

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 19, 2012

TITLE: 7315 West Towne Way (Mall Ring Road)  
– Planned Commercial Site, Multi-Tenant  
Retail/Commercial Development. 9<sup>th</sup> Ald.  
Dist. (27667)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 19, 2012

ID NUMBER:

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

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of September 19, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a Planned Commercial Site located at 7315 West Towne Way. Appearing on behalf of the project were Ken Wittler and Att. Bill White, both representing CBL & Associates Properties, Inc.; Rice Williams, representing Artech Design Group, Inc.; and Paul Mattias. Wittler introduced the team and presented plans for the two vacant buildings as part of the West Towne Mall property. These buildings have been vacant for almost 10 years. Staff noted that various building plans have been proposed for this location but none have been built; further noting that staff has no issues with this current proposal. Williams continued the presentation to demolish two buildings and enhance pedestrian movement throughout the site. To that end they discovered a 5-foot perimeter sidewalk around the project site; the City wants a 6-foot sidewalk. To meet the requirement as well as having a car overhang outside of the effective 6-foot width, the median has been widened by 3-feet. Currently there is a sidewalk from the corner of Dick’s Sporting Goods that comes to a sidewalk ramp where the crosswalk was never striped. From a traffic standpoint they are proposing to move the proposed crosswalk to be in the center and extended the crosswalk across the road to a short section of sidewalk to make that connection from Dick’s over to this site. A sanitary sewer easement crosses the site and effectively breaks the building into two. As a result they are proposing a pedestrian walkway through there that connects the front and back parking areas, as well as creating through traffic to keep traffic off the ring road. Front and rear elevations show the 11-feet of fall from end to end, where they feel this adds more interest with the stepping down of the site and modulates the rooftop and cornices. A total of three bicycle racks are spread throughout the site. The end building is an opportunity to address that section of the mall which is not currently very lively. Building materials include a larger limestone base, two different brick colors in vertical pilasters and under some storefronts. Accent colors will occur in tenant signage.

- The infill of this type of site I think is excellent. My thought was if the pedestrian were crossing here and this building were actually located at the corner, can you just sneak your drive through the back and you park behind the building? Filling the building corner would be more interesting and maybe I would feel like I could walk, but then again we’ve seen other developments where they make the parking lot

face the front door and they just mask off the back windows anyway. I would like to encourage that this be pushed to be something more than the same.

- It's a happy medium to a certain degree because there are other documents that govern the operation of the mall as a whole including site circulation and access, as well as building location.

(Staff) If you look at the substation and the grades, that basically precludes any cross access from coming from behind. What they have behind the building in that small parking area is actually the circulation loading area that they use to build the building and piggy-backs with the backside of ToysRUs. Everything that affects this site is already established along the perimeter because of the ring road and the cross road to the west is the loop that sends you back to Savers.

- What is between the proposed building and the existing substation right now?
  - A slope about 20-feet in height, it's grass.
- Are you looking at providing signage on this face? It would be kind of an iconic space for a sign. You can really see the building from the Beltline.
  - The substation we've referred to is greatly above the buildings (grade). When you look you get a small window and then it's just a fleeting glimpse.
- It looks like most of your mechanicals will be screened by this parapet wall?
  - That's correct.
- This looks very much like what's at the corner of Gammon and Mineral Point.
  - That's somewhat intentional. The scale is different in terms of the widths of the tenant fronts. Have you given any consideration to something different?
    - It's sort of anchored from one corner to another. A lot of attention was paid to this corner. Consider any kind of a curb, a line through the whole thing. Say a prayer for the pedestrian. This site is like building a watch, with the easements that run through it. They're a variety of competing elements that when you put them together this is the most logical result.
- This area is not on the planting plan.
  - That is existing to a large degree and will remain there (as it currently exists).
- It would be nice if you could like up these plants and make a large shade tree here. Right now they're just a little bit off. The other thing is we have a policy that you cannot have more than 12 stalls without a tree island. There are some places in here that you'll need to put in an island.
- I would take the Black Spruce out. If you have room you could put shade trees all along here (walk) and create an oasis. You're going to create an ambience that will set this apart.
- Rethink some of your plant materials (Spirea, Winter Creeper, etc.). Why not try plants that could be more interesting and unique?
- You've got understory trees here where they could really be bigger. The other thing is go to your competitor and look at the understory trees they have lining, you can't see what the store is. It helps the identity and the shade, as well as being a safety concern. Place major shade trees around the northwest corner and add shade trees at the storefronts.
- Are there any improvements to stormwater management?
  - No, there's a master plan for the whole mall that this falls under. The only management we're doing is relocating a couple of catch basins as we're going around the perimeter and reshaping and repaving.

### **ACTION:**

On a motion by Lufler, seconded by Slayton, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0). The motion required address of the landscape comments to be approved by staff.

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 5, 6 and 6.5.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 7315 West Towne Way**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	5	6	5	-	-	-	-	-
	5	5	4	-	-	-	5	-
	7	5	6	6	7	6	7	6.5
	5	5	5	-	5	5	5	5
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

**General Comments:**

- Very competent but unexceptional “mall” architecture. Nothing innovative.
- Typical strip mall aesthetic. Doesn’t stand out. Plaza is nice. More shade trees.
- Opportunity to truly begin to “green” this center long overdue.