



Tuesday, April 18, 2023

City of Madison
Urban Design Commission
urbandesigncomments@cityofmadison.com

Re: Item 77005 – 20, 22, 30 N. Carroll Street – New Wisconsin History Center in the Downtown Core (DC) District. 4th Ald. Dist.

Dear Committee Members,

We value the mission of the Wisconsin Historical Society (“WHS”) and welcome the redevelopment of the Wisconsin History Center (the “Project”). Hovde Properties and/or our affiliated entities (“Hovde”) currently own the properties on two sides of the Project (115 W. Mifflin St. and 16 N. Carroll St.). In addition, we own or have control of 5 other proximate properties and hold easement agreements related to the private alley on the Southwest side (back side) of the Project. While we are supportive of the Project, we also have concerns related to the proposed design and layout which we wanted to communicate for consideration early in the process.

These concerns are centered around four primary elements:

- 1) Uniform and windowless wall on the Southwest façade – back of the building;
- 2) 6-foot cantilever overhang on the Southwest façade – back of the building;
- 3) Potential reduction of the current Mifflin Street Plaza to allow a loading dock; and
- 4) Lack of setbacks from 16 N. Carroll.

Uniform and windowless wall on the Southwest façade. The Southwest façade is currently being shown as a blank monolith spanning 12 stories high and some 200 hundred feet wide with no distinguishing feature or articulation. This design feature seems to conflict with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines (“DUDG”), which provides that “[b]uildings be oriented to preserve and enhance the views...” (DUDG, pg. 5). As the DUDG explains, “...buildings occupying sites located at the end of a street, on a highly-visible corner...can serve as a focal point and the design of such structures should reflect the prominence of the site. *Particular attention should be paid to views from these perspectives.* [Emphasis added, DUDG, pg. 16). This façade will be readily visible given its scale both near and far and as currently contemplated presents a very unattractive and undesirable appearance in stark contrast to the rest of the Project. We strongly encourage the design team to consider breaking up this space with windows and/or other architectural details to preserve the aesthetic around the square and adjacent buildings. In addition, we believe the materials selected for this wall should be of a similar quality to



the rest of the Project. Finally, we believe a viewshed study may be needed to fully understand the potential impact of this element of the Project.

6-foot cantilever overhang on the Southwest facade. The current design anticipates a 6-foot cantilever over the private alley on the entire Southwest façade. We believe that this 6-foot cantilever would violate the current easement agreements in place and is not allowed. These easement agreements also prescribe that the private alley must always remain open except for normal deliveries. In addition, we believe this condition creates an unattractive viewshed on Mifflin Street, could limit future development potential of adjacent properties, will create an unworkable access condition during construction, and could create long term life/safety concerns for access to adjacent properties.

Potential reduction of the current Mifflin Street Plaza. While the design has not been fully developed for the replacement Mifflin Street Plaza, given the loading dock location, it is likely the Mifflin Street Plaza will lose a significant area to accommodate this element. As adjacent property owners, we value the Mifflin Street Plaza and believe reducing its size to accommodate a loading dock will be a detriment to the area as it currently serves as a gathering space and provides bike parking for visitors downtown. Finally, we would also note that the loading dock location will increase what is already a somewhat congested delivery area and could cause new pedestrian conflicts.

Lack of setbacks from 16 N. Carroll Street. The current design plans to block the entire Northwest façade of the 16 N. Carroll building with no setbacks. Currently the 16 N. Carroll building shares a common wall on the first 3 floors, however, the Project design is planning to block an additional 6 floors of the property which would eliminate more than 40 windows currently being enjoyed by the business customers of the building. This design will reduce the daylighting of these spaces and impact the property in a material way. In early concepts of the Project, step backs were envisioned between the buildings, and we would encourage this to be reincorporated in the design.

Despite the foregoing concerns, we truly value the time and effort of the WHS and its development team and look forward to this project ultimately being a tremendous asset to people of the City of Madison and State of Wisconsin. Finally, we appreciate the opportunity to provide our initial comments and look forward to future opportunities to collaborate with all stakeholders.

Respectfully Submitted,

Randall J. Guenther
President - Hovde Properties