



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 222-232 E Olin Avenue
Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building Located in Urban District (UDD) No. 1
Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [70106](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Lance McGrath, McGrath Property Group | Jennifer Camp, JLA Architects + Planners

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Initial/Final Approval for the redevelopment of the existing Coliseum Bar and construction of a mixed-use project with approximately 200 residences with 13,524 square-foot of at-grade commercial/retail space. The adjacent “Wonder Bar” is not a part of this application. As part of the development proposal, the project site will be rezoned from Suburban Employment to Traditional Employment.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on March 9, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on June 13, 2022.
- The Common Council is scheduled to review the CSM on June 21, 2022.

Approval Standards: The project site is located within Urban Design District No. 1. As such, the Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **approving body** on this request. The UDC shall review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in [Section 33.24\(8\)](#), MGO.

Summary of Design Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is also located within the [South Madison Plan](#) (the Plan) planning area. The Plan provides specific recommendations for development of the project site, including those that speak to maximum height/stories (12-story maximum), as well as identify future pedestrian and bike improvements that are applicable to the project site and for which additional coordination with City Engineering will be required. The Plan also notes that redevelopment in the Olin Triangle area should include “*high quality, four-sided design given the considerable visibility of properties from John Nolen Drive.*”

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC review the development proposal and make findings basing their decision regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Overall Site Connectivity.** As noted in the South Madison Plan, there is a planned future multi-use path along the project site’s northeast side that is intended to provide additional connectivity from the Wingra Creek path to the intersection of John Nolen Drive and Olin Avenue. If such a connection moves forward, additional coordination with City Engineering will be necessary to determine details such as the specific location and design parameters. While whether a path is implemented is not directly related to a specific UDD standard, staff advises UDC of the recommended connection as the future implementation of the connection could impact site and design elements related to the proposed patios, private path, and sidewalk along Olin Avenue.

- **Building Entry Orientation and Ground Level Activation.** Given the surrounding context, the project site has multiple at-grade public “faces,” including visibility from John Nolen Drive, the multi-use path on the northeast side of the site, the Olin Avenue street frontage, as well as the interconnectivity shared with the adjacent former Wonder Bar site. Related UDD guidelines include “the overall design of the building shall be of high quality, considering the importance of the district as a principal gateway to the City.” Staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings on the design considerations as they relate to the design of the ground floor of the building, especially as it relates to visibility from John Nolen Drive, including, but not limited to:
 - Minimizing blank walls, including the treatment of the building facades along John Nolen Drive, the future multi-use path (northeast) and northwest elevations adjacent to the former Wonder Bar site,
 - Utilizing four-sided architecture and incorporating pedestrian-scale design elements at the ground level,
 - Carrying vertical and horizontal elements along the entire base of the building, including materials and architectural details, etc., and
 - Composition of the ground floor in terms of the amount of glazing, pedestrian scale architectural details, number of materials, and the treatment of the parking garage screening. The balance of the ground level has limited storefront window openings due to the proposed parking garage screening. As such, alternative design solutions, including transparent materials could be explored to increase the appearance of building transparency, or introducing an architectural element/detail to break-up the spandrel panel, including identifiable sign areas, awnings, etc.
- **Building Design and Materials.** The project is highly visible, located along a major corridor at the culmination of E Olin Avenue and John Nolen Drive. As such the proposed development will be a highly visible part of the cityscape as viewed from multiple vantage points. Applicable design guidelines in UDD 1 include “Large unbroken exterior facades should be avoided; All building elevations are of importance and should be carefully designed; and Buildings should avoid blank facades.” While the overall proposed building design and material palette are relatively simple, primarily comprised of multiple types of metal panel and masonry materials, staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings on the overall building composition and material palette as it relates to:
 - The composition of the vertical metal panels on the upper stories and the offset application resulting in a geometric-like appearance, and
 - As proposed the primary exterior building material is metal panel. The building material standards per UDD No. 1 state that “*metal shall not be used as an exterior material for building, except as an integral part of a design of exceptional merit.*” Staff requests the Commission make findings related to the use of metal as it relates to the overall material palette.
- **Landscape and Open Spaces.** As noted in UDD No. 1, landscaping should be functional as well as decorative, provide year-round screening, interest, and color. Related guidelines state that developments should provide landscaping treatment for open areas which are highly visible from John Nolen Drive and which complement the building forms. Staff requests the Commission provide feedback and make findings related to the proposed landscape palette and planting plan, especially as it relates to:
 - Providing adequate screening for blank walls, service areas, and surface parking areas,

- Creating a positive relationship between the multi-use path and the proposed at-grade open spaces located along the building’s northeast side, i.e. plantings, amenities, pedestrian interest, etc., and
 - Providing enhanced connectivity between the commercial patio spaces, Olin Avenue, and the multi-use path.
- **Signage.** As noted on the elevations, anticipated sign areas and types are indicated. Staff requests the Commission’s findings and feedback related to the proposed signage, especially as it relates to the overall integration of signage with the architectural details.

Summary of the UDC Informational Presentation Comments

Staff refers the Commission to their comments from the March 9, 2022, Informational Presentation:

- I’m conflicted with how you approached the new design. I agree this is a unique site and entrance to the City, but it’s surrounded by vehicular traffic. The idea of layers was a strong one and the ends are looking like sheer forces, that’s really successful; it’s also the most interesting part of the building. Are you going for calm and serene or for entertainment-oriented? There was a lot of energy in that previous design, it felt like it was really fitting for the amount of traffic going by. I wonder about what’s happening on the inside, including families, outdoor spaces, pedestrian access to this and so on.
- It’s almost too restrained. There’s a lot of action and movement in this part of the city. I was really excited about the conceptual drawings of layering. The interpretation of it isn’t as apparent in the execution because of all of the similarity, it’s more like three buildings pressed together. There should be a bit more slipping, more contrast in between layers, these just seem glued together. It’s there as far as a lot of the massing and some of the geometries, it could use more articulation with the skin of the building. Right now I see a hotel or a hospital, I’m not really seeing residential. I do like the materials, the thin brick, the base looks really nice, that long linear brick really goes toward mimicking that concept you were describing. As far as the gateway to the city, it’s really the street that’s the gateway, not the building; it needs to have more of that dynamic appearance.
- Lovely materials and content you provided. We don’t know much about the inside of the building yet, wanted to ask about the function of these long balconies. These are shared balconies?
 - The intent is to have dividers to separate those spaces.
- I love the layering concept. I wish we had some more opportunities to use some of these concepts to be more protective of this particular façade, the extreme solar exposure here. You’re pushing something like a 50 percent window to wall ratio with the upper floors, which is very high. Recognizing the tremendous views this will have, I hope there’s an opportunity to explore giving depth to that glass.
- The layered concept diagram really caught my eye. I don’t think it translates successfully to this building, especially the Olin façade which is basically flat, even with the projected balconies. Appreciate the inset balconies, the long linear look is clever and useful, but it still needs more dimensionality. Appreciate the classic materials, but it reminds me of a hospital, it has a heaviness to it. Too much restraint, needs more dynamism, more of the motion that was visible in that massing diagram initially. I want it to have a more lively presence. The height does belong here.
- The fact that you are well-tied into a bike network system here, making sure that pedestrian realm and connections to the bike path, how this project really allows residents to easily funnel into downtown Madison in a very sustainable way will be key.
 - We have had discussions with Traffic Engineering, we talked about an easement along the railroad corridor, further west for a future bike path. They are looking at improvements to Olin

Avenue, changing it to two lanes with a middle turn lane and bike lanes, which we fully support and would be really good changes to the area. As the project advances, we're going to have some big bike storage areas to connect to.

- Is all the surface parking reserved for the Wonder Bar?
 - We're not sure what that use will be yet. It won't be all for that, there will be some overlap.
- The current revised Metro bus plan eliminates the #13 bus that runs down Olin Avenue. If we're going to build more with limited parking, you need bus service to this area. Suggest supporting the return of the #13 bus on Olin as part of your strategy on this project.