

AGENDA # 8

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: May 7, 2014

TITLE: 626 Langdon Street – Renovation and
Addition to the “Roundhouse Apartments.”
8th Ald. Dist. (33108)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: May 7, 2014

ID NUMBER:

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

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of May 7, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** and **PROVIDED AN ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** on the renovation and addition to the “Roundhouse Apartments” located at 626 Langdon Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Josh Wilcox, Abbie Moilien and Angela Black, all representing Roundhouse Apartments, LLC; Joe Korb, Dave Martin and Curt Brink. Registered and speaking in opposition was Patrick Corcoran. Parking has been modified with the addition of a handicapped stall on the east side of the drive aisle and a 5-foot walkway, four moped stalls, a fence along the east property line, and masonry piers through this area with lights on them. The front patio and landscaping area has been tightened up and now includes a pergola structure; it is intended for the use of the tenants and potential first floor commercial occupant but will be open to the public. In addition to that they have a 12-14 foot wide sidewalk entry point into the property. Three existing terrace trees will be removed during construction with one healthy tree to remain. The east and north setbacks are considered side yards at 5-feet; the building’s footprint and cantilever has been pushed back to the south giving them an 11-foot setback from lot line to the face of the building footprint at the first floor. Trash will be internalized. A small market is proposed on the first floor for the tenants which has to be entered through the building per the Zoning Code. The condenser units will be placed on the roof with some possibly being housed internally with the bicycles. The building is now cantilevered out to 7-feet with a metal band wrapping around to create a “C” shape in front returning down the east side capturing more metal panel. The balconies at the second floor have been omitted and turned into windows. Wilcox then addressed the concerns of Planning Division staff. The cantilever has been strengthened. The floor to ceiling heights are also of concern; 8-foot ceilings are not much different than most houses. The amount of surface parking stalls has been reduced and the project does exceed minimum greenspace amounts. A stormwater management plan has not been fully worked out at this time. The development team has looked at the idea of looking at this as part of a master development but don’t feel that is pertinent to the Urban Design Commission’s review of the project. A full fire protection system will be installed, pressurizing stairwells, accessibility for the entire existing Roundhouse and new addition, more life safety components, and security components will be added to the entire property. Building material samples were shown.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- It's been changed dramatically.
- The pergola in a different brick than either the new or the Roundhouse seems to be a third building. I don't know whether it should be brick or some other material so it doesn't seem like a third building.
 - We struggled with that too. We're comfortable switching that to a smart siding material that would play off the colors of the metal.
- What if it's a structure, just steel?
- If it were steel painted white, that seems less third thing than something that relates to the Roundhouse.
- You've got two really strong masonry buildings, that needs to be a connector or something a little lighter.
- The way that the building addition and entry piece touches the Roundhouse is lacking integrity. That Roundhouse is rigid geometry, you've touched the geometry at the street but your entry piece and the pergola discussion, that as one cohesive piece could somehow get the Roundhouse to have a more appropriate relationship to pedestrians. Studying those two pieces together. It should be glass. Give the street back to the public, rather than the pergola.
- If in fact adding on to the Roundhouse is the solution for this site, your key challenge is to engage the pedestrians around it and somehow do something with the base of the Roundhouse to bring that down to scale.
 - We thought the pergola engaged pedestrians as they walked by, giving your eye something to look at. And with the lower windows as well, you'll be able to look inside. Now you've got a definable space, where before we just watched people as they just walked by.
- You have an entry piece with a lobby and an outdoor space on top of that. I think that piece, if you resolve that geometry and celebrate that, would give this a totally different feel.
- The south elevation, where this new entryway goes into the addition, I'm almost wanting that glass to go all the way across rather than have this brick pillar come down. It seems something that's off-setting.
- I'm not sure another brick is again the solution.
- I'd go all glass.
- All glass and then metal panel across the top.
- Glass railing at the top, let people stand there.
- If the pergola didn't come down quite so far, if there was more openness there, open to that glass.
- In looking at your cantilever I see this very somber building, why not embrace some of the original building's funkiness with an angle or something that makes it a little more iconic, a little more dynamic. No something that's a little more playful with it.
- If your addition becomes a rigid addition, if you take that geometry, this corner piece you've dedicated as brick, which could be more related to the balconies, now your cantilever, it's how you're treating this base.
- They both need to be separate structures.

Patrick Corcoran spoke in opposition to the project. He met with the design team a couple of times to express his concerns, which include the "side" (rear) lot setback of less than 15-feet, the possibility of tenants throwing their trash off the balconies, the inefficiency of bringing the mopeds and bicycles all the way around for parking, the lack of a shadow study and how that will affect his tenants as their windows face south. This should be a stand-alone building because trying to push something into the Roundhouse just doesn't work. This is perpetually bad design.

ACTION:

On a motion by DeChant, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** and **PROVIDED THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PLAN COMMISSION:**

- Look at alternatives to the third brick material for the pergola.
- The entry piece to the Roundhouse and new addition needs to be more cohesive to tie them both together, including the pergola.
- The entry should be glass and a light piece that touches all, with consideration for a two-story element with more daylight (space between pergola and addition; consider a two-story lobby with outdoor space above).
- Eliminate the brick pillar at the entry in favor of more glass treatment.
- Consider an all glass entry with metal panel and glass rail atop and metal pergola.
- Consider angling the outside wall of the addition at the cantilever's edge to relate to the Roundhouse's geometry.
- The cantilever feature as a design is fine.
- Study alternative designs to address the issues as noted that tie the pergola, entry, Roundhouse and addition more effectively for staff approval.

The motion was passed on a vote of (4-0).

No rakings were provided for this project.

Stouder, Heather

From: patrickproperties .net]
Sent: Thursday, June 05, 2014 10:07 AM
To: Stouder, Heather
Subject: 626 Langdon St Addition

To: Plan Commission Members

From: Patrick Corcoran
Owner of 621 Mendota Ct

Regarding: Proposed 626 Langdon (Roundhouse) Addition

As the owner of 621 Mendota Ct, directly to the North of 626 Langdon St, I have several concerns with the proposed addition.

1. Set back from the lot line adjacent to 621 Mendota Ct.

Due to the fact the rear lot line for 626 Langdon St has a 'jog' in it, the area directly to the rear of the proposed addition is considered 'side yard', per the zoning code. In reality, this is the rear yard of the proposed addition and should be treated as such. Per code, a rear yard set back in this situation would be 20-22 feet. The proposal has a 10 foot set back. This will effect the privacy, air flow and sunlight of the living area of 55% of the residents in 621 Mendota Ct

The original design for 621 Mendota Ct had the living rooms and balconies facing East and West. Directly to the East is the UW Lowell Center. Out of consideration for the over night guests of the Lowell center, I redesigned 621 Mendota so the living rooms and balconies would face North and South. I request consideration for the residents of 621 Mendota Ct. The set back to the rear of the Addition should be 20 feet.

2. The lack of trash chutes in 626 Langdon St Proposal

The 626 Proposal has an indoor trash room, however, no trash chutes. This requires, approximately 200, residents to carry their garbage and recyclables down the elevators or stairs. In some cases as many as 13 stories. The sanitary condition of the common areas is a concern for the management of 626 Langdon. However, my concern is inconvenienced residents may throw their garbage off their balconies and into the backyard of 621 Mendota, this has been an issue. Trash chutes would be beneficial to the whole neighborhood.

If trash chutes were designed into the 626 Addition, they could be accessible to the residents in the original Roundhouse portion of the development. It is my understanding, most new apartment buildings of this scale have trash chutes.

3. Perpetuating poor design

The Roundhouse Apartment building has long been considered, by many, as a poorly designed building. Oddly configured units with low ceilings. Due to the fact the developer is tying into the existing apartments of the Roundhouse, the floor to ceiling height will be only 8' 0". This is low in comparison to most new apartment buildings. It is my understanding the existing Roundhouse units have baseboard heat and the new units will have forced air heat. With the low ceilings there is little room to run duct work without making the apartment feel very small.

It is my opinion the Addition, should be a building separate from the Roundhouse.

4. Bicycle/moped access

Access for bicycle and moped parking is very inconvenient.

Than you for you time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Patrick J Corcoran



Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C.

Angela Black
Attorney
Direct Dial: (608) 258-7128
ablack@whdlaw.com

June 6, 2014

VIA EMAIL

City of Madison Plan Commission
c/o Heather Stouder
Department of Planning and Development
Room LL-100, Municipal Building
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Conditional Use Permit for 626 Langdon Street (Roundhouse)

Dear Commission Members:

As acknowledged in the staff report, the owners and project team have worked extensively and diligently with City staff, the UDC, the alder and the neighboring property owner to accommodate and incorporate many differing viewpoints and visions for this project. The project team believes the issue really comes down to, not whether the applicable conditional use standards are met, but that staff feels the Roundhouse is an ugly building that should be torn down as soon as possible.

The owners and project team spent significant time and gave serious consideration to staff's proposal to demolish the Roundhouse and redevelop the entire site with more units than would result from the proposed addition. The project team concluded an entire redevelopment was infeasible economically when considering the current value of and debt on the property, and the staff proposal would triple or quadruple the cost of the project but only result in a 40% to 60% increase in the number of bedrooms. Such a cost increase would directly impact the rents needed to sustain such a project (and would put those rents outside of the top range of current market rents). Demolition of the Roundhouse would result in a loss of unique and affordable rental units which are larger and less expensive than most others available in the market (current average bedroom square footage in the Roundhouse is 750 square feet compared to 397 square feet in staff's proposed redevelopment).

Based on numerous comments, meetings and the staff report, it seems clear City staff believes the Roundhouse is unattractive and was conceived from bad architecture. The tone and detail of the report indicates staff has analyzed the project based on highly subjective standards outside of the applicable conditional use standards in an effort to ensure the owner is required to tear down the Roundhouse in the near future and redevelop the property in the manner envisioned by staff. The owners, project team and others disagree with staff's conclusions and recommendations, and believe the proposed addition is the best solution for this site and DOES meet the applicable conditional use standards, including the applicable goals and principles in the applicable City of Madison plans.

A. The Project is Consistent with Applicable City Plans

The staff report acknowledges the proposed land use, density, and architectural design of the proposed addition are generally consistent with recommendations in adopted plans for this area, citing both the City Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan.

1. Comprehensive Plan. The report does not give any detailed discussion of the applicability of the Comprehensive Plan to the project or why the project may or may not meet specific goals and guidelines in the Plan. The Commission should note the following applicable goals of the City's Comprehensive Plan which are met by the project:

- Promote the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
- Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
- Balance individual property rights with community interests and goals.
- Plan and develop land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.

2. Downtown Plan. The staff report discusses a number of reasons why staff believes the project does not meet one particular section of the Downtown Plan entitled "Strengthen the Region's Economic Engine," which includes guidelines for redevelopment/infill projects downtown. However, the report mischaracterizes the cited section in suggesting the Plan requires the Roundhouse to be demolished and neglects to address the project's compatibility with other, equally important sections of the Plan including "Enhance Livability" and "Become a Model of Sustainability" – each of which should be given equal weight and consideration in evaluating the project in the context of the Downtown Plan.

Redevelopment/Infill Projects. The narrative below the photo of the Roundhouse on page 24 of the Downtown Plan indicates it as one of "Examples of buildings that are out of scale with their surroundings". The staff report quotes the Plan incorrectly as saying the Roundhouse is "out of context" (p. 4 of the report). Since the date the Plan was adopted, the parcel directly adjacent to the north of the Roundhouse has been redeveloped into an 8-story building as noted in the staff report, which is just over 26 feet shorter than the Roundhouse. The Roundhouse and proposed addition are comparable in scale to the current surrounding buildings when considering the height of the recent neighboring redevelopment and the only 30 to 40 feet height difference between the Roundhouse and 4 neighboring buildings within 100 yards. Discussion of scale in this context is particularly important given staff's insistence redevelopment would allow for replacing the building with similar scale and massing (including additional stories – 10 to 12 – exceeding the 8 stories proposed with the addition). In addition, the report focuses most on recommendation 21 of the Plan in encouraging the Commission to agree the Roundhouse should be torn down. Recommendation 21 indicates existing buildings taller than proposed height limits should be *allowed* to be redeveloped at the same height. The Plan, however, does not mandate such buildings *shall* be redeveloped and, as noted, the Roundhouse is not currently out of scale with surrounding buildings.

The balance of this section of the Plan, cited extensively in the staff report, should be given due consideration in light of the report's focus on "context" and assertion the Roundhouse is functionally obsolete (p. 3 of the report). The Parcel Analysis map on page 25 of the Plan designates parcels of

Potential Redevelopment, which the Plan defines as “...sites that have a potential for redevelopment or infill projects ... [and] shows only those parcels, or combinations of adjacent parcels, of one-half acre or more with the following characteristics: surface parking lots, 1960s-1970s era zero lot line developments, underutilized sites and/or obsolete buildings, ...” The Roundhouse property – which is over ½ acre – is not specified as a redevelopment/infill site on the Parcel Analysis map. The report’s reliance on this section of the Plan does not accurately reflect the Plan’s recommendations or conclusions as applicable to the Roundhouse and is inaccurate in suggesting redevelopment of the entire Roundhouse site will be required at some point in the near future. The proposed addition represents a good infill solution for the Roundhouse property.

Diversity of Living Options. The Downtown Plan also emphasizes higher density infill (Objective 2.4), consistent with the Plan’s goal to provide opportunities for diversity of living options. On page 61 of the Plan, Objective 5.1 recommends encouraging “greater diversity of living options by providing a variety of housing types, sizes and prices throughout Downtown.” The recommendations in the staff report are wholly inconsistent with this goal in seeking to ensure the future demolition and replacement of the Roundhouse. Demolition of the Roundhouse would result in the loss of desirable units which are larger than most new units coming on the market and would significantly increase rents from those currently charged for Roundhouse apartments – an affordable price point uncommon in the current downtown rental market. Maintaining the existing Roundhouse and allowing the addition to proceed supports the City’s and the Plan’s goals of ensuring diversity of living options and affordable housing options.

Sustainability. The Downtown Plan emphasizes sustainability, and the City’s own Sustainability Plan encourages building rehabilitation where possible. The May 14, 2012 City of Madison Sustainability Plan – Definitions, Sources and Challenges (p. 20) recognizes “[e]ncouraging mixed-income buildings will help promote social well-being as a critical aspect of sustainability.” While we understand not all old buildings should be rehabilitated and added onto, and many opportunities for redevelopment exist where razing an old building is the best solution, in this particular situation adding onto and upgrading the existing Roundhouse makes the most sense. The Roundhouse is a functioning building with over a 100 desirable units and, with the proposed upgrades, will be a safer building while still maintaining an affordable rental price point in the existing units. While the aesthetics of the Roundhouse can be debated, it’s a stretch to disagree the Roundhouse reflects urban density and sustainability with its small building footprint housing over 100 affordable units.

In addition, upgrading and adding onto the Roundhouse makes the most sense from a sustainability perspective given the size of the Roundhouse, its structural cast-in-place concrete and masonry bearing walls and façade, and its location within a dense urban area with many varied building types. One expert has estimated if you tear down a typical older building in a North American downtown (25 feet wide and 100 to 140 feet deep), you lose the environmental benefit from the last 1,344,000 aluminum cans recycled because of the impact razing the building will have on the landfills.¹

Finally, while the “green building” movement tends to focus on the annual energy use of a building, sustainability overall needs to take into consideration the energy consumed in the construction of a building, which is estimated to be 15 to 30 times the annual energy use of an old building.²

¹ Donovan D. Rypkema’s presentation, *Sustainability, Smart Growth and Historic Preservation* from March 10, 2007.

² *Id.*

According to an expert, “embodied energy” is defined as the total expenditure of energy involved in the creation of building and its constituent materials. The expert concludes recurring embodied energy savings increase dramatically as a building life stretches over fifty years and, if you have an old building that lasts 100 years, you could use 25% more energy every year and still have less lifetime energy use than a new building that lasts 40 years.³

Under the applicable City plans, tearing down the Roundhouse and redeveloping the entire site rather than the proposed building an addition is not desirable, affordable or sustainable given the circumstances and, as noted above, demolition is not required under the Downtown Plan as suggested in the staff report. The proposed addition offers an alternative which furthers the City’s goals of urban infill, density, affordable housing and sustainability.

B. Conditional Use Standards. The staff report acknowledges most of the conditional use standards are or can be met by the proposed addition to the Roundhouse. The report focuses on Standard Nos. 3, 4 and 9 to support the recommendation the Commission deny the conditional use permit.⁴ The report is also full of examples of additional goals and standards apparently applied by staff, which appear to include “superior architectural design” (p. 5), “superior, well-designed building” (p. 5), “superior outcome ... in the future” (p. 9) and staff’s desire to see “significantly more development ... than what is being proposed” (p. 9). Each of the applicable conditional use standards can be met by the proposed addition, as discussed below, and it is not appropriate to apply additional standards outside of those established in the City’s ordinances in considering a request for a conditional use permit.

3. The uses, values, and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner.

In addressing this conditional use standard, the staff report points to concerns regarding the setback in relation to one neighboring property which has been recently redeveloped with a new, 8-story building (which, as noted above, is only just over 26 feet shorter than Roundhouse). This section of the report, however, fails to discuss or otherwise relate to the earlier conclusion on Page 2 of the report indicating the proposed addition meets all required setbacks of the zoning district (consistent with conditional use standard #7). In fact, the setback noted in the report is double what is required and staff has acknowledged the concern of the adjacent property owner related to impacts on light/shadowing are not significantly affected or increased by the proposed addition. The report cites no other specific examples and includes no other discussion of this standard and how the project does not meet it. The proposed addition will not impair or diminish the use, value or enjoyment of any other property in the neighborhood and is entirely consistent with the dense, student housing surrounding the project.

4. The establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

The report questions whether this standard will be met, but expressly acknowledges the proposed addition will not impede further development and redevelopment of surrounding properties. Thus, although the report questions whether the standard can be met, it also confirms the standard will be met.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Under the circumstances, placing on file is the equivalent of a denial.

9. When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building, the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district⁵. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendations:

Standard 9 presents a subjective standard which can be evaluated many different ways with different outcomes depending on the preferences and opinions of the particular person or body. Staff has evaluated the standard and concluded *“the proposed addition represents a lost opportunity for any number of more comprehensive scenarios for higher-quality redevelopment of this site, which would be precluded for several decades.”* The report’s analysis of this standard does not give due consideration of the significant and specific input given by UDC, the governing body specifically identified in the standard as the appropriate body to review a project for compliance. The staff report notes in numerous places the project team accommodated comments and input from the UDC, agrees with UDC’s recommendations, and confirms *“the applicant has responded to [the comments] in the latest submittal.”* (p. 9)

The owner and project team believe this standard has been met through the extensive UDC review process already engaged in by the applicant, as noted throughout the staff report (including the UDC minutes attached to the report). The applicant believes the process it has already engaged in with UDC demonstrates this standard has been met but the applicant is willing to revisit the project plans with the UDC as a condition of the Plan Commission’s approval of the conditional use permit. Deference to UDC review of whether the project meets this standard is particularly important here given the subjective nature of the standard and the significantly differing and inconsistent views that have been asserted throughout the review process (as indicated in staff’s comments referencing the significant revisions applicant has made in responding to comments throughout a “challenging review process”). We also note the Roundhouse is compatible with the existing character of the area – since its been a part of the area since 1969, it is a part of creating the existing character of the area.

Finally, we take exception to a note in staff’s comment related to conditional use standard #1. While staff agrees condition #1 is met, the report generally asserts without discussion *“the applicant will need to address life safety issues in the existing Roundhouse building whether or not this proposal moves forward.”* The owner and project team disagree with this assertion based on a review of the applicable statutes and regulations and discussions with the City of Madison Fire Department – no such

⁵ The report notes the following purpose of the applicable zoning district: These districts are intended to recognize historic Downtown neighborhoods comprised of predominantly residential uses with some non-residential uses. The districts are also intended to:

- a) Facilitate the preservation, development, or redevelopment goals of the comprehensive plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor, or special area plans.
- b) Promote the preservation and conservation of historic buildings and districts while allowing selective infill and redevelopment based on the recommendations of adopted City plans.
- c) Ensure that new buildings and additions to existing buildings are designed with sensitivity to their context in terms of scale and rhythm, building placement, façade width, height and proportions, garage and driveway placement, landscaping and similar design features.

Each of these purposes is duplicative of the goals and requirements of the City Plans and applicable use standards discussed throughout the staff report and this letter and need to be repeated here for the sake of brevity. The project team believes all of these purposes and intents are met by the proposed addition for the reasons discussed throughout this letter.

requirements apply imposing an obligation to upgrade or replace certain life safety systems in the existing Roundhouse short of replacement as part of the proposed addition.

We appreciate the Commission's careful and thoughtful consideration of the project, the issues raised in this letter and in the staff report and in undertaking consideration and balancing of the many policies, goals and standards implicated by this project. We ask the Commission APPROVE the requested conditional use permit. Our full project team will be in attendance Monday night to address any additional questions the Commission may have, we look forward to seeing you there.

Very truly yours,



Angela Black

cc: Jim, Marlene & Joe Korb, Roundhouse Apartments, LLC
Curt Brink
Josh Wilcox, Gary Brink & Associates
Dave Martin & Jason Bollig, Ideal Builders, Inc.