

Notes from TLNA Steering Committee Meeting
Gorman and Co. Proposal for the Messner Property
Thursday, September 13, 2018, 5:30pm
Festival Foods

Attendees:

Dane County District 2 Supervisor Heidi Wegleitner

City Planning Department – Sydney Prusak

Gorman and Company – Nicole Solheim (project lead), Ben Marshall (head of architecture), Mark Smith (project architect)

TLNA Council members - Patrick Heck, Karla Handel, Patty Prime

Neighbors and Interested Parties: Tom Kapper, Pat Kelly, Joey Hoey

Introductions:

After a welcome and introductions by Patrick Heck, the group agreed to forego the usual overview of the committee’s purpose since all attendees were familiar with the process.

District 2 County Supervisor Heidi Wegleitner reported that a little over \$1 million from County’s Affordable Housing fund was appropriated for this project in the recently released county capitol budget. This budget still has to go through County Board process, but she is optimistic the funding for the proposal will remain.

Proposal Update and Discussion:

(Note: The development team slides from this meeting are not yet available. See the pdf that was submitted to the City on Sept. 21 for renderings of the building, etc. That pdf is available on the TLNA development website for this project.)

The Gorman team presented their latest information and design. Nicole Solheim and Ben Marshall from Gorman and Company reviewed the evolution of the proposal to date. In June the steering committee saw that the one level of parking was already to be underground. In July they altered the 5th floor in the rear by stepping down and moving 4 units to the first floor at grade. They submitted that version to the City in August. The big change now is as a result of their consideration of the recent flooding - Valor is a building that needs to last for the very long term - the flooding is not going to get better. It will be affordable housing for 99 years; they are and will be responsible for that operation. It is not just a matter of their saving construction costs – it is more the long-term operational costs that they feel could be impacted by future flooding. They mentioned that Sydney Prusak from City Planning has been looking at iterations with them. The first parking level, which covers an entire floor, is now above the ground floor, so is now the 2nd floor. What were floors 2 through 5 are now floors 3 through 6.

Joey Hoey agreed that the flooding is not going to get better, but he thinks that if the flooding doesn’t get better, people won’t be able to get to the proposed building. He thinks that we dodged a huge bullet with E. Wash not completely closing this time, but if it closes due to some future flooding, people won’t be able to get to Valor. Moving the parking level up from underground doesn’t solve the problem for 99 years. Nichole agreed that the situation is still not all sunshine even with moving the parking level above ground, but it does help minimize the risk.

Ben Marshall (Gorman lead architect) said that when they looked at the building earlier there were 3 to 4 feet of water in the basement. At that time, they thought they could deal with that amount of water, but pumps wouldn't be able to deal with extensive flooding. The proposed building was about 62' tall before they moved the parking level up; now it is 68'. They will stay at or below 68' so that no Condition Use will be required from Plan Commission for exceeding the maximum 68' building height. Urban Design District-8 requires a front step back above the 5th floor, so they also had to shove the building back there – the top floor has been moved back accordingly. This results in the rear top floor apartments filling up almost all of the rear top area that was created in the last proposal iteration by moving 4 apartments to the ground level. The site plan is relatively the same as before – they have kept the 4 units on the ground floor in the rear, which the neighborhood liked.

Joey Hoey said that we can talk about the design concepts, yet we should be talking about the neighborhood and impacts. The requirement for the top floor to step back negatively impacts the neighborhood. Sydney Prusak (City Planning) said that this is what the UDD-8 guidelines are for and the Conditional Use process. UDD-8 guidelines require that there be a 15' stepback above the 5th floor, so the 6th floor can't be as close to E. Washington as the lower floors. Joey asked why we can't get rid of that requirement instead of screwing the neighborhood. Sydney answered that it would require an ordinance change for those guidelines to be altered. Patrick Heck added that an ordinance change is usually a lengthy process that generally requires the support of the Alder and neighborhood association. Sydney added that the upper story step backs were established along E. Washington to preserve views of the Capitol building. Joey was not convinced it was a good guideline – he would like to see it changed. Sydney said it is also about the view towards the Capitol when driving– not just residences. The Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan is considered important to the City and it governs these design guidelines.

Karla Handel asked about reducing the number of units so that the required stepback doesn't result in the loss of the stepped-down area in the top rear. Ben said that they can't accommodate that financially – they have already reduced the project by 8 units and that has stressed the financials already. It was asked if there was another configuration of the apartment floors that would allow the rear to stay stepped down. Ben and Mark Smith said they had tried everything they could think of.

Joey said that if this proposal was on a different block he might support it, but because the smaller scale Pasqual's building is staying and because he believes the single family homes and rentals nearby are no longer targets for redevelopment, this building is not appropriate. The only place for a high rise on the block is the sliver between Pasquale's and this building. The people in this building will never feel part of the hood because they will be like an island. The higher and blockier the building is will accentuate their isolation from the neighborhood.

Tom Kasper asked for clarification on where all the parking will be and how that impacted the building's height. Ben said that they reduced every floor's height by about a foot to stay at 68'. The 4 rear apartments are 2-story townhouse-style units. The interior parking will be towards the rear of the ground floor, and most of the 2nd floor.

Sydney Prusak noted that the front façade might need to have the same required setback (15') along its entire width, unlike in the rendering, which shows a larger setback on the side closest to the surface parking lot. She will double-check that with Planning though. Patrick noted that if that area was required to come forward towards E. Washington like the remained of the façade, that could free up some space for apartments to come forward on floors 3 through 5. Could that

be enough room to rearrange some of the interior, thereby allowing for the 6th floor step-down in the rear to be feasible again? Ben and Mark said they were not optimistic that there would be a way to do that, but they can look at it. (Note: the pdf submitted to the City shows that the entire front façade is now brought up to the same UDD-8 required front setback)

Tom Kasper asked about the large flag-like feature that is on the east side of the building in the renderings. Mark Smith said that they are required to have a barrier along that entire “zero lot line” where the building can go all the way to the lot line. The apartment windows along that side that you can see above the enclosed garage entrance off E. Washington are set back, but below that and in front of that where the building goes up to 6 stories, there needs to be a non-combustible barrier with no openings. Typically, new buildings use a cinderblock wall to meet that requirement, but they don't think that will get UDC or City approval in this circumstance. Mark looked at the likely residents of the building (veterans) and thought a flag-related covering would be appropriate. It also won't require much maintenance, so they can afford it. The barrier has to go up to the top floor in the front because the building's side is not setback from the east lot line in the very front. Ben noted that there will be 2 or 3 UDC meetings on this project, so their feedback on the flag design will be important. Joey Hoey asked if they could instead put a brick wall there with faux windows – he has seen this elsewhere, e.g., off the Bronx Expressway. Ben said that UDC generally has not liked fake window features. Patrick added that something more creative might be appropriate. Karla Handel said that she did not like the flag concept. Mark said they would be working on this and would try to better depict the concept.

A question was asked about the placement of the building mechanicals – they will be the same as earlier discussed, i.e., HVAC on the roof and/or in the u-shaped cutout area on top of the 2nd floor. They are aware that the mechanicals and parking exhaust shouldn't bother the residential neighbors. Tom Kasper asked if the height increase will impact the shadow studies that the committee has already seen. Ben said that since the building shape isn't much different, they think the shadows will be similar, but in the worst case situation (winter), the additional 6' or so of building height could lengthen shadows by as much as 12' or even more when the sun is very low in the sky.

Patrick asked about the front parapet – was that included in the 68' height estimate? Yes, so the majority of the building will actually be a little less than 68'.

Nicole said that this proposal's density is about 69 units/acre. Since the new land use map that is a product of Imagine Madison allows up to 120 units/acre in this land use category, we can all imagine what could go on this site instead.

Wrap Up:

The meeting drew to a close with Gorman and Company agreeing to look again at any possible increase in the top rear step-down in an attempt to recreate the effect that was seen in the previous proposal renderings. They plan to submit their application next week. It was discussed that any changes can be emailed by Patrick who can then forward them to the steering committee members for comment.

Sydney noted that Planning had given Gorman some extra time (until Sept 21) to submit their application so that their initial meeting with the UDC on Oct. 3 can occur.

Patrick agreed to forward any new renderings to the steering committee. Once any additional changes were discussed via email, the tentative plan is for Patrick to draft a steering committee

report. That report would be circulated to the committee to make sure all opinions and input were well represented. Once finalized, the report will go to TLNA Council, likely in early October.

Patrick noted that the steering committee report would contain more negative opinions than the report he had drafted after the previous proposal version when the parking level was underground and the step-down on the top floor rear was larger.

Patty Prime confirmed that there is an Oct. 11, 2018, TLNA Council meeting scheduled for 7pm at Festival Foods. Currently, the only order of business is consideration of this proposal. Gorman and Company agreed to come to that meeting to present their proposal. The Council will then discuss the proposal and the steering committee report, and consider any motions related to the proposal.

Patrick thanked the steering committee for their good input and hard work. At this point, the steering committee does not plan another meeting until spring 2019 prior to any final UDC approval of the proposal. The more detailed features of the exterior design will be available in the spring.