



**Project Address:** 200 Wisconsin Avenue

**Application Type:** Informational Presentation for a new Hotel Development in the Downtown Core (DC)  
**UDC will be an Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [90072](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Bruce Pfeifer, Drury Madison, LLC | Brenda McClure, Potter Lawson

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing an 8-story, 205-room hotel on the northeastern portion of the block, with below and above-grade parking. The former Madison College building is not included as part of this proposal.

Staff note that rezoning the project site from Planned Development (PD) to Urban Mixed Use (UMX) will be pursued as part of a future Land Use Application request.

**Approval Standards:** As noted above, the applicant is proposing to rezone the project site to UMX. As such, the Urban Design Commission (UDC) will be an **advisory** body on this request when a formal application is submitted. Pursuant to section [28.076\(b\)](#):

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

**Related Zoning Information:** The Zoning Code outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in both the UMX and Downtown Core zoning districts ([MGO 28.071](#)), including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

As noted in the Downtown Height Map, the maximum height allowed for the project site is eight (8) stories with the potential for two additional stories. The Zoning Code also notes that buildings must meet both the maximum number of stories and the maximum height. Staff note that while ultimately, the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with the Zoning Code requirements, as proposed the development **appears to be consistent** with the height limitations.

**Design-Related Plan Recommendations:** The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, within the Downtown Core subarea. As such, development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). The Plan recommendations for development in this area generally speak to encouraging the highest intensity of development in this area and encouraging a mix of uses that will help to retain the area's vibrancy.

The Plan also identifies Wisconsin Avenue as a "Premier Street", which are streets intended to be designed with the highest level of design and amenity, including many characteristics of "complete streets" which are designed to host all users, including bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles. Currently, Wisconsin Avenue includes metered on-street parking, tapered medians, sidewalks and very wide, embellished terraces.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommend that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards as it relates to the design considerations noted below.

- **Site Access and Circulation.** As indicated on the site plan, an auto-oriented drop-off area is proposed introducing two curb cuts along Wisconsin Avenue. While a previous proposal was ultimately approved with a similar feature, Staff are again noting concerns related to the potential adverse impacts of the proposed drop-off area on the existing uninterrupted pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns, design of the streetscape and pedestrian environment, and relationship of the building to the street. Additionally, staff are concerned with plan and design guideline consistency, especially considering Wisconsin Avenue's recommendation as a "Premier Street" in the Downtown Plan.

As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines that speak to site access and circulation one of the primary goals is to maximize uninterrupted pedestrian access within a given block. More specifically, the guidelines state that *"Porte-cochere type entries, drop-offs or circular drives should not be parallel to the street or within the right-of-way, nor should they be oriented to require more than one curb cut."* As noted on the site plan, a one-way thru-block private drive is proposed that will provide access from W Dayton Street to W Johnson Street. Consideration should be given to exploring alternative drop-off sequences, including one that utilizes the private drive.

Staff request the Commission's feedback on the proposed entry sequence and design elements along Wisconsin Avenue related to the applicable guidelines. Consideration should be given to the building setback, entry orientation and the mass/scale of architectural design elements, creating an enhanced design aesthetic at the pedestrian level, utilizing human scale architectural elements, creating a free and clear pedestrian zone, treatment of public spaces, landscape treatment, etc.

- **Building Design and Composition.** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to building design and composition in terms of creating one cohesive architectural expression, balancing vertical/horizontal proportions, creating distinctive building components (base, middle, top), maintaining positive building and entry orientation to the street, providing ground level activation on all street frontages, minimizing blank walls, creating positive termination at the top of the building, and creating a successful transition between buildings, etc.

With regard to overall building design and composition, staff request the Commission's feedback on the following items:

- Building corners. The project site has frontages on three streets and two prominent intersections along Wisconsin Avenue, a premier street in the heart of downtown. As such, consideration should be given to maintaining strong corner elements.

In addition, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines speak to reinforcing the urban block form and to maintaining a consistent build-to line along street frontages. Special consideration should be given to maintaining the building setback and building relationships between the proposed development and the existing MATC Downtown Campus Building along W Johnson Street.

- Street-level activation. Consideration should be given to the design of the building base component as it relates to providing a higher level of interest or richer level of architectural detailing along the lower levels of the building along all street frontages.

Of particular interest, however, is Wisconsin Avenue, which appears to be the main entrance to the building. This entrance is significantly setback from the street due to the proposed drop-off area and there do not appear to be any other active entries along this street frontage. Consideration should be given to locating active uses and additional entries along the street, utilizing architectural details and elements that engage the street/sidewalk in a contextually appropriate manner and that integrates architecture with landscape/streetscape design (i.e., planters, canopies, awnings, etc.).

In addition, there are vehicle entrances that are located along the ground floor on both the W Johnson and W Dayton Street elevations that leave voids in the streetscape. Consideration should also be given to the design and detailing of these entrances to ensure not only their integration in the overall building design, but also in maintaining an active streetscape/richer level of detailing at the pedestrian level.

- Design of Building Components. The design and integration of the second and third floors into the larger building design and composition as these floors are part of the structured parking amenity and the top component and utilizing design details that create a positive visual termination at the top of the building, and
- Four-sided architecture. As noted on the site plan, there is a thru-block private drive along that serves the back-of-house operations and parking access. Consideration should be given to the design of this space as a shared space that will not only serve service-oriented uses and vehicles, but pedestrians and also provide a transition to the adjacent development.

As indicated on the northeast elevation, the first two levels of this wall are primarily blank and the upper floors are primarily clad in metal panels, which is a different expression than on the other outwardly facing elevations. Consideration should be given to utilizing a similar level of design and detailing across all elevations.

- **HVAC Wall Packs and Architectural Louvers**. While HVAC wall packs are not shown on the elevation drawings architectural louvers are indicated in the garage space on the second and third floor on the northeast elevation. It has been the current practice to locate wall packs and their associated louvers so that they are not located on street-facing or on highly visible facades, although wall packs have been approved in some situations when found to be well-integrated into the façade's design.

Staff request the Commission's feedback related to the design and finish detailing of HVAC wall packs (if applicable) and the architectural louvers.

- **Building Materials**. As indicated on the elevation drawings, the proposed material palette will be comprised of a modular brick veneer, concealed fastener flat metal panel, and concealed fastener corrugated metal panel. The applicant also indicates that where material transitions occur a change in plane will be introduced to add depth and dimensionality to the façade.

The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines state that *"An integrated palette of high quality, durable building materials can enrich the pedestrian environment through the use of scale, color, texture, and architectural details."*

Staff request the Commission's feedback on the proposed material palette and composition, especially as it relates to creating an enhanced design at the pedestrian level.

- **Long Views.** Due to the prominence of this site along the outside loop of the Capital Square spanning several heavily trafficked thoroughfares in the Downtown Core, including Wisconsin Avenue, W Johnson Street and W Dayton Street, consideration should be given to the overall composition of the building as part of the overall cityscape and how it will read from a distance.

As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, corner buildings should define street intersections with distinctive architectural features and demonstrate a higher degree of architectural strength, one that aligns with their location.

- **Landscape.** While limited information was included in the submittal materials related to landscape, staff request the Commission' feedback related to potential landscape improvements/considerations. Generally, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines speak to landscape designs being focused on creating an "urban" landscape that not only is context sensitive but that also that softens hard edges, incorporating site amenities (i.e. planting beds, seat walls, street furniture, public art, lighting, and landscape materials, etc.) in combination with plant species that are compatible with an urban environment and that provide year-round texture and color.