



Project Address: 110 E Rusk Avenue & 1919 Alliant Energy Center Way

Application Type: Major Exterior Alterations to an Existing Public Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 1
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [93257](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Larry Barton, Strang, Inc. | Jeff Connelly, Strang, Inc.

Project Description: The applicant is proposing to construct an approximately 153,000 square-foot building addition to the existing Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall, which constitutes Phase 1 of a multi-phased campus-wide master plan. The Phase 1 scope of work includes a building addition at the north and south ends of the existing building, including a new connector link to the existing Spark Hotel, addition of a rideshare drop-off lane, a new receiving/storage addition, and new outdoor plazas with native plantings and pedestrian-scale lighting.

Project Schedule:

- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review the conditional use for this proposal on July 27, 2026 (Legistar File ID [93275](#)).

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is in Urban Design District 1 ("UDD 1"), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in [MGO Section 33.24\(8\)](#).

In addition, the proposed development is a public building. Pursuant to MGO Section 33.24(4)(d), "*The UDC shall approve plans for all buildings proposed to be built or expanded in the City by the State of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, the City of Madison, Dane County, the Federal Government or any other local governmental entity which has the power to levy taxes on property located within the City.*"

Zoning Related Information: The project site was attached to the city as part of the October 2022 Town of Madison attachment and zoned Parks and Recreation (PR). The proposed improvements trigger compliance with the Zoning Code related to how Alliant Energy Center uses the site and the required landscape improvements.

To address both, a recent Zoning Code text amendment was adopted that added fairgrounds as a permitted accessory use in the PR District (Legistar File ID [92344](#)), a use that was not identified in the Zoning Code. Related to landscaping, the text amendment also exempts fairground uses from interior parking lot landscape island requirements because of their incompatibility with the space needs of such uses, including, but not limited to carnival rides, stages, concessions, temporary structures, tents, trailer parking, etc. The Zoning Code text amendment allows for the Alliant Energy Center to designate outdoor areas on their site for fairground accessory uses. As it relates to this project, staff believe these areas to be the parking fields on the east and west sides of the building. In these areas, interior parking lot landscape island would not be required.

However, development frontage landscape requirements would still need to be met along the entire perimeter of the designated fairgrounds area, consistent with both the UDD 1 Parking and Service Areas; Screening, and Landscaping guidelines and requirements, and the landscape requirements in the Zoning Code. Staff note that the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with the landscape requirements in the Zoning Code.

While the Exhibition Hall is part of a larger planned multi-use site, including the New Holland Pavilion, Coliseum, and Spark Hotel, given the size of the larger site and so as not to create a hardship related to landscape compliance, the Zoning Administrator has determined that the development frontage landscape requirements will only be applied to a portion of the site. The area south of Alliant Energy Center Way and that extends west to Rusk Avenue and east to Rimrock Road is the area of concern. For similar reasons, staff recommend the UDC limit their review scope to the same area.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommend that the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the development proposal as it relates to the aforementioned standards and the design considerations noted below.

- **Building Design and Composition.** The UDD 1 Building Design requirements and guidelines generally speak to utilizing contemporary architecture, high-quality design, as well as minimizing blank walls and utilizing the same level of design and detailing across all elevations.

Staff request the UDC make findings related to the overall building design and composition, including as it relates to creating a cohesive architectural expression and minimizing blank walls.

- **Exterior Materials.** The UDD 1, Building Design requirements speak to using low maintenance, durable and harmonious materials. In addition, UDD 1 also states that metal panel shall not be used except as an integral part of a design of exceptional merit.

As reflected on the elevation drawings the material palette is comprised of various metal panel, and masonry elements, including limestone panel, concrete panel, and ground face CMU. All of which are intended to match the existing building's materials and colors as well as the motif of the New Holland Pavilion Building also on the campus.

Staff request the UDC's feedback and findings on the proposed material palette including specific findings related to the use of metal.

- **Landscape and Screening.** The UDD 1 Parking and Service Areas; Screening, and Landscaping guidelines and requirements generally speak to providing adequate year-round screening of parking and service areas, as well as complementing architecture and encouraging the use of native plant species. Staff request the Commission's review and findings on the proposed landscape plan and plant list as it relates to:
 - Minimizing the appearance of blank walls,
 - Providing adequate year-round screening of the parking and service areas as viewed from Rimrock Road,
 - Plant height and spacing, both at the time of planting (minimum 30 inches) and at maturity (minimum 54 inches),
 - Plant quantity and density, and
 - Plant species.