



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

Application Type: Planned Development for a New Mixed-Use Development

Legistar File ID #: [80306](#)

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 residential building with 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.

Project Schedule:

- UDC received an Informational Presentation on July 12, 2023 (Legistar File ID [78639](#)), which reflected development within the existing, conventional zoning district.

Approval Standards: While the subject site is currently zoned UMX (Urban Mixed Use District), the applicant is proposing to rezone the project site to Planned Development. The UDC is an **advisory body** on the Planned Development request. For Planned Developments the UDC is required to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission with specific findings on the design objectives listed in Zoning Code sections 28.098(1), Statement of Purpose, and (2), Standards for Approval (PD Standards Attached), including, more specifically:

PD Standard (e), which generally speaks to coordinating “...*architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with surrounding land uses and create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose of the PD District.*”

PD Standard (h), which speaks to height in excess of that allows in the Downtown Height Map noting that “...*no application for excess height shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:*”

- The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned (if the recommendations in the Downtown Plan call for changes) character of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the scale, mass, rhythm, and setbacks of buildings and relationships to street frontages and public spaces.*
- The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories.*
- The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the project and create a pleasing visual relationship with them.*
- For projects proposed in priority viewsheds and other views and vistas identified on the Views and Vistas Map in the City of Madison Downtown Plan, there are no negative impacts on the viewshed as demonstrated by viewshed studies prepared by the applicant.*

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 as enumerated in the Zoning Code and Downtown Plan. Current standards include a base height of eight stories/116 feet. Up to two bonus stories could be awarded for up to 10 stories/144 feet. Per the ordinance, a building must meet both the number of stories and the measured height.

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 very wide, 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 and 144 feet. As proposed, while the new height is below the maximum allowable height in feet, the new hotel tower is in excess of the allowed number of stories at eleven stories. Per the ordinance, a building must meet both the number of stories and the measured height. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the proposed building height relative to the objectives noted above in the Downtown Plan and PD Standard (h) related to achieving additional height, especially those pertaining to designing with a sensitivity to context, creating appropriate transitions, and encouraging a higher level of design aesthetic.
- **Site Access and Circulation.** As indicated on the site plan, there remains an auto-oriented drop-off area located within the Wisconsin Avenue right-of-way, though the amount of right-of-way disturbance has been reduced compared to the [plans previously presented to the UDC](#). As previously noted, staff has noted significant concerns related to the potential adverse impacts of the proposed drop-off area on the existing uninterrupted pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns, design of the streetscape and pedestrian environment, relationship of the building to the street, and safety. In addition, specifically with regard to Wisconsin Avenue, the plans depicts the removal of some street trees. All of which is a 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 revised entry sequence and design elements along Wisconsin Avenue related to the noted applicable guidelines. Consideration should be given to the building setback, entry orientation and the mass/scale of architectural design elements, creating an enhanced design aesthetic at the pedestrian level, utilizing human scale architectural elements, creating a free and clear pedestrian zone, treatment of public spaces, landscape treatment, maintaining mature landscaping, etc.

- **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 that generally speak to creating one cohesive architectural expression, including overall building proportions and articulation, balancing vertical/horizontal proportions, mass/scale of building components, size and rhythm of windows and detailing, especially those on the upper floors of the hotel building on the Carroll Street elevation, building and entry orientation, ground level activation on all street frontages, minimizing blank walls (including those shown on W Johnson Street), creating positive termination at the top of the building, and creating a successful transition between the hotel and residential buildings, 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. While some longer views were provided in the application materials, a complete composition of the proposed building and existing building from the distance was not provided. If the Commission requires additional renderings of the building on the site, staff suggests views from further down the 100 and 300 blocks of Wisconsin Avenue (nearer Mifflin Street and Gorham Street, respectively) demonstrating the proposed building’s interaction with the premier street.

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, and the exposed upper floors of the proposed hotel building, in particular the Carroll Street elevation, especially as seen from a distance.

ATTACHMENT
PD Zoning Statement of Purpose and Standards

28.098 (1) Statement of Purpose.

The Planned Development (PD) District is established to provide a voluntary regulatory framework as a means to facilitate the unique development of land in an integrated and innovative fashion, to allow for flexibility in site design, and to encourage development that is sensitive to environmental, cultural, and economic considerations, and that features high-quality architecture and building materials. In addition, the Planned Development District is intended to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- (a) Promotion of green building technologies, low-impact development techniques for stormwater management, and other innovative measures that encourage sustainable development.
- (b) Promotion of integrated land uses allowing for a mixture of residential, commercial, and public facilities along corridors and in transitional areas, with enhanced pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections and amenities.
- (c) Preservation and enhancement of important environmental features through careful and sensitive placement of buildings and facilities.
- (d) Preservation of historic buildings, structures, or landscape features through adaptive reuse of public or private preservation of land.
- (e) Provision of more adequate, usable, and suitably located open space, recreational amenities, and other public facilities than would otherwise be provided under conventional land development techniques.
- (f) Facilitation of high-quality development that is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.

28.098(2) Approval Standards for Project

The standards for approval of a zoning map amendment to the PD District, or any major alteration to an approved General Development Plan, are as follows:

- (a) The applicant shall demonstrate that no other base zoning district can be used to achieve a substantially similar pattern of development. Planned developments shall not be allowed simply for the purpose of increasing overall density or allowing development that otherwise could not be approved unless the development also meets one or more of the objectives of (1) above. Conditions under which planned development may be appropriate include:
 - 1. Site conditions such as steep topography or other unusual physical features; or
 - 2. Redevelopment of an existing area or use of an infill site that could not be reasonably developed under base zoning district requirements.
- (b) The PD District plan shall facilitate the development or redevelopment goals of the Comprehensive Plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.
- (c) The PD District plan shall not adversely affect the economic health of the City or the area of the City where the development is proposed. The City shall be able to provide municipal services to the property where the planned development is proposed without a significant increase of the cost of providing those services or economic impact on municipal utilities serving that area.

- (d) The PD District plan shall not create traffic or parking demands disproportionate to the facilities and improvements designed to meet those demands. A traffic demand management plan may be required as a way to resolve traffic and parking concerns. The Plan shall include measurable goals, strategies, and actions to encourage travelers to use alternatives to driving alone, especially at congested times of day. Strategies and actions may include, but are not limited to, carpools and vanpools; public and private transit; promotion of bicycling, walking and other non-motorized travel; flexible work schedules and parking management programs to substantially reduce automobile trips.
- (e) The PD District plan shall coordinate architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with surrounding land uses and create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose of the PD District.
- (f) The PD District plan shall include open space suitable to the type and character of development proposed, including for projects with residential components, a mix of structured and natural spaces for use by residents and visitors. Areas for stormwater management, parking, or in the public right of way shall not be used to satisfy this requirement.
- (g) The PD district shall include suitable assurances that each phase could be completed in a manner that would not result in an adverse effect upon the community as a result of termination at that point.
- (h) When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed in Section 28.071(2)(a) Downtown Height Map, except as provided for in Section 28.071(2)(a)1. and Section 28.071(2)(b), the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans and no application for excess height shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:
 - 1. The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned (if the recommendations in the Downtown Plan call for changes) character of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the scale, mass, rhythm, and setbacks of buildings and relationships to street frontages and public spaces.
 - 2. The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories.
 - 3. The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the project and create a pleasing visual relationship with them.
 - 4. For projects proposed in priority viewsheds and other views and vistas identified on the Views and Vistas Map in the City of Madison Downtown Plan, there are no negative impacts on the viewshed as demonstrated by viewshed studies prepared by the applicant.
- (i) When applying the above standards to an application to reduce or eliminate setbacks required by Section 28.071(2)(c) Downtown Stepback Map, the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans, including the downtown plan. No application to reduce or eliminate setbacks may be granted unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:
 - 1. The lot is a corner parcel.
 - 2. The lot is not part of a larger assemblage of properties.
 - 3. The entire lot is vacant or improved with only a surface parking lot.
 - 4. No principal buildings on the lot have been demolished or removed since the effective date of this ordinance