

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: January 28, 2015

TITLE: 202 East Washington Avenue –
Redevelopment of the “Pahl Tire” Site for
a 10-Story, 146-150 Room “AC Hotel by
Marriott” in UDD No. 4. 2nd Ald. Dist.
(33109)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: January 28, 2015

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Tom DeChant, Dawn O’Kroley, John Harrington, Melissa Huggins, Lauren Cnare, Cliff Goodhart and Richard Slayton.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of January 28, 2015, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a 10-story hotel located at 202 East Washington Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Josh Wilcox, Andy Inman, AJ Robitchek, Nathan Wautier, Matthew Bruenig and Jeff Lenz. Appearing and speaking in opposition to the project were William Gates and Nan Fey. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak was Anne Stoelting.

Inman noted parking concerns under the old design; in order to address this they pulled the building back and took the drop-off and guest arrival experience into the site instead of having all of the valet operations in the right-of-way. This was favored by Traffic Engineering. They also more than doubled the number of on-site parking stalls. They will still negotiate a lease with the City for overflow parking at the Capitol North ramp. This also shortens the valet cycle time. Regarding the pedestrian and sidewalk experience along North Webster, there were some concerns about the proximity of the building to the sidewalk and some of the valet operations. Along the entire façade the building has been pulled back at least 4-feet, the entrance to the underground ramp has been pulled back over 10-feet and the loading dock doors have been pulled back over 30-feet. Traffic Engineering has asked for a 1-foot easement along their property on Webster Street to widen the sidewalk.

Wilcox spoke on the overall design aesthetics. A lot of the public amenity spaces from the 1st and 2nd floors have been brought up to 9 and 10. In terms of the key design attributes, they looked at the guest experience, the base of the building to have more transparency, and the integration of an art wall which will be a focus of the project all the way through. The building steps back as it approaches the Lamp House to create a more residential scale. The shadow study shows the “AC” shadow on the roof of the Lamp House for 95 minutes; at no time during those 95 minutes are they 100% covering the roof, in fact they max out at 10:45 a.m. at 74% coverage of the roof.

In addressing the Capitol Height Preservation Limit, Wilcox described the mechanical units that provide air to the guest rooms, air to the public space on the 9th and 10th floors, a kitchen hood exhaust and the elevator

overrun and stair that goes up to provide access to the roof for the Fire Department. The overall enclosure for the equipment extends 1'8" above the view height on one side, with the other side at 2'3".

Bill Gates spoke in opposition, noting that while some comments have been addressed, it doesn't mean that they have all been adequately addressed. There are a number of contingencies that need to be met. He stated it is still too tall of a structure, it does impact the Lamp House, he still has concerns about deliveries, and the overflow parking.

Nan Fey spoke in opposition, noting that the Urban Design Commission asked the developer to answer two questions: economics and the height of the building, and there appears to be nothing in the materials available to the public that addresses any willingness to discuss or change either of those things. Furthermore, the building has now grown taller and is asking for a conditional use to exceed the Capitol Height Preservation Limit. It feels unresponsive to this requests of this Commission, several Commission members, increasingly disrespectful of the plans that have been in place for a long time in a sensitive location. This project should be rejected by this Commission and the Plan Commission. It feels like this developer continues to ignore the stated goals of our community for the height, massing and character of buildings on this Heritage Block, starting back at the Comprehensive Plan which identified the Downtown Core, the Downtown Special Area Plan, detailed recommendations in 2012, and the Lamp House Committee that studied this one block for four months, very intensely. She cited the Plan Commission manual and how commissions are supposed to communicate and work together. No matter how beautiful this building has become, it doesn't belong on this site. The developer has minimized the impact of the shadows. She further stated that it should not be the responsibility of the community to rescue someone who paid too much for a piece of land they should have known they could not develop at an intensity that might provide the level of investment they promised people who came in on the project with them. We should not approve a project that claims it can't succeed without special dispensation. She also commented on the Planning Unit addendum, in her years as Chair of the Plan Commission she read many of these staff reports, and whenever she saw the words "may" or "if" in a staff conclusion, that signaled to her extreme caution. If Planning staff has enough reservations to use language like that about the approvability of this project, we should all proceed very carefully.

The Secretary noted that the Zoning Administrator has requested that this body not consider signage at this time and have it come back separately. He saw issues in the current version that need to be addressed and discussed more. As far as the Urban Design District, the main thing that affects the Commission's ability to look at this goes back to what they have to make findings on in other categories: the use of metal is required for a finding of exemplary design.

Kevin Firchow addressed the Planning staff report addendum. He spoke to the standards for Urban Design District No. 4, it is a Planned Development and because of the additional height, the standards that specifically relate to additional height state that the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations and adopted plans with no application for excess height to be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds the height compatible with the existing or planned surrounding area, and the excess height demonstrates a higher quality building. He requested the UDC to make a finding on the conditional use for the mechanical units on the roof. The Planning Unit believes the standards could be met, while noting that this is different than adopted policy.

Ald. Zellers spoke, noting that the Lamp House report states that any building height above four stories should require a shadow study to ensure meaningful sunlight; there was an expectation of four stories and not six. She thinks that the developers have done a lot of good things, the building is very attractive, they resolved some of the traffic problems that were a big issue. That being said, trying to squeeze an awful lot into a small piece of land, when you consider price of the land and trying to make a viable project...look at the project holistically and consider the entire block. This block was pulled out and studied individually because of the importance of

this Heritage Block and building. She named The Odessa, the Rouse building and further developments on East Washington Avenue that also affect the sunlight on the Lamp House.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- You've heard that the height is really the issue here. I'm assuming you're saying you can't actually make this work if it's any lower?
 - We have. To the extent of reprogramming internally above the third story, we've adjusted the rooms. It's still as tall but we've minimized that height; above the third level we actually worked very hard on addressing those comments. We haven't been ignoring the plans or the comments we've received. We've incorporated stepbacks also and architecturally tried to make the height more horizontal and residential in scale. The other standard of demonstrating a higher quality building, we've eliminated the p-tak units, we're using limestone and glass, high quality metals. We've gone a long way in terms of reducing the scale of the height on Webster Street.
- Using the equinox is very misleading. The way you say it's going to be affected, it's not really accurate. You have to decide which is more important, the winter or the summer. Instead of saying "it's only going to be shaded this much," you should be telling us "this is the point where it's shaded and this is when it's not shaded."
 - We did our analysis based on the information in the Lamp House report.
- The Lamp House would like to have four stories on the Webster Street side, the Downtown Plan and zoning allows six, and you are showing, you're saying for that narrow site you are only using 33% of it above the third story. In essence it's less than ½ the actual property. I want to understand how much we're impacting, so I appreciate the changes that you've made. I would like to respond to some of the barbs about exceptional design that we keep getting thrown. I've had conversations with staff about this. Staff did try to put specific criteria in to determine what exceptional design is. As things go through Commissions and the neighborhood, things get stripped out and we end up with things that don't work. Exceptional design, what we have to do here is subjective. If I had my druthers we would go to all our plans and we would strip that language out, and we would require everybody to make a donation to an affordable housing fund in order to get bonus heights. We know we need affordable housing. That's just my opinion. I would like people to stop making nasty comments about exceptional design, because the fact is this is a city and we need to have big tall buildings because that's what cities have. It is not only our job to think about this within the perspective of this block, it's to put it in the perspective of the entire city, the entire downtown. If I put this building in that perspective, looking from the Capitol, looking from East Washington Avenue backwards, this building makes sense. Despite all these issues that we still have to grapple, and that does not take anything away from the Lamp House and how important it is, but as an urban planner this is the kind of building I want to see in my city.
- I too have been bothered by the barbs about exceptional design. I think the city needs exceptional design, we see too much unexceptional design here. That's one of the reasons we're having such a lengthy conversation about this, because the Lamp House is exceptional design by a master architect.
- We have to think about context. Urbanism is not just tall buildings. It has nothing to do with the structure itself, it's the mass on that corner.
- That's what the zoning calls for.
- It's called for exceptional design. I think it's too massive for this area. The context here is not appropriate. There is still that conflict with the bike lane.
- Height has always been the tipping point on this building, and the Zoning Code was written 8 plus 2, and further study was done on the block. In no means do I find the plus two compatible with the adjacent context, as well as looking at the adjacent context in the Downtown Core, and beyond that I would not support this building having merit to suggest breaking the Capitol View Height. I do not feel

it would be a weaker composition if it were 8 stories. In no way can I support the plus two, without dealing with the piece of Webster and what we do there.

- I can completely support the ten stories. On Webster you've got five kings and a suite, are they absolutely critical to the programming? If they were swung even the other direction you could get more sunlight. In the summer when the Lamp House might be the tourist destination people want it to be, and a roof garden, if restored, there's going to be more sun. It's the winter time when it actually suffers more.
- The Lamp House doesn't have the benefit of being on the street. Is there any opportunity to take this corner out, a little nod to the Lamp House that there isn't so much of an imposing feature over the Lamp House. I'm not saying the whole two floors, but maybe just this corner.
- What about taking that corner and just having it be glazed.
- Is a 10-story building considered that if it doesn't reach 10-stories on all four corners?
 - A 10-story portion is on a site that is zoned for 6-stories. That is why it's that 34%, where in the code right now requires 6. It's not an interpretation of the overall building, it's because of that portion of the site. The site is two properties, so the East Washington Avenue is the 8 plus two stories, and this piece behind on Webster Street that is six stories.
- It's still 10-stories, right? We should be addressing this as a 10-story building.
- The question is when those decisions were made you were looking that parcels that were not all one parcel, and that's the nature of changing real estate versus your plans and zoning. That's not a stable environment.
- That's absolutely correct, it was based on existing property lines.
- (Firchow) Going back to the standards, it says the excess height is compatible with the existing planned character, so in that regard you can look at the amount that is being requested. If that changes someone's finding, that it's a portion of the property versus the whole property, to talk about whether what's proposed is compatible.
 - The 9-foot setback was to create that sight line. As you go down the sidewalk as part of the Heritage Tourism your eye stops at the 3rd floor. Your eye will totally focus on the Lamp House. As you continue your eye up, certainly there's some opportunities here in the corner for different materials. We had a lot of glass on the last proposal over here. Everybody seemed positive that the simplicity was there, and the setback helped to minimize that.
- What is showing I'm not sure is a view that anybody will see, because you only have views of the Lamp House through narrow slits in presently existing buildings, not to say anything about what buildings may still be built on those other sites, even with the Lamp House height recommendation. The site itself doesn't present long views. It's a wonderful house in its own way, but it's not in a sylvan setting. It's always going to be squeezed in, the question is how much and what we think is appropriate, those are very legitimate questions to debate.
- From a distance, this will be viewed. The height guidelines that are established in the surrounding area and the surrounding parcels that are there, this is what we're approving as what we'll project to the Capitol Height Preservation Limit or above.
- Part of what we're trying to do here is not only preserve views to the Lamp House, but if we assume people will come to the Lamp House, this becomes a destination I assume we're equally concerned about what you would see at the Lamp House. Can you tell me what do you think someone would see from the Lamp House in terms of looking out?
- If it was restored and you had the actual garden up there that would be much more intriguing than the later addition that was put up there. It seemed tucked in and part of its genius is having it tucked in that spot, it's not how it looks as it's presented today. The house needs something desperately to be a gem and I don't think necessarily this decision one way or the other saves the Lamp House.

- (Firchow) The Lamp House study identified views to Lake Mendota, with the lakes being one of the fundamental reasons for the siting of the house.
- The perspectives were toward the lakes and those were protected views.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by DeChant, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-2) with Goodhart, Cnare, Huggins, DeChant and Slayton voting yes; O’Kroley and Harrington voting no. The motion provided that the project meets the standards of the following:

- The PD standards, including Section 28.098(g)(1) and (2);
- Urban Design District No. 4 standards.
- Signage shall return for separate consideration.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 6, 7 and 8.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 202 East Washington Avenue

| | Site Plan | Architecture | Landscape Plan | Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc. | Signs | Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular) | Urban Context | Overall Rating |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Member Ratings | 5 | 7 | - | - | - | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| | 8 | 8 | - | 6 | - | 8 | 10 | 8 |
| | 6 | 8 | - | - | 8 | 5 | 8 | 7 |
| | 4 | 7 | 6 | - | - | 4 | - | - |
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General Comments:

- Shading of Lamp House is a concern, but this hotel in this location is a great addition to the Square and outer loop.
- Very nice improvements to original submission, both functional and design. Height on Webster Street still an issue, but should not kill such a substantial downtown investment.
- Too much mass, needs to meet City plans.