

LETTER OF INTENT

May 9, 2022

City of Madison - Planning Department
215 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Suite #17
Madison, WI 53703

Re: 131 W Wilson St – Request for Demolition Permit

To Whom It May Concern:

Introduction

The majority owner of 131 W. Wilson Street, Rice Investors, LLC, is requesting approval of the enclosed Land Use Application for a Demolition Permit due to the deteriorating condition of the building and attached parking structure. 131 W. Wilson Street was built over fifty (50) years ago, in 1971. As the city is aware from the Structural Condition Study completed by GMA Engineers and the recent reports and inspections conducted by Pierce Engineers, the structural integrity of the building and attached parking structure has been compromised and continues to deteriorate. The shoring posts installed in the fall of 2021 are temporary, were never meant to be a permanent solution and their lifespan has been exceeded per Wisconsin Building Code. The estimates for permanent repairs are equal to or exceed the building's value. Accordingly, we request that the city grant a demolition permit as we believe the building is at risk of immediate collapse.

Details and History

In October 2021, Pierce Engineers recommended that temporary structural support posts be installed in the parking garage, to hold up the building and slow down its progressive collapse. On October 16, 2021, the owners had 3,300 posts installed in the parking garage on all 3 levels, effectively closing those three levels of parking since the posts sit only 1 to 5 feet apart in a grid pattern. The two types of steel posts are only 4 and 6.5 inches in diameter and were intended by the engineer to be a temporary solution so that the building tenants could conduct an orderly and safe withdraw from the building. This work was completed at significant expense.

The posts were never intended to be a permanent solution. Wisconsin Building Code defines that the maximum temporary shoring condition for a building is 180 days. In fact, the engineer's report expired on April 14, 2022 (180 days after installation), which means that the engineer never considered the posts to remain in place more than six months, as Pierce acknowledges that the shoring posts may loosen and become ineffective after that 180-day temporary lifespan.

Even with the posts in place, chunks of concrete ceiling in the garage continue to break off and fall onto the parking floors on occasion, endangering the lives of anyone entering the parking garage. Per Pierce Engineer's March 29th Structural Inspection Report, concrete spalling continues to occur, and additional spalling is anticipated. One expansion joint had a 10 ft concrete edge "bar" drop to the floor. In this report, Pierce notes that "As the bars continue to

corrode the bond between the concrete and the bar fails, causing the slab strength to continue to diminish and cause additional spalling.” When this occurs, the steel rebar becomes exposed.

Because of the continued deterioration of the garage and falling concrete, the parking garage was closed approximately six months ago, not only because of the posts but because of the risk of someone being injured in the parking garage. In addition, the first half of the first floor of the garage, like that below it, also has deteriorating concrete and spalling. Parts of the parking ceiling have broken off as the parking deck continues to warp and crack which causes water to pour through.

Building management has worked diligently over the last six months to work with tenants to vacate the building and it is now down to only a few tenants remaining. Any remaining issues with tenants are financial, which is not a valid basis to keep this building open in light of the knowledge of its deteriorating condition. The city took the right steps to close the building. The owners followed up by installing temporary support so that the tenants could vacate in an orderly fashion. Any tenant that insists on remaining in the building at this point or delaying its demolition is putting its own interests above public safety.

But now, with the engineer’s report and temporary structural post’s lifespan expired, the building must come down. The posts cannot hold the building up indefinitely. A full or partial collapse will occur in time. We’ve all seen what happens when a building’s structural age comes to an end. The Champlain Towers in Florida and the condo building in Waukesha are two examples. Recall the concrete panel weighing thousands of pounds that was on the UW-Madison Administration building falling off AND the concrete panel of the parking ramp in Milwaukee that fell off years ago and killed a person. The situation here is the same, this building is at the same risk.

Additional internal inspections indicate that the facade of the building is now bowing out and this creates the risk that brick from the facade may pop off at any time, potentially falling on top of someone either injuring or even killing a person. It is time for this building to be closed to the public.

Therefore, the building owners are asking the city for a demolition permit so that the building can be taken down in an orderly and safe fashion without putting the public at risk.

Summary

The building’s concrete parking garage is not sound and cannot continue to hold up the building, the brick is at risk of falling off, and the building cannot be saved as the flaws are inherent to the structure (Remember, this building was built back in 1971 and concrete installation then is not the same quality as it is today). Concrete ages and like the UW Administration building, the clips and connections holding up the facade, in this case the brick, will eventually age and fail. The Humanities building at UW-Madison is another example of a building that is slated to be taken down because the age and original installation is not what it

would be today. Therefore, the building must come down before it collapses, or parts of the brick start falling off.

If the city does not grant a demolition permit, the building is at risk of failing down. If the building falls, it could collapse onto the adjacent apartment buildings, the public streets, or the railroad, all of which could risk public lives. Granting a demolition permit ensures that the building can be taken down part by part in a safe manner and prevent a sudden injury to the public. At this point, this is purely a public safety issue.

Make no mistake about it, the building will fail, or brick will fall off sooner or later. The engineers won't stand behind the report or the temporary posts any longer. Let's prevent the likelihood of injury. Please grant the demolition permit immediately.

Thank you,

Rice Investors LLC

By: Greg Rice
Greg Rice, Managing Partner