



T. Wall Enterprises  
Mgt LLC

July 29, 2022

Ms. Heather Stouder, Director  
Planning Division  
City of Madison Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development  
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room 017  
Madison, WI 53703

RE: Concerns Regarding Proposed Plans for 139 W. Wilson Street to UDC

Dear Ms. Stouder:

I am writing in regard to the development plan for 139 West Wilson Street. I have several concerns. These concerns directly impact the neighborhood and adjacent building residents.

First, let me say we're not opposed to an appropriately sized development of a mixed-income nature, if it includes enough parking and amenities; maybe 4 or 5 stories of 100 units?

But, let me say this, given the city recently started a master planning process for the Monona lake front, this 139 site may be an ideal place for a **city pocket park** with a ped/bike overpass over John Nolen Drive linking Law Park to the capitol square area. Think about it.

**Parking.** The proposed building has only a handful of parking spaces for 300 units! The idea that residents will park in a city ramp blocks away and walk to 139 isn't going to happen. Plus, there's no agreement in place between the city and the 139 developer to use a city ramp.

In the event of deliveries to the building, any delivery vehicle will block traffic. West Wilson Street is a two-lane, one-way street with limited street parking opportunities, and one side of the parking will soon be removed to allow for a bike lane, which we support. With the constant flow of tenants given 300 units moving in and out, moving vehicles will block traffic and potentially even block the driveway to our future property at 131 West Wilson Street given how close the properties are and given that there will likely be multiple moving/storage trucks (rental, U-Haul's, pick-ups, etc.) lined up to move in and out simultaneously.

Likewise, the proposed building violates the handicap parking rules. The turning radius needed for parking in one of the 4 covered parking spaces is severely limited by the proposed concrete wall and the trash trucks picking up trash will block access to the handicap parking spaces. (And trash pick-up for 300 residents will take a considerable period of time.)

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**Facade Design.** The second concern is the design of the exterior. This 3D fractal pattern serves no purpose other than to stand out and collect dirt. The all-concrete structure is, I believe architects call it, “brutalistic”, and is reminiscent of buildings built in the 1960’s and 1970’s with concrete bunker house designs. The building literally looks like a prison.

**Affordable Housing.** While the need for more affordable downtown housing exists, this proposal is trying to cram 10 lbs. of flour into a 5 lbs. bag! We are not opposed to a mixed-income building next door, but to put 300 units on a 1/3 acre site is insanity, and to make them all 100% low income, jammed into tiny prison-cell units, is just asking for trouble. The Section 42 tax credit program has worked well *because* it forces a mix of units within the same building, some market rate, some affordable. I thought we learned the lesson of isolating all low-income housing units in one place as being a big mistake.

Plus, this is a high-value site, and it should contain a high-value, market rate building. Why? because it’s contrary to the laws of economics. The city should promote using high-value sites for high-value buildings in order to maximize tax revenue so that it can reduce the burden on lower income units. If the city uses high-value sites for low-value properties, the city loses significant tax revenue that it needs to carry out its mission.

Plus, putting a low-valued property that will have lots of police calls between two high valued properties will drive out residents from this location, and likely risk the success of the adjacent properties. The design and density and lack of amenities all will serve to create the problems - it’s human nature - if you jam all those people into a small space, you’re bound to have problems - *because of the design*. As Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” In other words, if the city allows this design to go forward, the design will create the problems with human nature. Don’t blame the residents later!

In addition, the exclusion of many basic amenities in its goal to “achieve affordability through density that maximizes efficiency without sacrificing function” has missed its intended purpose. This is a high crime, troubled property in the making.

**Landscaping.** There is almost none. Where are the residents supposed to relax and get some sun outdoors?

**Building and Fire Codes.** My architect has analyzed this proposal and has found a number of building code and fire code and exiting violations. How can an approval be granted in the face of such law breaking?

**UDC.** I would be concerned if I was the UDC, because if the design is approved, the developer will be forced to make significant changes in the design to comply with the building and fire

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codes, later. This will result in significant design changes, which means that UDC's approval would be void since the plan will have changed. Why not require the developer to present a design that complies with the codes first, and then evaluate it for a UDC design approval?

Likewise, we looked up the architect on the web and found that he apparently lacks any experience in designing multi-family buildings of even the smallest size. He says he's done single-family and interior design work, but there's no multi-family design work listed that we could see, which means you have a rookie architect on this (obvious by the design itself) that lacks the experience for this size and complicated project. We don't want this building falling down because of his lack of experience or his concrete panels falling off, which recently happened on the UW administration building and a Milwaukee parking garage.

There also appears to be an issue with the rooftop mechanicals, and likewise, where are all the mechanicals? We can't seem to find them, so where is the venting, etc.?

### **Conclusion**

This proposal is the worst kind of development. Brutal, too dense (almost 800 units per acre!!!), criminalistic, that will *shape* the residents into bad behavior later. It will destroy what is developing into a terrific neighborhood along the lake front.

We're not opposed to a more appropriate density, something like maybe 100 units given the narrow size of the site, in a mixed-income building with appropriate parking, outdoor space, and amenities.

Sincerely,

Wilson Street Redevelopment, LLC

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CC: Matt Tucker, Director of Building Inspection  
Kyle Bunnow, Plan Review and New Construction Supervisor  
Matt Wachter, Director of Department of Planning, Community & Economic  
Development

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