



Project Address: 411-433 W Gilman Street

Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building in the Urban Mixed Used (UMX) Zoning District
UDC is an Advisory Body

Legistar File ID #: [89582](#)

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Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Jason Doornbos, LCD Acquisitions, LLC | John Myefski, Myefski Architects

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a 16-story, mixed-used building with 259 residential units and ground floor commercial space. Residential amenities are proposed, including a clubhouse, fitness room, outdoor amenity deck and swimming pool. The project will be served by two levels of structured parking.

Staff note that both a rezoning request to rezone the portion of the project site that is currently zoned Downtown Core (DC) to Urban Mixed Use (UMX) consistent with the remainder of the project site, and a Certified Survey Map (CSM) to combine parcels, are being pursued.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission ("UDC") is an **advisory body** to the Plan Commission on this development request. Pursuant to [Section 28.074\(4\)c](#):

All new buildings and additions greater than six (6) stories shall obtain conditional use approval. In addition, the Urban Design Commission shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in the [Downtown Urban Design buildings](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.

As noted above, the UDC is an **advisory body** to the Plan Commission on this request. Staff recommend that as an advisory body, the UDC should structure a motion as a recommendation to the Plan Commission with or without specific findings and conditions. For example, such a motion may look like the following:

"The UDC finds that the development is consistent with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, with the following conditions being met...and recommends that the Plan Commission approve the proposed development subject to the following conditions..."

Landmarks Commission Comments: As a reference, the Landmarks Commission is advisory to the Plan Commission on the demolition and proposed mitigation efforts. On January 12, 2026, the Landmarks Commission reviewed the proposed demolitions of existing structures on the subject site, finding that the buildings at 433 W Gilman and 415 W Gilman were historically significant for their architecture. The applicant asked for comment on their proposed mitigation to replace the building at 433 W Gilman with a new façade inspired by the historic building. Related to the design of the new building, the Landmarks Commission did not think that was appropriate mitigation as it was a different design, would likely not include architectural salvage, and would create a false sense of history with a fake historic building. Importantly, the demolition requests are NOT under the purview of the UDC. The role of the UDC is to make an advisory recommendation on the design of the proposed building.

Adopted Plans: The project site is in the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, in the State Street Neighborhood. Generally, the recommendations included in the Downtown Plan speak to encouraging a diverse mix of uses, and creating a unique sense of place, an enhanced design at the pedestrian level and human-scale development.

Zoning Related Information: The project site will be zoned Urban Mixed Use (UMX). The Zoning Code outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in the Downtown and Urban Zoning Districts ([MGO 28.071\(3\)](#)), including, but not limited to those related to parking, building entrance orientation, façade articulation, design of street-facing facades, door and window openings, and building materials. Staff notes that ultimately, the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with Zoning Code requirements.

In addition, as noted in the Downtown Height Map, pursuant to MGO 28.071, the subject site crosses three different height zones, including six stories (88 feet) for the parcel closest to State Street (411 W Gilman Street), eight stories (116 feet) for the parcels located mid-block along W Gilman Street (415-421 W Gilman Street), and twelve stories (172 feet) for the remaining parcels along W Gilman Street (425-433 W Gilman Street). Additionally, along the W Gilman Street facade, there is also a requirement to step the building massing back 15 feet above the fourth story.

While the proposed building at its tallest is 16 stories (approx. 163 feet), which is in excess of the maximum height allowed in the Downtown Height Map in stories, staff note that additional stories may be requested as part of a voluntary land use restriction agreement to provide income restricted dwelling units provided the overall building height in feet (172 feet) is not exceeded. It is staff's understanding that the applicant is proposing to pursue the land use restriction agreement. With that, the applicant is encouraged to work with the Zoning Administrator to confirm that the proposed building will meet the height limitations in feet and that stories are being reported correctly.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff request the UDC's feedback and findings on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards as it relates to the design considerations noted below.

- **Building Scale and Massing.** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to creating visual interest as a means of breaking down mass and scale, including utilizing building modulation and articulation to distinguish architectural components (top, middle, base), the appropriateness of setbacks/stepbacks to minimize perceived mass and scale, balancing proportions and horizontal and vertical datums, incorporating articulation in transitions between materials, creating positive termination at the top of the building, and utilizing an enhanced level of design and detailing at the pedestrian level, etc.

Staff have identified the overall mass and scale of the proposed development as a concern, noting that consideration should be given to employing design techniques to break down the overall mass and scale of the building. While staff have suggested breaking the building mass and scale down to reflect the appearance of multiple buildings, similar to other recent larger-scale buildings reviewed by the UDC, the current design approach generally creates a street level character with a distinct different upper-level design for the entire development. Staff also note that there appear to be some areas with limited articulation and modulation in the upper stories, resulting in flat shear walls. Consideration should be given to the overall shape and design of the building and incorporating visual relief and interest in the design of the upper stories.

Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings related to the overall mass and scale.

- **Building Orientation.** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally note that how a building addresses the street and defines the public/private spaces along the public way is the primary factor in creating an active urban environment. Consideration should be given to locating active uses at the street, incorporating a richer level of design detailing at the pedestrian level, minimizing the presence of service-oriented uses (i.e., dumpster enclosure, utility rooms, garage doors, etc.), utilizing architectural elements to identify main building entrances, as well as incorporating landscape elements to add interest, texture, and color, etc.

As proposed, there appear to be two sizable garage doors along the street, including those dedicated to refuse pick-up and the garage entry/exit. Careful consideration should be given to the design and detailing of these two areas in terms of minimizing the appearance of the back-of-house and automobile-related services as much as possible, and in maintaining an enhanced design at the pedestrian level.

In addition, there are two units located at the street level, where individual unit access is not provided. Consideration should be given to providing active unit entries for these units. Doing so would be consistent with the adjacent development.

Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the overall building orientation.

- **Overall Building Design and Composition.** Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the overall building design and composition, especially as it relates to those Downtown Urban Design Guidelines that speak to utilizing design details to break down building mass and scale, the design, detailing and proportions of building components and integrating visual interest, incorporating positive termination at the top of the building, integrating the rooftop equipment and stair/elevator overruns into the overall building design, etc.

Staff note that there appears to be a pedestrian pathway that will wrap around almost all four sides of the proposed building in their entirety, and connect to Gorham Street; the proposed building will be experienced from all four sides at the pedestrian level. As such, consideration should be given to the design, detailing and materials of all four sides of the building at the pedestrian level, especially those elevations that are anticipated to be more heavily trafficked, including the northeast and portions of the southeast and southwest elevations, all of which have blank walls and mechanical louvers.

Staff request the Commission's feedback and findings on the overall building design and composition, especially as it relates to creating one cohesive architectural expression, an enhanced design at the pedestrian level, as well as utilizing four-sided architecture and screening/integration of rooftop mechanical at level 12.

In summary, and generally, the Commission's Informational Presentation comments noted that:

- Overall, the massing appeared to fit in with the context, but that the design could be taken further to make the building "stand out" more,
- Looking for ways to better balance the windows between the reinterpretation of the historic façade and those on the lower level of the new building,
- Giving consideration to the angled building corner, which is going to be highly visible. It should be more integrated into overall design composition that ties into the rest of the building better,
- Consideration should be given to the location of the retail space – locating it closer to State Street to attract people down Gilman,
- Adding dimension/articulation to the glass wrap-around and metal panel applications, and
- Giving additional consideration to the pedestrian experience along W Gilman, especially in terms of lighting, landscape, texture, colors, etc.

- **Mechanical Louvers.** While HVAC wall packs are not shown on the elevation drawings mechanical louvers are indicated in the garage space along the first floor on the northeast, southeast and southwest elevations. While not street-facing facades, they are adjacent to a pedestrian pathway. Staff request the Commission's feedback and findings related to the design and finish detailing of the proposed mechanical louvers, as well as any HVAC louvers, if proposed.
- **Landscaping.** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines note that *"...how a site is landscaped can soften hard edges, make a site more inviting, and bring color and interest to a development."*

As noted on the Landscape Plan, there are limited plantings proposed along pedestrian pathway along the southeast side of the building, including deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs, and perennials. Landscaping **does not** appear to be included along the W Gilman Street side of the building.

Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings on the Landscape Plan, especially as it relates to softening hardscape areas, appropriateness of the plant selections, and providing year-round color and texture, especially at the pedestrian level.

Staff note that while landscape beds appear to be included in the rooftop and courtyard amenity spaces, final landscape planting plans for these spaces were not included in the submittal package.

- **Lighting.** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to lighting being adequate, but not excessive, limiting glare, utilizing fixtures that are appropriate for their function and well-integrated into the building design/detailing, as well as full cutoff fixtures, etc.

Staff note, and the applicant is advised, that while lighting plans and fixture cutsheets have been provided, many of the light fixture cutsheets are not legible, making it difficult to fully evaluate the proposed fixtures for consistency with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. In addition, a Fixture Schedule was not provided for the light fixtures located at grade. To complete the evaluation of lighting these items will be required.

Of particular concern is Fixture T1 (quantity 38), which is a floodlight that appears to be used on the Level 12 pool deck. In this area there are a total of 38 fixtures, all mounted 5'-6" above the deck. Light levels in this area reportedly range from 3.0 footcandles to 25.9 footcandles, although the higher light level is not indicated on the photometric plan. There is question as to whether a different fixture, including but not limited to a bollard, pole light in a lesser quantity, wall pack or railing mounted light, or combination thereof may be more appropriate and produce lesser, more uniform lighting across the pool deck area. Staff requests the Commission feedback and findings as it relates to the use of this fixture.

Staff note that the continued review of lighting can occur administratively, as part of the Site Plan Review process along with the review of the proposed lighting for compliance with [MGO 29.36](#). The applicant is encouraged to work with Building Inspection Division staff to confirm submittal requirements.

- **Signage.** Staff note and the applicant is advised that while signage is shown on the elevation drawings, signage is not a part of this review nor subsequent approvals. A separate review is required. The applicant is encouraged to work with Zoning staff to confirm whether the proposed signage complies with the [Sign Code](#).

Summary of Informational Presentation Discussion & Questions

As a reference, a summary of the Commission's discussion and questions from the September 3, 2025, Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission noted the Stafford building atrium comparison to the proposed courtyards, and appreciated how they are adding ventilation.

The Commission stated that for a very large building, it's designed very well, like the stepback, and the pedestrian experience. Can you change the color of the terra cotta? Given this size and design you want to stand out and you'll blend into every other building surrounding it. Make this a stand out building in Madison, it will go a very long way. Great job massing it, fitting it into the context, successful project.

The Commission asked if consideration was given to renovating or retaining the Fisher Apartments and connecting to it, but not building on top of it. The applicant noted that they looked at incorporating it into the building, but some buildings are very hard to work with in context of bringing them into another building. In this case if they did maintain the Fisher Apartment, that building would have to remain a stand alone building to make it work. Unfortunately that building is in the height portion of the site that lets us go up the highest.

The Commission asked about the four-story masonry mass and the recessed portion of the building where there is a window in the corner where the masonry meets the metal panel, noting that it is a weird transition between materials and massing. The applicant noted that has advanced with the window being pulled out and framed in the brick element, and with the brick coming across rather than the metal panel.

The Commission noted the W Gilman façade jogs so much more than the others. The applicant commented the others are more vertically linear, the units are different on this façade. It started with the historic façade, but they can look for a way to balance some of those windows.

The Commission commented that the angle with curtain wall seems foreign, and as a big expanse, it might need more detailing for a sense of scale. Is there a different iteration where the angled language does not feel as foreign to the building and how could that tie into the rest of the building better? The corner is going to be very visible, it might deserve another look. There are other examples in the precedent images provide for how that could be treated. Is there a different iteration where the angled language does not feel as foreign to the building. How could that tie into the rest of the building better.

The Commission liked that the building wants to address State Street, but it's unfortunate that first ground floor bay is the transformer location instead of an active use. Consider a different location if possible, it should be a lit-up corner of retail activity that will attract people from State Street. The applicant noted that the transformers will be behind a curtain wall system.

The Commission commented that the angle with glazing breaks up the building and would suggest adding some dimension to the glass wrap-around and metal panel.

The Commission discussed activating the retail space on the corner more. Concerns were expressed with that whole stretch in terms of safety and lighting, it seems like a dark and shaded area for most of the year; any way to lighten that up with lighting, vegetation or other colors, would be a useful way to bridge that gap between University Avenue and State Street.