

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: July 14, 2021

TITLE: 222-232 E. Olin Avenue - New
Development of an 18-Story Mixed-Use
Building Located in Urban Design District
(UDD) No. 1. 14th Ald. Dist. (64920)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Kevin Firchow, Acting Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: July 14, 2021

ID NUMBER:

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

*Asad was recused on this item.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 14, 2021, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a new mixed-use building located at 222-232 E. Olin Avenue in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 1. Registered and speaking in support were Joseph Lee, representing McGrath Property Group; Lance McGrath and Andy Meessmann. Registered in support but not wishing to speak were Daniel Zutter and Jennifer Camp, both representing JLA Architects; Taylor McGrath, Carole J. Schaeffer, Dan Kennelly, Michael Metzger and Dennis Konieczny. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Adam Kaniewski, and Spencer Christiansen, representing Vierbicher. Registered and speaking in opposition were Helen Kitchel, Janelle Munns and Lili Kelly. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions was Charlene Sweeney. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Colleen Potter, Carrie Rothburd, Michelle Potter and Dave Davis.

McGrath noted no dramatic changes to the design while addressing most of the comments received: the entry feature is less commercial and more pedestrian friendly, the rooftop screening feature has been redesigned to be more of an architectural feature while still lit but with a soft washing of the frame and fins as opposed to casting light outwards. The landscape design has advanced significantly. Desirable amenities inside the building to enhance the living experience include a large residential lobby, a drop-off/delivery area under cover, direct access to the mail room for deliveries, an outside dog run, a dog wash station, bike maintenance stations, garbage and recycling chute on every floor, two community rooms, a fitness center, an entertainment room and a community terrace. Lee noted the program and design haven't changed in any significant manner, but it has been refined and finessed. They scaled down the residential entry to reduce the profile, refined and enhanced the whole entry area for vehicles and pedestrians, enhanced landscaping in that area as well, extended the canopy the full length of the building and added green roofs, and glazing to the windows. The landscaping in the commercial plaza area has been enhanced. The rooftop mechanical penthouse would be incorporated into the design with a curtain wall system with vertical fins that extend 15-18-inches, all of which is recessed with lights aligning the bottom frame that flood the backside of the finned area, focusing the light on the frame. The rendering is a realistic intensity of that element. The plaza area hardscape is more integrated with the landscape

area, along the ground floor works better with the rhythm and architecture of the building. The building materials have not changed.

Andy Meessmann spoke, noting this is a logical location for density, but that the beacon is unnecessary, causing light pollution as light is always emitted outward and will always be seen. The two large parks (Olin and the Arboretum) are large habitats for wildlife, 90% of the birds migrate at night and this will limit their ability to guide safely through this area. Since 2010 significant efforts have been made by the Friends of Olin Turville and the Bay Creek Neighborhood to restore the natural landscape in Olin Park. Impacts to humans include sleep disorders, obesity, breast cancer, and impacts on discovery. He asked that they remove the beacon, reduce the light levels on the rooftop patio and include bird glass one level above the rooftop patio as the green roof will attract birds.

Helen Kitchel spoke in opposition. This massive building will become a bird collision building, especially the beacon on top. There is no need for it. Ideally this would be bird glass all the way up the building. A building of this height does not fit here, it is excessive for the location and not in compliance with the rest of its surroundings. She also expressed concerns about the removal of the Wonder Bar.

Janelle Munns spoke in opposition noting this land is not in a neighborhood association area and residents of Bay Creek were not informed until this was already planned. The building does not relate in appearance to other buildings along Olin Avenue, it stands out in an unpleasing manner from its nearest neighbors. It is surrounded by natural areas which are highly valued by its residents. She also expressed concerns about the removal of the Wonder Bar.

Lili Kelly spoke, asking the Commission to consider our signature skyline in Madison. This is going to be a statement building. There are very few other tall buildings in Madison, think about whether and how we consider our skyline: is it a resource, part of our history, does it give a sense of place of Madison? This height might be too large for the site; it looks like an airport hotel with no urban context. It's a nice setting for the people who live in the building, but part of the UDC's job is to consider the scale, design and setting for the building. Thirteen floors of residents and five floors of which the majority is for parking because this site isn't receptive to underground parking. The building is so tall because it's accommodating all that parking, maybe that's the message that this site isn't the right one for a building of this scale. Birds and light pollution. Long-term impact of this on our community; other buildings will follow, this will be a precedent.

Ald. Evers spoke generally in support of this project, noting it is imperative to build up and not out. He expressed concern about the natural aesthetics, the lakes and natural environment, and the urban oasis concept of having these parks as part of our urban experience. With Lake Wingra in District 13, he is very concerned about the impact of this building which will be visible from the shoreline of Wingra and Vilas Parks, and the Arboretum. Light pollution concerns are serious. The Friends of Lake Wingra are moving forward with a working group to review the City's lighting ordinance. He talked about dark sky, minimizing light pollution, limitations on illuminated signs, how buildings are illuminated at night (office and commercial spaces) and asked that the Urban Design Commission and the Plan Commission not approve lighting of the penthouse, it's not necessary. Do whatever is possible to ensure minimal impact to migratory species that come right through this area and we have to be mindful of that.

Ald. Carter spoke, noting concerns with bird migration and strike glass. There is no ordinance that stops this building from being 18-stories, other than the fact that the neighborhood doesn't want it and District 14 isn't used to the height. UDC can address the lights.

The Commission discussed the following:

- The renderings show window mullions expressed as a dark color, your material sample image shows cream or white.
 - It is a dark color.
- I do not care for the beacon. As a lighting strategy it's nice but it does not belong on top. I've seen it firsthand in our City where you can't avoid it. I question the size of it, make sure it's not taller than it needs to be. The way it continues up from the building massing actually accentuates the height of the building, seems unnecessary.
- No comments on the metal panel. The orange tone brick shown in the sample photo reads a little institutional and visually connects me to campus buildings that are some of the least nice buildings in our City. The darker hue looks nicer in the renderings.
- Like how you added the green roof over the canopies. Because they are at a limited depth you will want to consider irrigation. Benefits to tenants looking down. The landscape planting plan and site design is nice, there is a Potentilla that is a lower quality plant, I would propose replacing with a low mounded Aronia or any number of smaller shrubs.
- Wondering how the height does compare to the Capitol Preservation limits.
 - It's a one-mile radius around the Capitol dome of 187.2-feet.
 - We are looking at reducing that mechanical penthouse space.
- I like this project. Is the true intent the lighting or the mechanicals? Have you considered moving them to a lower roof option?
 - Due to the nature of how things circulate it wants to be at the top. We're trying to make it look attractive.
- I'm appreciative of trying to make that beacon more subtle, but I would tend to agree with the other comments that we don't quite understand enough about what that would render like in real life. Some technical questions: is that a reflective surface on the slats?
 - The back wall system is designed to be a curtain wall, acting as an exterior wall and the architecture feature. The mullions will have extensions to give them depth that create the fins. There is no glazing, it would be metal panels so there would be some reflectivity. It's meant to just wash the face of them. It would also wash the side wall of that recess at the same time.
 - We've worked really hard to integrate that mechanical penthouse level into the design instead of an uninteresting box. It's not like anything you see in Madison but that's good, it's a dynamic different design. The renderings are representative of what that would look like.
- I'm excited by that idea, I liked the way the development progressed but I'm not convinced it's the right site. The lower level entry lighting is appropriate and a nice change. It would be quite distracting to the eye for someone not looking to experience light in that natural landscape.
- Can you speak to any plans or limitations on how commercial kitchen exhaust might be handled?
 - That's not fully designed at this point. Our hope is a restaurant or café type user for that first floor so their exhaust needs could vary. Currently we think we can go side wall with it but we're not 100% sure yet.
- The visibility of smoke from a commercial kitchen will be more noticeable. I'd make a strong recommendation for some type of scrubber to clean that air.
- The canopy is detracting from the entry point and I'm still seeing hospital. Especially the residential entrance is tucked in a corner not facing the street. That part of it I'm still distracted by. I agree that the color of the brick on the sample board made me think of a school building, it doesn't pop and doesn't fit with this architecture. The team did a really nice job on the proportions and geometries of this building, but that brick detracts.
- As far as the penthouse, I kind of like the way it is illuminated, I sympathize with the bird migration. We try not to do harm to things we can prevent in the built environment. We could prevent bird confusion or

impact; is there a way to turn the light off at a certain point in the evening, or is there is a certain wavelength that doesn't attract birds that could be used?

- Vilas Park Drive, Andy Meessmann's presentation, the building is between two natural sensitive areas, the night lighting on the penthouse is an issue and I would like to see it go away completely. The same building in another location, that lighting wouldn't be as problematic. There's a lot of wildlife in this area, it's a very serious issue. Bring the penthouse down in height if that is possible to deemphasize the height of the building. Reexamining the brick is worthwhile. You mentioned you were looking at some kind of a subsidized housing program; what's the status of that? From the neighborhood's perspective affordable housing should be included. Connection to Wingra Creek bike path to make that more direct?
 - The program was through WHEDA. It's still up in the air if we can do that on this project. The loan would be larger than what WHEDA is used to lending. I'm not terribly optimistic that it will happen but it's still being worked out. The bike path connection, the easiest route is going up Olin Avenue and getting on there. We have not had any in depth discussions with our neighbors but there has been discussion with Traffic Engineering about a future connector behind our properties on the railroad right-of-way or on our properties. That can be explored in the future.
- The fact that the bike path is almost directly behind the building, it feels like it could be a selling point and encouraging to alternative transportation.
- This project is really handsome and very stylish, the word 'beacon' is an unfortunate word to use because it sets off flags. The concerns about birds and wildlife and lighting are all things this team has shown they can address. This is a crux of a question for Madison: how big and when? This site is landlocked by roads, it's not a pedestrian site. It's a good thing to question a building of this size on this site, if you have families there I don't see much space for them to land when they leave the building. That would go in line with tying into the bike path. You are surrounded with all these amenities, there could be a stronger connection between the building and all of that. Kudos on the design, it's striking and thoughtful.
 - What we're proposing, all the planning that has gone into the Alliant Energy Plan and Destination District Plan is very exciting. Projects like this create a sizeable increment to the tax base and help support and advance some of those future changes. Right now we're on a kind of island, but in a few years it's going to be a dynamic area with good access.

ACTION:

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Bernau, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0). The motion provided for the following:

- Address of penthouse size, how it's expressed without being illuminated.
- Look at a way to bring forward the pedestrian entrance component and lighten the entrance.
- Reconsider the terra cotta brick color.
- The UDC accepts metal panel building material.
- The UDC notes very little support for any kind of illumination of the penthouse curtain wall.