



# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

November 1, 2023

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 304-318 N Broom Street/408-430 W Johnson Street/407 W Gorham Street

**Application Type:** New Student Housing Building in UMX Zoning  
**UDC is an Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [76205](#)

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Brian Munson, Vandewalle & Associates | Chad Matesi, Core Madison Broom, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing an eight and fourteen-story student housing development with frontages along Broom, Gorham, and Johnson Streets. The project will include a mix of unit types and configurations and resident amenities spaces.

### Project Schedule:

- UDC received an Informational Presentation on
- UDC received a second Informational Presentation on August 16, 2023.

**Approval Standards:** The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **advisory** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *“All new buildings that are greater than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four stories shall obtain Conditional Use approval. In addition, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.”*

**Related Zoning Information:** The property is currently zoned a combination of Urban Mixed-Use (UMX) and Planned Development (PD). With this proposal, it is staff’s understanding that the applicant would rezone the entirety of the project site to the UMX zone district. In addition, the Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a conditional use under the Zoning Code.

As noted on the Downtown Height Map, the maximum recommended height is up to 12 stories (172 feet) as it relates to those properties fronting on W Johnson and W Gorham Streets and six stories (88 feet) for those fronting on N Broom Street. In addition, the Capitol View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development. The Zoning Code requires that buildings must meet both the maximum number of stories and the maximum height. However, a recently approved modification to the Zoning Code allows, in cases where applicants voluntarily enter into a contractual agreement to provide affordable housing, the maximum number of stories may be exceeded, provided the building remains at or below the maximum height (172 feet and 88 feet, as noted above). The applicant is seeking this affordability bonus.

The UMX zoning district also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX zone district 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](#) (the “Plan”) planning area in the Johnson Street Bend Neighborhood. As noted in the Plan’s recommendations, this district should continue as a primarily higher density student housing area with some new neighborhood service retail uses. Development on the project site is also subject to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines as noted above.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development and make findings 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, Massing and Scale.** Staff’s primary concern remains the overall scale of the development as it surrounds an existing building on three sides. Given the extent of the project site, staff continues to emphasize the importance of a development of this size and scale to read as a collection of multiple buildings versus one building. In addition, as shown on the elevation drawings, the tallest components of the building are proposed up to the Capitol Height View Height limit. While this may be determined to meet the allowable height standards, the proposed development will nonetheless be the tallest building(s) in the surrounding area.

While the applicant has already made positive efforts to enhance articulation and provide gaps between building components, the proposed building surrounds another development on three sides and has an above-grade skywalk that spans the gap between buildings. Staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings related to the building mass and scale. Consideration should be given to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that speak to:

- Building orientation, including the location and orientation of common building entryways, defining public and private spaces along the street, maintaining an appropriately scaled, enhanced pedestrian environment,
- Building mass and scale, including potentially incorporating setbacks and stepbacks to reduce mass/scale, providing adequate transitions between differing levels of intensity and the surrounding built environment, and
- Building components, including the levels of design details at the street, incorporating positive termination at the top of the building, integrating the rooftop equipment into the overall building design.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the building massing and details fronting the plaza space, as well as along Broom and Johnson Streets.

- **Building Design and Composition.** First, staff commends the application team and acknowledges the positive design refinements have been incorporated into the overall building design and composition, including refinements to materials, detailing and colors, organization of windows, and modifications to the massing of Building 1 (Broom Street, upper floors). With that, staff has identified several areas of interest for continued consideration, including:
  - The design of the Broom Street elevation, including as it relates to the massing and proportions and absence of a building entry (refer to Elevation N Broom St, sheet 32),
  - The design of the pedestrian level along the W Johnson Street frontage, which is comprised of several blank wall expanses varying in height and design (refer to Elevation W Johnson St, sheet 33),

- In addition, with regard to the W Johnson frontage, consideration should also be given to appropriateness of this location for residential units, as well as those primarily orientated towards the autocourt as this location is primarily auto-centric and comprised of service related activities. As such, consideration should be given to the an alternative, including potentially locating residential units along Broom Street, which was part of the initial proposal (refer to Level 1 Floor Plan, sheet 11),
- The design and detailing of the bridge connection (refer to Elevation W Johnson St, sheet 33),
- The blank wall expanse that is located along the shared alley on the southwest side of the project site (refer to Elevation Alley, sheet 34),
- The design and detailing along the promenade, including the individual unit patios and treatment of garage and utility doors. Consideration should be given to the individual unit patios and whether their design should reflect more of a front door than back door (refer to Elevation Promenade Building 4, sheet 35), and
- The southwest elevation of the central building wing, which appears to be primarily clad in flat metal panel with openings being limited to below level 9 (refer to Elevation Promenade Building 3, sheet 36).

As part of the Commission’s continued evaluation, consideration should be given to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that generally speak to minimizing blank walls, utilizing four-sided architecture, size and rhythm of windows, consist application of design details across all elevations, building mass and scale and proportions and articulation (vertical/horizontal), etc.

As noted by the Commission in their two previous Informational Presentation comments, in summary, consideration should be given to:

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- Reconsidering the color palette and transitions across elevations, i.e. locating lighter colors along the pedestrian level,
- Incorporating more residentially scaled architectural details, including windows and balconies,
- Utilizing consistent window patterns, openings, and detailing,
- Refining the heaviness of the grid pattern throughout the building composition,
- Incorporating more articulation, color or whimsy into the building designs,

May 10, 2023 Informational Presentation Comments

- Improving the relationship of Building 1 (Broom Street) to the corner open space, including setting the building further back so that Building 2 is proud,
- Designing with a sensitivity to context, including datum lines and intensity of adjacent rights-of-ways (i.e. Broom Street frontage being more suitable for walk-up townhome units versus W Johnson),
- Utilizing four-sided architecture as the building, including the interior building face that surrounds existing development,
- Maintaining a modern design aesthetic,
- Simplifying the design of Building 1 (Broom Street) to reflect a cohesive building in and of itself, including adjusting the mass to be more of a U shape, providing a better balance of the proportions and massing of the building components, and
- Locating active common entries and uses along W Johnson Street frontage versus individual units/blank walls.

- **Longviews and Sensitivity to Context.** Due to location of this site within a major transit view corridor, as well as mass/scale of the development, it will undoubtedly be experienced from multiple perspectives

and vantage points. As such, consideration should be given to the overall composition of the building design and materials both as part of the overall cityscape, as well as how the proposed building relates to the immediately surrounding context and transitions to the scale of development along Broom Street, which is significantly different than the W Johnson Street and W Gorham Street frontages.

Staff requests the UDC provided feedback and make findings on the overall longviews of the proposed development and its impact/contribution to the larger cityscape. Consideration should be given to the Downtown Plan and Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which generally speak to architectural designs anchoring street corners and framing intersections, positively contribute to the overall composition of the cityscape, provide appropriate transitions, and incorporate a higher degree of architectural design.

- **Building Materials.** The building material palette is primarily comprised of multiple colors, types and styles of metal panel and masonry materials. Given the scale of the proposed buildings, staff believes that the design details will ultimately play a significant role in creating an enhanced design at the pedestrian level, as well as in breaking down mass and scale.

Staff requests UDC provide feedback and findings on the proposed material palette giving consideration to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that generally speak to utilizing high quality, durable building materials and appropriate scale, color, texture, architectural detailing to create an enhanced pedestrian environment, as well as providing continuity in the finish and detailing of all four sides of each of the building components.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to incorporating more contrast in the colors of materials, in particular using lighter colors at the ground level.

- **Landscape.** As noted on the site plan, an at-grade open space/promenade located between Building 3 and the neighboring building that provides a thru-block connection. The successful design and planting of this space will impact its use as not only as a pedestrian thoroughfare, but also as an entry to the units located along it, and as an open space amenity. Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the successful planting of this space, as well as softening/screening the blank wall expanses along the ground floor.

In addition, consideration should also be given to the proposed landscape screening of the shared alley wall, as well as the landscape along the W Johnson Street creating an enhanced pedestrian environment.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and findings on the overall landscape plan and plant schedule giving consideration to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which generally speak to softening urban edges, providing year-round texture and color, utilizing context appropriate plantings, etc.

- **Lighting.** As indicated on the lighting calculation summary tables, there are average light levels on both the ground level (7 footcandles) and roof top amenity spaces (11 footcandles) that are in excess of the maximum averages permitted by MGO 29.36 (2.5 footcandles maximum). In addition, there are also uniformity ratios (over 30:1 in some locations) that are also inconsistent with the maximum uniformity ratio permitted (5:1).

In addition, the proposed lighting includes linear light strips are proposed as a light fixtures (HEX-C, HEX-C1, and HEX-O), however it is unclear based on the information provided where the fixtures will be placed on the building relative to architectural details, and the length of the proposed fixtures, which is required to determine cut-off compliance.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the proposed lighting, especially as it relates to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which generally speak to providing adequate but not excessive lighting.

## Summary of UDC Second Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the August 16, 2023, second Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- The large percentage of materials on these building, are you using brick or metal panel?
  - A combination, Building 1 is primarily brick. We are looking at these elements as metal panel, but we are just looking at that. Mostly brick with metal panels and masonry base. It's a combination of the materials.
- It's an improvement but I wouldn't call it vibrant. I would like to see more color, Madison is the red brick, gray, that's the skyline of Madison. For some reason people don't want to add color. The composition works, it's very busy, I like it and it's much better than before, I just get tired of seeing the brick buildings that continue the same color palette throughout the city. I know it's different but we still clad it in all the same color materials. I don't know if there's opportunity to get real vibrancy there. I love the plaza, it's really modern and interesting from the plan. You have this white cupped articulation on that, you have these notes of interest that could be celebrated in a different way, it's just so safe with brick and gray. But it looks much better, I like the entries, and things you started to enhance the project.
- I hope you might consider using lighter colors on the street level. The bases work well as a plinth for what's above it, but walking past dark colors as a pedestrian with dark colors at the street, the sun and light are sucked out of the street. Slide #29, the windows changed quite a bit. Are those windows with a panel below them when the windows do not go all the way down to the floor? What is happening below the window frame – is that a recessed metal panel?
  - That window goes floor to ceiling, you see the operable window above.
- I was hoping that would be the answer. If it was a panel, it would have lost some of its interest. There was something about the one on the left that had really nice proportions, maybe it might be better for putting furniture if it's not floor to ceiling. But that one on the lower left was really handsome (Building 4 along Johnson).
  - When we do our next UDC presentation – there will be renderings where the glass will be expressed. I am excited to share that with you. It will be expressed in how it will read on the street.
- The corners went from being solid to being open, there was a lot of change in there and that is something for us to notice - you have a lot of changes in there. Just thinking about consistency in the whole thing. I highly encourage considering not using dark colors along the street level.
- The bridge could use some design, it looks super functional as a walkway with glass on either side. Think of that as an opportunity. I quite like Building 2, its slim and elegant, it's just so simple that when you place the other buildings next to it, the other buildings start to look a little...there's not much life to them. They become very repetitive, there's no whimsy. Building 2, in and of its mass is so slender and someone mentioned cupping, which adds interest; the others just need more articulation or color or whimsy, or something. This rendering view is terrifying because I feel like the buildings are so close to each other that it looks like you are looking right into others' kitchens or something.
  - They are further away in actuality, like 25-30 feet.
- Maybe more articulation is needed.

- This is a perfect picture, what is going on with the punched window opening patterns, they all look different. Is there supposed to be some type of randomness to them? It seems like there is a lot of undulation.
  - There is articulation that does step within the building. The rhythm of the windows is proposed to vary.
- Maybe a standard floor plate?
  - The floor plates and windows are the same, there is just a variation and rhythm on it based on the way the materials are used.
- Look at the seventh floor, inside corner. That is odd.
  - Those are showing across the courtyard.
- The windows don't align, it's drastic.
  - Yes, there is a little variation and rhythm. Something that we will look at. There is a little bit of a rhythm to it, it's not like it's on every floor.
- On the first floor, is that commercial – what is that supposed to be (along Johnson to Broom)?
  - That is some amenity space and the white space is a public art opportunity. That is where you are seeing a pretty big change in the elevation.
- So am I seeing units?
  - This portion is two units where originally there were townhouse units, which do not have entries on the street. Currently you enter from within the building. Because of the grade change we replaced it with active uses and panel areas that we are planning for public art opportunities – even if we opened it up it would expose the parking garage.
  - Where the units are located at the corner, it is a remnant of how the building functions internally. It kind of has to be residential.
  - We are also looking for some window walls that open for indoor/outdoor space – potentially along the plaza space or Broom Street frontage. Our biggest challenge is making the bridge to where we have a half floor along the sidewalk and once we got down to a full floor area return it back to an active use and that is the residential piece along the left.
- I do appreciate the before and after, it is dramatic and very interesting – thank you.
- I see an opportunity here for some landscaping because it looks like you are right on the sidewalk, you are really not on the sidewalk, right?
  - Correct, we are not. We're at the stage where the landscape plan has not quite gotten integrated. There is landscape along that stretch and widening of the sidewalk. It is not right on the sidewalk as far as the building placement, and there is an opportunity there for some landscaping softening along that entire edge...inaudible audio.
- That will really help a lot rather than just having that right on the sidewalk.
- I struggle with the heaviness of the grid, especially on the smaller shorter building, it's probably heavier than the structure is. It just looks so compressed, whereas this building (2 and 4) have an opportunity because they're more vertical. This one is pancaked because of the heavy expression of horizontals. Look at the building diagonal to this where it had grids as a bold statement, metal panels and big funky grids. This harkens back more to some of cast in place concrete buildings you see around town that were built in the 70s with low floor-to-floor ceiling heights and they took that concrete structure and expressed in on the outside with brick infills. It sound like that is what I am hearing from the rest of the Commission, Building 2 is tall and elegant, Building 3 is light due to its color and height, and Building 1 is oatmealy and compressed. The ground floor is really dark, it's just a matter of the fenestration and the color and the material keeps going.
- This zig zagging here, is not random, but it's not straight. If you go kind of random and really articulate it at that, it almost looks slightly crooked like you're not really sure...if you are going to do it, do it.
  - We will look at this some more. There is some similar comments that we received on May 10.
- This is a veneer, so you could just do a simpler more taught, brick veneer.
  - Yeah that's true.

- One of the things we talked about before, was suggesting taking this mass back and giving this plaza a little bit more relief from the tall vertical structure right on the quarter pie. You decided that wasn't worth bringing this mass back and kind of closing this off like you did around the corner with Building 3?
  - We looked at that, we felt like we wanted a hard corner that. There is a lot of relief already as we wrap around the block. We felt this was the right approach. It was an important expression especially as it is the entry. If we it dropped down it would disappear, and it's probably the most important entry point to the building. We wanted to have that be a strong element and strong statement.
- Especially 2 and 4 could stand alone as their own building, Building 1 needs some work. Looks like a cohesive building in and of itself. You see this gap in the middle with the balconies and just sort of not consistent with everything else going on beside it. I'm glad you came here informationally because that is what we are trying to do, give some feedback.
- You could do a simpler more taugth brick veneer on that (Building 1).
- Taking this mass back could give relief and more room for the plaza.
  - We wanted to have more mass at the corner, it's a stronger element at the corner and an important entry point. We wanted it to make a statement.
- Buildings 2 and 4 can stand alone as its own building, but Building 1 needs some work so it looks like a cohesive building itself.
- The roof of Building 1 seems like a great green roof opportunity to soften the experience of folks living in Building 2 looking down on it.
  - We don't have them in the renderings at this time. We are looking at an entire green roof on Building 1 having a green roof for stormwater management. Then a very detailed combination of active spaces on the roofs of Buildings 2 and 3 along with additional green roof components. We are looking at ways to activate those. Building 1 will be proposed for green roof, not an accessed green roof, but as part of our stormwater management.
- It's a great improvement, the massing of Building 1 could be simplified while still maintaining the unit count. Does it need to be an "E"; it could be a "U" or pulled back. I agree with the comments with how the entry should show. It's fussy for no reason, you could change the massing and still maintain the number of units and density to where it is simpler. I agree that that piece in the middle doesn't help anything; it's in and out for no reason.
  - These buildings are based on the planning of the units from the inside out – it doesn't mean that it has to be this, but the shape was designed to create units that made sense from the way that they laid out based on the mix. We have heard some really good feedback on Building 1 that will continue to look at.
- The one furthest by itself that has the bridge that works independently (Building 4) is fine. The one in the middle is what it is, but then Building 1 is so, just looking at where your corridors are and how your units come off of them, it's just fussy for now reason. If you simplify it, it could be stronger a composition.
  - It deserves a lot of focus and attention given its location.
- As you know the more you go in and out, it adds cost.
- This project has a lot going on the windows with the size of those windows I don't know that they needs to be the drunken installation. There is a strategy with aligning them. There is articulation with the metal panels and the horizontals and other things that you don't need this hour glass pattern of windows that look like a mistake.
- Is there an opportunity to open up Building 3 with balconies like Building 4? It really helps lighten up the building.
  - Let us look at the way those are planned internally. We will study that and see what we can do with that. These are metal panels and masonry at the base, they are to compatible metal panels and brick combination.

**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 maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.



4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. 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.