

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: September 17, 2014

TITLE: 707-709 Rethke Avenue – Madison
Supportive Housing Project for 60 Studio
Apartments. 15th Ald. Dist. (35494)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: September 17, 2014

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Cliff Goodhart, Dawn O’Kroley, Richard Slayton and John Harrington.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of September 17, 2014, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a Madison Supportive Housing project for 60 studio apartments located at 707-709 Rethke Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Mike Zuehlke, representing Engberg Anderson; and Jacob Blue, representing SAA Design Group. Registered in opposition and wishing to speak was Harvey Storm. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Brian Munson. The proposed building would be four-stories placed on the northwest corner of the site. Building materials are primarily fiber cement board in a lap siding with some hardiboard panel as well in multiple colors. The first floor space would have a community room that fronts Rethke Avenue and would be set back to create some garden space in the front, while the other part of the residential is set more towards the street. On the one-story section of the building they will use a metallic metal panel, and have a rooftop garden area for the residents. One central system is proposed for the HVAC equipment. Parking is located on the south side of the building. They will be pursuing LEED certification. Towards the front of the building they will use a green screen with the garden space to allow the vegetation to grow upwards. The second story will have a cable system guardrail around the building. Elevations along Rethke Avenue show yellow creating a vertical pattern in combination with the window system to show pattern differentiation. As you move around to the prominent side of the building the corner pops out, and the side that borders a chiropractic building will be a prominent elevation so that detail continues as they wrap around the building. Bicycle parking will be located in the basement. Open space for the residents will be provided in the back. The roof will be lined with PV panels and horizontal sun shading will be used on the east, west and south sides to help minimize solar gain. Geothermal elements will be used in the parking lot, as well as cisterns in the front and back of the building that will be used on the rooftop garden. The intent is that the residents will have a hand in cultivating the landscaping, and they are proposing a chicken coop and perhaps an apiary system. They are also looking at trying to create multiple layers of perennial and native or near-native vegetation that would be a forged garden. They are proposing all native turf and are looking at how to maximize the turf aesthetic. The Secretary noted that if you’re going to grow grass in excess of 8-inches and try to work with any proposed grasses to be individual types in arrangements rather than one mono-culture.

Brian Munson commended the design team on the progress of the project. There are designed-focused issues from adjacent property owners. One is that there is an existing retaining wall that is in very bad shape along the eastern side, and is of primary concern for the daycare owners because of reconstruction needs for that and how that will be coordinated to not impact their business (the retaining wall is owned by Madison Supportive Housing). Because of parking concerns it is requested that the design team changing that from a swale with no curb or sidewalks to an urban cross-section. The mixed-use component of this is confusing to some and they would like clarification on a possible kitchen and the public access to that. The sun shades are a great design element. As this continues to develop, the color palette could be lightened up a bit.

Harvey Storm owns the building immediately to the north of the subject property. This project will impact his chiropractic building and property. Two concerns are the visual aspect, coming down East Washington Avenue and look down Rethke Avenue, you're going to see the back of a four-story building that is quite flat, with some color variation and sun shades, that is uninteresting. The corridor into the Capitol should showcase properties that are more aesthetically pleasing. If the building were turned 90 degrees you would get a more interesting view rather than a flat back. This development calls for 60 apartment units with no parking and that seems like a disaster waiting to happen. He is also concerned, after talking to the project manager, that if they do not receive adequate funding for the programming of the building, the capabilities of the people that live here will go up, hopefully have jobs, and they will have need for vehicles.

Comments from the Commission were as follows:

- I like the theme, it carries through the whole setting.
- I think the building could have a bit more articulation; add relief to the north elevation in combination with changes in color.
- Maybe there's a two-step approach to parking needs. Look at on-street parking as needed to provide for more parking as the need arises.

ACTION:

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