



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

Heather Stouder, Director

126 S. Hamilton Street
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, Wisconsin 53701-2985
Phone: (608) 266-4635
www.cityofmadison.com

TO: Urban Design Commission
FROM: Timothy M. Parks, Planner
DATE: July 31, 2017
SUBJECT: ID [48105](#) (UDC); [47853](#) (Plan Commission) – Advisory recommendation by the Urban Design Commission on a request for conditional use approval by the Plan Commission to allow construction of a three-story addition to Hotel RED at 1501 Monroe Street; 13th Ald. Dist.

Hotel RED is requesting Plan Commission approval to construct a three-story addition to the existing four-story, 48-room hotel located at 1501 Monroe Street at the southeasterly corner of Regent Street. The proposed addition calls for 39 additional lodging rooms on the fifth and sixth floors of the building for a total of 87 rooms, and a seventh floor that will feature indoor event spaces and related outdoor terraces. No substantive changes to the existing four-story hotel structure are proposed. Parking for the expanded hotel will be provided in 77 auto stalls to be located below the building. The applicant proposes to convert the existing hotel parking into a full valet operation in which all of the car parking will be handled by hotel staff. The Plan Commission hearing on the proposed addition is scheduled for August 14, 2017.

The proposed three-story addition follows a proposal by Hotel RED earlier this year to construct a four-story addition that called for up to 57 additional rooms (105 total) and an eighth floor event space. Hotels are conditional uses in the TSS (Traditional Shopping Street) zoning district under the 2013 Zoning Code. In addition, any building in TSS zoning taller than three stories and 40 feet requires conditional use approval. On March 20, 2017, the Plan Commission could not find that the standards for approval met and denied the four-story addition. In placing this matter on file, the Plan Commission specifically stated that conditional use standards #9 and 12 were not met, concluding that the four-story addition to create an eight-story building would not create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the intended character of the area as recommended by the Comprehensive Plan and the Monroe Street Commercial District Plan, that the height of the eight-story building would be out of scale with adjoining streets, alleys, and public rights of ways; and that the public interest in exceeding the TSS district height limits was not met.

However, members of the Plan Commission expressed some support for an addition to the hotel to create a “top” to the building that some felt is missing in the existing four-story composition. Despite placing the four-story addition on file, **members of the Commission noted that any new application for Hotel RED should be presented to the Urban Design Commission for an advisory recommendation prior to being reviewed by the Plan Commission.** Such recommendations are allowed under conditional use standard #9, which reads as follows:

9. When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or

intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation.

As noted above, conditional use approval is also specifically required to allow the building to exceed the three-story and 40-foot height maximums in the TSS district. In order to approve that aspect of the project, the Plan Commission shall find the following standard met:

12. When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed in the district, the Plan Commission shall consider recommendations in adopted plans; the impact on surrounding properties, including height, mass, orientation, shadows and view; architectural quality and amenities; the relationship of the proposed building(s) with adjoining streets, alleys, and public rights of ways; and the public interest in exceeding the district height limits.

The applicant and Plan Commission are requesting an advisory recommendation from the Urban Design Commission whether the above-referenced standards can be met. In considering its recommendation, the Planning Division requests that the Urban Design Commission consider the following:

- The proposed three-story addition to the hotel will create a seven-story, 85.75-foot tall structure along the Monroe Street façade. In addition to being more than twice as tall as the maximum height allowed by right in the TSS zoning district, the proposed structure will exceed the height recommended in the [Monroe Street Commercial District Plan](#). That plan was adopted by the Common Council in March 2007 to provide detailed development recommendations for each blockface along Monroe Street from Regent Street to Glenway Street, including urban design recommendations for building placement, height and articulation. The plan identifies the Monroe Street blockface bounded by Oakland Avenue on the west and Regent Street on the east as a “redevelopment opportunity, short term” and recommends that it be developed with two- to four-story buildings with an opportunity for a projecting bay or tower-type element at the Regent Street intersection. The plan encourages buildings along Monroe Street to step down in height along the rear alley in order to provide a “comfortable transition...to the residential neighborhood behind” and encourages rear building parking, service and loading from the mid-block alley. The proposed building is also taller than the two- to four-story building heights generally recommended by the [Comprehensive Plan](#) for Neighborhood Mixed-Use development sites like the subject site.

The applicant has submitted a comprehensive set of plans and renderings for the Urban Design Commission’s consideration, which depict the hotel in its current four-story condition, as proposed as a seven-story building, and with images that juxtapose the current seven-story proposal with the earlier eight-story proposal. In addition to proposing fully one less floor than previously, the three-story version of the addition proposes more stepping back of the upper floors in an effort to reduce the mass of the seven-story building, particularly above Monroe and Regent streets.

Despite the above reductions in the proposed mass of the three-story addition compared to the earlier version, the Planning Division cannot support the current proposal. Staff believes that the scale of the proposed seven-story hotel is out of context with its immediate surroundings, and is

inconsistent with the scale and mass recommended by the Comprehensive Plan and Monroe Street Commercial District Plan, both of which recommend significantly smaller buildings for the site and the Monroe Street corridor. Finally, staff does not believe that the proposed building will create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability consistent with the adopted plan recommendations for the site per conditional use standard #9, or that there is a sufficient public interest to allow the proposed height per standard #12.

- Notwithstanding the above concerns about scale and plan consistency, the Urban Design Commission is asked to provide feedback to the Plan Commission on the final form of the proposed seven-story hotel should it be approved. In particular, the Urban Design Commission is asked to comment on the overall composition and the success of the proposed addition in providing a “top” for the building that some have suggested is missing from the current four-story composition.

While the Planning Division does not believe that the scale and mass proposed are appropriate for the site, it generally agrees with comments made by members of the Plan Commission in March that the existing four-story building seems to lack a definitive top and otherwise appears incomplete, especially when viewed from the north and west. **Given that creating an “environment of sustained aesthetic desirability” consistent with the character of the area is the objective of conditional use standard #9, and architectural quality is a consideration in finding standard #12 met to exceed the allowed height, staff feels that the final building needs to be exceedingly well designed, and that the Urban Design Commission’s input on the proposed design will be valuable for the Plan Commission’s upcoming discussion.**