

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 19, 2023



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 20, 22, 30 N Carroll Street

Application Type: Informational Presentation for the Construction of a New Building in the Downtown Core District
UDC will be an Advisory Body

Legistar File ID #: [77005](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: George Austin | Wisconsin Historical Society

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Project Description: The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of the existing Wisconsin History Museum and two adjoining properties at 20 and 22 North Carroll Street for the new 100,000 square-foot Wisconsin History Center.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission ("UDC") is an **advisory body** on this development request. As a new development in the Downtown Core Zoning District, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.

Related Zoning Information: The project is zoned Downtown Core (DC). Pursuant to Section 28.074(c): All new buildings and additions greater than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four (4) stories shall obtain conditional use approval. In addition, the Capital View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development.

The Zoning Code also 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.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: 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](#). As noted in the Downtown Plan, the maximum recommended height is up to the Capital View Preservation Limit. In addition, the Plan recommendations for development in this neighborhood generally speak to encouraging the highest intensity of development in this area and encouraging a mix of uses that will help to retain the area's vibrancy.

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 Design and Composition.** Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the overall building 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.

Staff notes that the Zoning Code requires that a primary building entrance to be oriented towards the primary abutting public street (N Carroll Street) and have a functional door. The applicant should continue to work with Zoning Staff to develop plans that can comply with this standard as this is not a requirement that can be waived by the UDC.

- **Materials.** As noted in the application materials, *"The project intends to use a simple palette of durable materials, including glass, concrete, metal or terracotta."* 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 at the top of State Street, at the corner of Mifflin and Carroll, visible from multiple directions, consideration should be given to the overall composition of the building as part of the overall cityscape and how it reads 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 of the southwest elevation as well as the upper floors of the building.
- **Building Height.** As noted above, the Capital View Preservation Limits will apply to the project site. At this time, more detailed information is needed to determine compliance with those standards. The applicant is encouraged to continue to confirm proposed building heights with Zoning Staff prior to making a formal Land Use Application.

Limited projections and elevator overruns above this height limit are only allowed with Conditional Use approval, which is the sole authority of the Plan Commission. As noted in the application materials, projections above the Capital View Preservation Limit are anticipated, including the elevator penthouse. As with similar applications, staff encourages the applicant to eliminate or minimize any such projections.

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 minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.
2. 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.