

A neighborhood steering committee met 2 Dec, 16 Dec and 9 Jan to discuss issues surrounding Core Space's proposed development at 126 Langdon St. The committee is concerned that the proposal does not conform to the zoning for the location. There are features of the proposal that the committee feels are inappropriate for the historically collegiate neighborhood very closely associated with UW-Madison campus. The steering committee recognizes that the Urban Design Commission is empowered to influence the design of the proposed development for 126 Langdon. We would like the commissioners to consider the following.

Building Design

The first is the mass of the proposed building and its commercial appearance. The size of the front elevation is out of scale with respect to adjacent buildings and appears to be more appropriate for a location for a mixed-use development. There is little in the design that brings out the residential character found in Kennedy Manor or in the new Evans Scholar building.

Furthermore, the committee felt that the proposed building design should reflect the dignity and integrity of the neighborhood. Superior architectural design encourages respect and civility, thus mitigating many of the concerns for bad behavior. Because we are evaluating what appears to be a commercial design with no effort to integrate into a residential space, the committee feels that the design does not meet the standard of compatibility with surrounding buildings in order to qualify for the bonus 2 stories.

Another example of this lack of integration is just across from the proposed 9-story northwest elevation is 130 Langdon, Pi Beta Phi, a 3-story contributing building in the National Register Historic District on the lake. The Commission must evaluate whether the bonus 2 stories resulting in a contemporary 9 story building should be directly next to a traditional 3-story historic building.

In MGO 28.071(3)(c)(1) concerning façade articulation: 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. 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.

A design with much deeper articulation and less vertical height on the front elevation would address the committee's concerns about the aesthetics of the design. UDC's review of this design is important for maintaining the architectural harmony of this historic neighborhood. The steering committee did not feel that the building design met the City's criteria for a bonus 2 stories.

In MGO 28.183(6)14 concerning allowing excess height, all the following conditions must be present:

- a. 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 steering committee has concerns with the proposed 9 stories directly next to a 3-story building that contributes to the National Historic District.

-Also the Downtown Plan (p. 36) "Objective 3.3: Provide a flexible framework for building scale that encourages innovation and growth while reflecting the existing or planned (if recommended for change) character of the area in which a site is located and considers the larger Downtown context.". Since the area is not recommended for change, the steering committee does not see the need for a building that is so far outside the neighborhood's context.

- Again in the Downtown Plan (p. 122) Appendix C: “These two small areas within the Langdon District are portions of large, deep blocks that slope downward towards Lake Mendota. Both areas are in a National Register Historic District and include identified contributing buildings, and any new development should enhance that character...” The steering committee strongly feels that the proposed development does not match the character of the neighborhood.

- Appendix C of the Downtown Plan: :” ... Where additional stories are available, it is not intended that they be earned merely by complying with standards and criteria that would be required and expected in any case, such as underlying zoning regulations, good design, or sensitivity to the adjacent historic landmark. The intent is not simply to allow a taller building, and additional stories show not be considered “by right” heights. Rather, additional stories are to be used as a tool to encourage and rewarded buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to the specific context of their location and accomplish specific objectives defined for the area.” The steering committee feels that the proposed building is not of “truly exceptional design” and the proposed development does not deserve the bonus 2 stories.

MGO 28.183(6)14b: The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories. The steering committee feels that the proposed development’s quality would be in no way compromised with a maximum 5-story or even 3-story building. In fact, a building at the shorter heights could easily be of higher quality just because it would integrate better in the National Historic District.

MGO 28.183(6)14c: The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the projects and create a pleasing visual relationship with them. The steering committee is very concerned about the massing of the proposed development with respect to the adjacent contributing buildings in the National Historic District. The proposal does not create a pleasing visual relationship with them.

Delivery and Rideshare

Another important feature of the proposal’s design is the perceived inadequate space for commercial and residents’ deliveries including food, merchandise and rideshare vehicles. There is already insufficient parking on Langdon St and the developer is responsible for accommodating the needs of its residents. Adjacent neighbors are concerned that delivery and rideshare vehicles will occupy the fire lanes on the east and west sides of the building. These fire lanes also provide pedestrian access to neighboring buildings, so keeping 126 Langdon’s delivery vehicles on that property will enhance neighborhood safety.

The proposed design has a 2-lane driveway that will also be used for refuse and recycling pick-up. The committee strongly encourages the UDC to require the developer to provide a separate horseshoe-shaped front driveway with obvious entrance and exit. This will mitigate the pressure of the delivery and rideshare vehicles and will enhance the residential appearance of the proposed development.

Rooftop Pool

The proposed design has a rooftop deck with a pool which will be open year-round. Other student-oriented developments have had unfortunate problems with this type of feature, and the steering committee is very concerned about the noise and deleterious behavior it can encourage.

The deck must be recessed from the side of the building by at least 15’ on all sides to prevent any issues with objects “falling” off the roof. Not having a line of sight with adjacent buildings and ground below will greatly deter bad behavior.

The pool is seen as feature that will generate much unwanted noise in the neighborhood. The steering committee feel strongly that there should be no pool on the rooftop. Experience with 3 nearby developments with rooftop pools has shown how problematic they are for all neighbors.

Exterior Lighting

The exterior lighting will enhance pedestrian safety on all elevations of the building. UDC should consider it to be an important aspect of the proposal's design.

Noise

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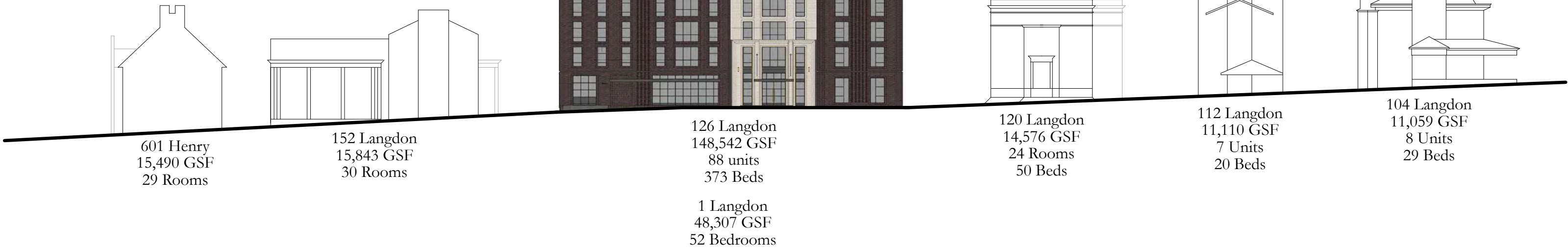
The steering committee would like to suggest the following possible conditions of approval.

- No rooftop pool shall be allowed.
- Deck is recessed at least 15' from the edge of the building.

Attachment

Please review the attached drawing comparing the front façade of the proposed development to that of adjacent buildings on Langdon St.

	Gross SF	Beds
Five Existing Houses	68,078	239
126 Langdon	148,542	373



28.071 - GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR DOWNTOWN AND URBAN DISTRICTS.

Statement of Purpose .

- (a) Recognize and enhance Downtown as the civic and cultural center of the City and region; the seat of...government, and a significant retail, entertainment, and employment center;
- (b) Recognize and enhance the unique characteristics of Downtown neighborhoods;**
- (c) Recognize the architectural heritage and cultural resources of Downtown neighborhoods;**
- (d) Facilitate context-sensitive development;**
- (e) Foster development with high-quality architecture and urban design;**