



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 307 E Wilson Street
Application Type: Façade Alterations for Summit Credit Union in UMX Zoning
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [76206](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Steve Polacheck, Summit Credit Union | Alec Hembree, Strang, Inc.

Project Description: The applicant is proposing exterior façade alterations and parking lot landscape improvements to the existing Summit Credit Union Downtown Branch. The proposed alterations include the redesign of the front entrance volume, addition of a metal canopy structure, painting all facades, and adding metal panel accent band on the John Nolen Drive façade.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **approving** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *“All new buildings and additions that are less than twenty thousand (20,000) square-feet and are not approved pursuant to (a) above, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#).”*

Related Zoning Information: The property is zoned Urban Mixed-Use (UMX). While the UMX zone district outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings and modifications thereto, the applicability of those standards is only triggered with the addition of floor area. It is staff’s understanding that the floor area is not being added as part of this request.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area. As such development on the project site is subject to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development plans and make findings based on the aforementioned standards and guidelines, as well as the Commission’s Informational Presentation comments, especially as it relates to the items noted below.

- **New Entry Tower Volume.** As noted in the Commission’s Informational Presentation, the Commission noted that the proposed entry tower volume is out of scale and proportion with the one-story building. The Commission recommended giving consideration to bringing the height of the proposed volume down to the second floor window (dark gray datum) height to maintain proportions and scale.

Staff requests the UDC review and make findings on the overall design composition as it relates the successful integration of the building entrance volume. Consideration should be given to the Downtown Design Guidelines, including those that speak to proportions of architectural features and creating a cohesive architectural expression.

- **Building Composition and Materials.** In the Information Presentation comments, the Commission noted that given the small scale of the building and recognizing that the material palette is already limited, consideration should be given to minimizing the number of colors, especially on the John Nolen elevation.

In addition, as noted on the plans, copper-metallic metal panel is proposed on both the front (E Wilson Street) and back (John Nolen Drive) facades. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the introduction of the new material as it relates to Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that generally speak to utilizing durable, high-quality, complementary materials, and creating visual interest, as well as those that speak to creating a cohesive architectural expression.

- **Landscape.** As noted in the Commission's Informational Presentation comments, the Commission noted that careful consideration should be given to the screening and softening of the existing parking area, including both architectural (i.e. a wall to carry the horizontal lines across the ground) or landscape. Staff requests the UDC review and make findings related to the proposed landscape plan giving consideration to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, especially those that generally speak to softening hard edges, adding color and texture to the streetscape, encouraging canopy trees to add human-scale, and providing year-round screening, and make findings.
- **Lighting.** Staff requests the Commission review the proposed lighting plan and make findings related to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that generally speak to limiting glare, providing appropriate, but not excessive light levels, and non-competition with the capitol dome.

Staff notes that MGO 29.36, allows 1.5 footcandles as the maximum average light levels on the ground for low activity areas. As proposed, the lighting plan is not consistent with the maximum light levels pursuant to MGO 29.36.

- **Signage.** While signage is not part of this application request, potential sign locations are shown on the elevations, including locations above the second floor on the John Nolen side of the building. While the UDC has approved some signs at the second floor level in the Downtown area, including recently on the adjacent property, locating wall signage above the first floor has always been given careful consideration. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the proposed sign locations.

Staff notes that additional review and approval will be required for the proposed signage.

Summary of Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the March 1, 2023, Informational Presentation are provided below.

- I think you chose the wrong datum for that entry piece, it is out of scale; it is way too tall and out of proportion with everything else. It's so awkwardly tall and thin, the scale is off. It just needs to come down as much as it can. Otherwise it's a great exterior improvement.
- Integration of the canopy with the new entry, you hit the nail on the head.
- I really like the modernization of your canopy over the drive area, but I totally agree that the entry is way too tall for the scale. I think you want something more in keeping with that nice horizontal. I think more simplification is needed at the back of the building where it appears you have three colors of gray; you could simplify that to one and not have that orange at the elevator overrun. It's a very small elevation and I think there's way too much going on. I only mean the grays, maybe limiting it to two, the orange is fine.
- Is the glass entrance on Wilson Street that high to provide access to the roof?

- No, it can be lowered.
- I thought that was a door. That would solve that.
- That orange is a wonderful thing.
- This has always been a funky building and parcel in the urban fabric, I definitely appreciate removing the out of scale arches. I'm still not crazy about how much surface parking you see, which feels out of place, but could be remedied by how you screen that with something architectural or with landscaping. These strong datums would have a landscape element that also continues horizontal so we're not presented with so much surface parking lot from Wilson Street. A new tree on the left side, I don't know if that fits there with wires and proximity to the building. Something lower you could still see over for safety but that creates a green band or horizontal plane to help cover up the cars, that would be my only comment.
- The Monona Waterfront design challenge, some of the proposals obliterate this building altogether. Worth looking at out of curiosity or amusement if you are interested in checking out those master plans.
- A low wall or something between those two columns would really help.
- Bring down the entry features and anything above the dark gray datum just makes it awkward.
- It's the only one-story building around. It stands out in its size in a different proportion.