

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION **PRESENTED:** October 1, 2014

TITLE: 516 & 530 Cottage Grove Road – Lots 2 & 3 of Royster Corners Plat for a Mixed-Use Building. 15th Ald. Dist. (35627) **REFERRED:**
REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary **ADOPTED:** **POF:**

DATED: October 1, 2014 **ID NUMBER:**

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Melissa Huggins, Cliff Goodhart, John Harrington, Lauren Cnare.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 1, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for the Royster Corners Plat for a mixed-use building located at 516 and 530 Cottage Grove Road. Appearing on behalf of the project were Randy Bruce, representing Ruedebusch Development and Janine Glaeser. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Alder David Ahrens, District 15. The proposed development of a four-story building would contain over 40,000 square feet of retail on the first floor with multi-family use above. Lots 2 and 3 include a piece of the site that anchors Cottage Grove Road and Dempsey Street. This development does follow the neighborhood plan and there have been a number of neighborhood meetings for this entire development, as well as this smaller development for Lots 2 and 3. The upper levels are proposed for senior housing. The proposal contains approximately 198 surface parking stalls with parking beneath the building for the residential component. Because of the types of retail uses they are looking at, their need for parking drives the surface lot. Parking lot islands are included in the landscape plan, and green roofs are being investigated. Magic paks are proposed to be hidden behind balconies. The development would include components to speak to the industrial nature of the site's history. Building materials are still being worked out. Covered bicycle parking would be centrally located to the parking area, as well as some bicycle parking off of Cottage Grove Road.

Ald. Ahrens reiterated that this project is the result of a two-year process that developed a very detailed 60-page plan for Royster Corners, with this plan really representing almost exactly what was detailed in the neighborhood plan. This is the beginning of the process as we go down this street. The Library Board has committed themselves to this location, and street parking will occur in this area. This district is predominantly seniors and this development will allow them to stay in their neighborhood.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Are there services associated with the senior aspect of the housing?

- We don't know that yet.
- My understanding is that Ruedebusch was going to work with people who are experienced in developing housing for seniors in terms of the home design and so on.
- You also need to think about the services that go along with that as they really start to age.
- Can you just come through here on the bike path (questioning connectivity across the site)?
 - There's going to be a path on the west side of Dempsey, a very wide sidewalk/multi-use path and this will connect to that.
- With the building right up to Cottage Grove Road, are we setting us up for what happened on East Washington Avenue where there's no parking in front and all the signage and "back of the house stuff" goes right up against the street. Are they going to use those front windows and address the street or will they address the back parking and not activate Cottage Grove Road?
 - We haven't done any interior layouts yet. We're trying to set it up so that the central atrium area gives access off of Cottage Grove Road and through the site, with main entrances to each of the individual users off the parking area, but we do have the ability to allow for on-street parking and to permeate into the site. We've got openings so we can start to address when we start doing rail. I do anticipate with the market that because of how they are set up similar to CVS where you've got displays that need to be up against exterior walls, why we're starting to use that kind of industrial motif there.
- Can they do it like Fresh Market does? They show their display food right at the window, it's really very attractive.
- Fresh Market faces north which is why they can do that.
 - They also have an interior wall that they can work off of. We have three sides that are exposed, so it's a challenge.
- I'm a little bit troubled with the controlled access atrium. The overall master plan made it look like that was an open air path to get through the site. I'm wondering if the library comes in, they may be in the middle with their lobby, then the grocery store comes, who's going to use that atrium? If they don't have their primary entrances off of that atrium? It'll just be a dead space.
 - There's entrances here into the center space. They also lead directly into those other spaces. The market might have a coffee shop/bakery component off of this area where people could sit in the center atrium, or the library people could add to that space. So it's not controlled access, it's a very public space that's open but it keeps from having outer access points.
- If that's not where primary entrances are and people aren't going in there it'll be a dead space. There's not really going to be any reason to walk through this.
 - We're looking at garage doors to open this space in the summer. The idea is to have it be an active community space. You made good points, and maybe we should study how this area works with the entries.
- It's just concern that it doesn't become a "back of the house" kind of a thing.
- Who's going to park in front if you can't access anything?
 - The feedback that we've gotten so far from as we develop the library, the dual access points at Sequoia Library have been a real problem for them.
- (Ald. Ahrens) Informal discussions I've had with Greg Michaels, the director of the library, he's very excited about the atrium as a joint space with the co-op. The outlet would be facing the atrium and would become a hub between those two ports.
- I would really like to see you get big shade trees in there. You've got a nice selection but we're not just looking at the site, we're looking at cooling effects and all kinds of things.
- You've got this large line through the center. You could put a row of trees in there. It would really liven that space up.
 - We did put pretty significant green islands in the parking.

- I agree I just think you need bigger trees on the site. And use shredded mulch, there's no reason to use stone mulch out here.

ACTION:

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

Regarding the Royster Corners proposal before you Wednesday evening, Agenda Item 6, I oppose it. I submit this letter and the following article in rebuttal to the proposal:

<http://www.isthmus.com/daily/article.php?article=43906&sid=5fd53d3c0405e89dce70fa754ed9fea1>

You are undoing a lot of work toward reducing the amount of parking in this city.

I note that the proposal before you far exceeds any rational call for parking. I was on the Urban Design Commission during the Roaring Aughties, when our packets were so thick they routinely had to be mailed in three very thick envelopes. It was typical to receive projects that paved & parked excessively. We were lucky, though, in that we had a majority on the commission which routinely knocked down the excessive parking that came before us. We were usually successful in getting it down to about 2/3 the zoning code (sometimes even less) at the time. Developers told us it would lead to economic disaster. I've gone back to view these projects in the years after completion and fully rented/leased. Not one of the reduced parking lots is ever more than 2/3 full. Ever. Often, the peak parking utilization is much less. The disaster failed to materialize in every case. Indeed, the reduced lot size was still too much.

I note that what is before you far exceeds any zoning requirement. I also note, with sadness, that so much of what gets approved by your commission these days militates against a quality urban aesthetic. In recent years we have typically gotten boxes that present no convivial, pedestrian-scaled interrelation between the architecture and the public street. Indeed, most buildings you approve exude fear. It looks like that is what is going on here yet again; the priority is the car at the expense of

architectural and landscaped beauty.

301 parking spaces? For 89 apartments and just 41,000 sq. ft. commercial?

Why are you recreating the 80s suburbs all over again? Parking-light neighborhoods have far outstripped those hideous places in terms of value, livability, community. Why? Because they aren't burdened with the ugliness and costs of too much paving and too much parking.

It seems clear that, after the cratering of the suburbs during the crash, we already have a surfeit of car-oriented Sun Prairies and Fitchburgs in this world. During that same crash, however, our ped/bike/transit-oriented 'hoods thrived. What we have too little of is cool places that de-emphasize the car. And that's right, you can't simultaneously have a cool place and a car-coddling place. The car--it's ugly infrastructure and the ugly attitudes it fosters--is anti-everything that makes a place a pleasant & enjoyable one to live in.

So why are you doubling down on 1980s car ideology?

Parking lots are not fun. They are ugly. They add unnecessary costs. They reduce the value of property. They are unsustainable. Are you even aware that we have a sustainable transportation master plan in the works--in reaction to ugly, car-oriented developments like this? Are you even aware that Chicago is now granting parking waivers down to zero for new construction? The latest, a hundred-unit building (near Milwaukee & Division, one of the parking-lightest areas of the city outside of the Loop), was met with howls of protest and predictions that it would never rent. It rented to capacity very soon after construction completed.

Face it, you and Madison developers come from a generation (or a culture) that doesn't have the first clue about living the good life without a car. That is simply not true among the generations entering (& recently entered into) the work force; they are eschewing cul-de-sac-&-car living. They are embracing urban living and a car-light->car-free lifestyle. Developments like this have us competing at the level of Peoria (or Fitchburg) when we should be competing with

Chicago and San Francisco.

The upshot: Parking lots are ugly places that beget ugliness. So why are you kicking things off here with such anti-pedestrian, anti-urban design hideousness?

I remind you of your charge as a commission:

"The Mission of the Urban Design Commission is to assure the highest quality of design for all public and private projects in the city; protect and improve the general appearance of all buildings, structures, landscaping and open areas in the city; encourage the protection of economic values and proper use of properties; encourage and promote a high quality in the design of new buildings, developments, remodeling and additions so as to maintain and improve the established standards of property values within the city; foster civic pride in the beauty and nobler assets of the city and, in all other ways possible, assure a functionally efficient and visually attractive city in the future."

Yet all we are seeing is a back to the 80s architecture, when car was king.

-Mike Barrett

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