

Downtown Madison, Inc. Position Statement: 7-11 N. Pinckney Street Development

As reported in the media last week, Urban Land Interests (ULI) has proposed to redevelop several properties stretching from 7-11 North Pinckney Street that ULI acquired over the past 27 years. The proposal includes 300,000 square feet of office space, street side retail and 840 underground parking places. Included among the properties that are part of the proposed development is the Centre Seven building, which will be demolished. Physical parts of the building that have historical architectural significance will be preserved and will be incorporated into the new building.

Under the City of Madison's current process for demolishing a registered landmark, as a threshold step, applicants must seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Landmarks Commission before commencing the traditional land use process. This threshold step precludes the general public, through either neighborhood meetings or discussion with elected officials, from having a say in the process. Consequently, the first step in ULI's process to obtain the City's approval of the proposed project is for ULI to apply to the Landmarks Commission to grant a Public Interest Variance from the Historic Preservation Ordinance to allow a Certificate of Appropriateness to be issued for the demolition of the properties it owns on North Pinckney. If the Landmarks Commission does not issue the Certificate, then unless the Common Council overrides the Landmarks Commission's decision, the application and project will not move forward. If, however, the Certificate is issued, the application will be subject to additional vetting by Landmarks, the Plan Commission, and the Common Council, as part of a public process that is expected to last for a year or more.

The Landmarks Commission will conduct a hearing on ULI's application on Monday, May 4. DMI believes the Certificate should be granted to allow the traditional land use process to take place, thus ensuring that there is an opportunity for the public, as well as the various local government authorities, to both vet, and provide input on, such an important project for downtown. DMI also believes ULI should have the ability, through the due course of public review, to prove to our community the numerous direct benefits this project brings to the general public. Projects small and large should be heard by a greater audience to better understand their overall value to our community. Without entering the traditional due course of review, projects like the one that ULI has proposed may never have the chance for greater participation. Without the greater participation of the neighborhoods, Urban Design Commission, Landmarks Commission and the City Council, development projects are not reviewed for their full value to our city. Historic Preservation certainly is an important value however it is not be the only interest of our city. Without due course of review, our community will never weigh other values including economic development, downtown quality of life and sustainability.

Granting the project a Certificate of Appropriateness will give ULI the ability to prove to our community this development is within the public interest and should move forward. During the traditional review process, ULI will meet with numerous bodies, including the Landmarks Commission, to ensure this project sustains and grows downtown as a vibrant regional economic engine that offers the best-in-class quality of life. Projects like the one that ULI has proposed are central to DMI's mission and Civic Agenda. To continue to build the downtown as the thriving heart of the larger Madison community, we need both commercial and residential development that offers density. More density will create more jobs, help sustain our local retail stores, restaurants and arts/entertainment options, generate additional tax revenue, and ensure we retain a strong and sustainable urban core. With the advent of COVID-19,

downtown, now more than ever, needs projects like the one ULI has proposed. The project will create vibrancy and increase the tax base at a time when our city sorely needs both.

DMI urges the Landmarks Commission to grant the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the ULI project to enter the traditional land use process thus ensuring our whole community has a chance to better understand this important project.