

**Urban Land Interests' response to the April 27, 2020 Planning Division Staff Report prepared for the Landmarks Commission:**

On April 27, 2020, Planning Division Staff issued their report in response to Urban Land Interests' variance request for the demolition, and preservation, of the landmarked building commonly known as Centre 7. Several of the key conclusions Staff noted in their report are highlighted below:

**"The Landmarks Commission may grant a variance allowing the construction of a new structure, or the alteration, demolition or removal of an existing structure..... if the Commission finds the variance is necessary in the public interest."**

**"The applicant cites substantial benefits to an increased tax base, increase in employment opportunities downtown and more publically accessible parking. Most of these are indirectly beneficial to the general public."**

**"The Landmarks Commission must determine if the primary economic benefits of the redevelopment outweigh the public benefits of cultural heritage."**

**"The project as proposed would not be able to occur.....without demolishing the subject property."**

**"The charge from the MGO 41.01 "Policy and Purpose" section of the Historic Preservation Ordinance describes historic resources as "economic assets that can attract residents and visitors, create jobs, stabilize and improve property values, and stimulate business and industry."**

Urban Land Interests' proposed development is directly beneficial to the public interest.

We propose to preserve and enhance the limited historic details of 7-11 North Pinckney that remain intact after the existing structures were basically destroyed by bad remodeling done in the 1970s. Not only will ULI's proposed project significantly increase the tax base, employment opportunities and the vitality along our sidewalks by reestablishing shops and restaurants, it will also highlight, showcase and preserve the remaining historic elements in a storefront that recreates the total façade in its original condition. After our work is complete, the historic storefront will be once again be used for the retail purposes that the original builder intended. The new development will highlight and celebrate an important part of Madison's history and put it in the condition needed to contribute to a future that makes the Capitol Square able to attract and serve the people of Madison. What exists now is a nonfunctional office building that actually detracts from Madison's downtown. With the cooperation of the Landmarks Commission, we can preserve and enhance an important part of Madison's history and restore it to life.

Today, downtown Madison has been decimated by the COVID-19 virus and the closure of restaurants and retail shops, many of whom may never recover and reopen. The retail heart of downtown Madison along State Street no longer exists, with even the most well-known shops closing. Property values are falling and will continue to decline.

The City of Madison has major challenges and problems as its revenues decline and the cost of dealing with this crisis go up. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway said recently that “I’m extremely worried about our budget. Both this year’s budget and next year’s budget, and frankly, for years after that.”

Investing in downtown Madison to undertake development that, in keeping with MGO 41.01, can “attract residents and visitors, create jobs, stabilize and improve property values, and stimulate business and industry” while dramatically increasing the tax base of the city is clearly directly beneficial to the general public. Undertaking major infill development like Block 89, the development of the former Anchor Bank properties or our proposal for the American Exchange properties requires a public/private partnership and cooperation.

With the support of the City of Madison and with the approval of the Landmarks Commission to demolish and reconstruct the historic Burrows Block as close to its original form as was possible, Urban Land Interests was able to undertake the redevelopment of Block 89. Today, this project has the highest assessed value of any single block in the City of Madison. Block 89 was a critical step in revitalizing the Capitol Square. Without the support of the Landmarks Commission to demolish a landmarked Burrows Block building to allow the construction of underground parking, with a commitment to reconstruct the historic façade in its original form, Block 89 would not and could not have happened. Would downtown Madison be what it is today if the Landmarks Commission did not support using an historic building to help make great development feasible?

Today, the City faces the same question that the Landmarks Commission faced in 1992 with the Burrow’s Block. It is clear that the property we propose to develop surrounding the American Exchange Bank building is blighted and underutilized. More than 55% of the land area ULI has assembled is used for surface parking. With the exception of the American Exchange Bank Building that we have invested significantly in saving, the old wood frame buildings on Pinckney Street are functionally obsolete and have been stripped of almost all historic detailing. In spite of our best efforts, significant portions of the office space in those existing buildings are vacant. There is only one retail shop left in more than 700 lineal feet of sidewalk.

Brad, Tom and Urban Land Interests have a long, demonstrated commitment to balancing thoughtful historic preservation with innovative architecture. Our goal is and always has been to respect and preserve the historic scale of our downtown while creating great projects that will make important contributions to improving the quality of life for everyone. We have spent our entire careers committed to making our community better. The developments we create have always been focused on improving historic buildings and making them functional and attractive for use by future generations. Our goal has always been to undertake developments that stand the test of time by using great architecture to create buildings that will attract and meet the needs of current and future office and retail tenants in order to maximize the vitality and quality of life in downtown Madison.

We have carefully considered all of these factors and look forward to continuing the conversation about the American Exchange development opportunity with the Landmarks Commission and other downtown stakeholders.