as successful. A deeper setback is OK but right now it's not used in a great way, the elevation and height of those porches is too great. The courtyards and general massing of the building, I definitely want to look out over the park and towards downtown, that's the preferable frontage as a tenant. That side does have the surface parking lot and the less continuous façade. Keep in mind that that's probably the more desirable side and that the park and view towards downtown is a real amenity to you.
- I would really advocate taking any parking down to E. Washington and move it farther east as possible to avoid a switchback ramp, it makes it look less accessible. If you go further east you may decrease the amount of ramping. The entrance to the apartment building needs a statement, it doesn't distinguish it enough from the commercial development. I echo the townhouse comments, they could be articulated more in a series versus a strong horizontal bar, and make those porches really usable. You've got the extra setback, maybe a low wall could lessen the amount of railing you need to express there. Overall the use of materials, the colors, the openings, and the proportion of the building has a really good start. It doesn't fall back on any revival styles, it shows real nice self-confidence and good scale, particularly what's going on across E. Washington where The Marling is located.
- I strongly hope the windows will be aluminum and not vinyl.

Doran addressed some of the Commission's comments. The courtyard areas between the buildings facing the park is intended to be all green roof amenity for residents, we're in the process of programming that space. We recognize we need to provide areas for residents to be outside, areas for pets and activities. The middle appendage on the second floor is all interior amenity space; residents can traverse from one courtyard to the

next without having to go into a unit. We agree that the townhouses need help, the railings won't be white. We could have a nice patio along First Street that's usable with a nice public plaza. The 15-foot setback there will help us do more creative things in that area. We are evaluating having family units in the building. We will look closer at the sun and areas in the courtyard. The building naturally does want to face that way because of the views to the park and Capitol. We can look at softening up the building. There is no pedestrian connection to the park from the building, the railroad prevents that. There is a connection along E. Washington Avenue at the southwest corner of our site. Plantings above the commercial is a great idea. We don't have a desire to add any more surface parking with the project. I like the idea of making the townhomes more vertical, we'll take a look at that and come up with a better option for those. We'll also look at the switchback ramp to the parking.

**ACTION:**

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