



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 33 W Johnson Street
UDC will be an Advisory Body

Application Type: Redevelopment in UMX Zoning

Legistar File ID #: [78639](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Andy Inman, NCG Hospitality | MC Investors I, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of the former Madison College site with a mixed-use development featuring a hotel, residential and commercial spaces. The development proposal includes repurposing the existing historic building into a six-story mixed-use tower with a 16,000 square feet of commercial space, and the construction of an 11-story dual branded hotel tower with amenity spaces, including restaurants, rooftop lounge, underground parking, meeting/event space, and winter garden.

Approval Standards: The subject site is currently zoned UMX (Urban Mixed Use District). Per MGO Section 28.076(4)(c), *"All new buildings and additions greater than 20,000 square feet or that have more than four stories in UMX zoning shall obtain conditional use approval from the Plan Commission following review by the Urban Design Commission for conformity to the design standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and report its findings to the Plan Commission."*

Zoning Related Information: As noted above, the project site is currently zoned UMX. The Zoning Code outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in both the UMX and DC zoning districts. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX and DC zone districts are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

As noted in the Downtown Height Map, the maximum height allowed for the project site is eight stories/116 feet, however the project site is also located in an area of additional height. A maximum of two additional stories may be permitted if approved as part of a Conditional Use request, which would result in a total of 10 stories/144 feet. As noted in the Zoning Code, buildings must meet both the maximum number of stories and the maximum height.

Adopted Plans: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, within the Downtown Core neighborhood. As such, development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). The Downtown Plan (the Plan) recommendations for development in this neighborhood generally speak to encouraging the highest intensity of development in this subarea and encouraging a mix of uses that will help to retain the area's vibrancy. In addition, the Plan also includes specific recommendations related to building height and the overall design/treatment of Wisconsin Avenue as a premier street.

With regard to building height, the Plan notes key objectives in the evaluation of requests for additional stories, which include but are not limited to compatibility of scale, preservation of key view corridors, and respect for the unique individual Downtown neighborhoods and districts. The Plan states, *"...additional stories are to be used as a tool to encourage and reward buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to specific context of their location and accomplish specific objectives defined for the area."*

In addition, as noted on the Downtown Plan Height Map, the project site is located within Additional Height Area G, which is noted as “...a transition area between the Downtown Core, with the tallest allowed buildings in the planning area, and the Mansion Hill Historic Districts, with a five-story height limit.” The Plan recognizes that taller buildings than what are present now would be appropriate.

Staff notes that, the proposed new hotel tower, at eleven stories/125 feet, is not consistent with the maximum height limitations (10 stories/144 feet) as enumerated in both the Zoning Code and the Downtown Plan.

With regard to Wisconsin Avenue, the Plan identifies it as a Premier Street, which are intended to be designed with the highest level of design and amenity, including many characteristics of “complete streets” which are designed to host all users, including bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Currently, Wisconsin Avenue includes metered on-street parking, tapered medians, sidewalks and embellished terraces.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Height.** As noted above, the maximum permitted height for the project site is ten stories/144 feet, if approved as part of a Conditional Use request. As proposed, the new hotel tower is in excess of the height limitations at eleven stories. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the proposed building height relative to the objectives noted above in the Downtown Plan related to achieving additional height, especially those pertaining to context, appropriate transition, and encouraging a higher level of design aesthetic.
- **Site Access and Circulation.** As indicated on the site plan, there are two auto oriented drop-off areas, one located on Wisconsin Avenue and another on W Johnson Street. Staff has significant concerns related to the impacts on the pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns and safety. In addition, specifically with regard to Wisconsin Avenue, the resulting pedestrian environment depicts the removal of street trees and the terrace being primarily hardscape. All of which is a significant departure from the existing conditions and impacts the character of Wisconsin Avenue as a “Premier Street” as identified in the Downtown Plan.

As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines regarding site access and circulation one of the primary goals is to maximize uninterrupted pedestrian access within a given block. More specifically, “*Porte-cochere type entries, drop-offs or circular drives should not be parallel to the street or within the right-of-way, nor should they be oriented to require more than one curb cut.*” While the UDC does not approve modifications or improvements in the right-of-way, the Design Guidelines specifically address this subject and such modifications to the entry sequence will impact the on-site design. Staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the proposed entry sequence both along W Johnson Street and Wisconsin Avenue related to the noted applicable guidelines.

- **Building Design and Composition.** Staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the overall building design and composition as it relates to the adopted design guidelines, including those related to building and entry orientation, proportions and articulation, balancing vertical/horizontal proportions, ground level activation, overall massing/scale of components, size and rhythm of windows, and termination at the top of the building, etc.

- **Building Materials.** While not delineated in the application materials, the renderings indicate that the preliminary material palette is comprised of masonry, glass, and metal materials. As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, *“An integrated palette of high quality, durable building materials can enrich the pedestrian environment through the use of scale, color, texture, and architectural details.”* Staff requests that the Commission provides feedback on the proposed material palette and composition, especially as it relates to creating an enhanced design at the pedestrian level.
- **Long Views.** Due to the prominence of this site along the outside loop of the Capital Square spanning several heavily trafficked thoroughfares in the Downtown Core, including Wisconsin Avenue, W Johnson Street and Dayton Street, consideration should be given to the overall composition of the building as part of the overall cityscape and how it will read from a distance. As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, a similar design composition and quality of materials should be used on all sides of the building. Staff requests the Commission’s feedback on the proposed treatment of the less articulated walls, especially those along Dayton and W Johnson Streets.

ATTACHMENT:
28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
 - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
 - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
 - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
 - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.