

June 30, 2025
Updated July 28, 2025



Ms. Meagan Tuttle
Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development
Madison Municipal Building, Suite 017
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53703

Re: Letter of Intent - Land Use Application Submittal

15-27 N Butler and 302-308 E Washington Ave
KBA Project #2406

Ms. Meagan Tuttle:

The following is submitted together with the plans and application for the staff, Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission's consideration of approval.

Organizational Structure:

Owner:

Butler Plaza LLC
21 N Butler St
Madison, WI 53703
608-256-1400
Contact: Erik Minton
[REDACTED]

Architect:

Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC
8401 Greenway Blvd., Ste 900
Middleton, WI 53562
608-836-3690
Contact: Duane Johnson
[REDACTED]

Engineer:

Wyser Engineering
300 E Front St
Mt. Horeb, WI 53572
608-437-1980
Contact: Wade Wyser
[REDACTED]

Landscape Design:

Saiki Design, Inc.
1110 S. Park St.
Madison, WI 53715
608-251-3600
Contact: Christopher Sina
[REDACTED]

Introduction:

This proposed project includes the redevelopment of the buildings located at 302 & 308 E Washington Ave located at the north corner of North Butler Street and East Washington Avenue. Located within the Capitol Neighborhoods, the buildings are currently occupied by Capital Fitness and Eisenberg Law Offices. This application requests the removal of these two existing buildings for the development of a new 11-story mixed-use building including 76 multifamily dwelling units, two levels of underground parking, and approximately 9,000 SF of commercial space. This project is part of a Planned Development (PD 279), which includes additional buildings located at 15-27 N Butler St. The 308 E Washington Ave property (Eisenberg Law Office Building) will be adopted into PD 279 for the proposed redevelopment. This redevelopment proposal responds to both the City's Downtown Plan for growth and the undersupply of housing in the City of Madison, specifically the downtown core area, while maintaining important commercial space. Madison is experiencing consistent and steady job growth and a resulting

population growth. Although the City has seen much new construction over the past several years, vacancy rates continue to hover around 3%, signaling a significant undersupply of housing. This undersupply directly leads to rising rents and the increase in housing costs for all City residents.

Downtown Plan

The properties are within the boundaries of the City of Madison Downtown Plan adopted July 2012. The Plan was the product of 4 plus years of work including 125 group meetings with neighborhood and community groups, City Boards and Commissions, business owners and many other interested parties.

The Plan places this site inside the boundaries of the Downtown Core, which is recommended for the highest intensity of development within the city. One of the Plan's key recommendations is to accommodate future growth within the downtown.

The Downtown Plan also provides guidelines for building height and designates this site as having a maximum building height of 10 stories, this includes a 2-story bonus height that is available in the Plan's Additional Height Area H. The additional height was specifically allowed to encourage taller buildings that provide continuity with the Capital Gateway Corridor while also providing the additional design flexibility to address the transition to the adjacent lower density neighborhood.

Existing Structures and Proposed Deconstruction

302 E Washington Ave. is currently occupied by a 3-story brick building built in 1927 and renovated in 1997, at which time much of the brick detailing and corner parapet height changes were removed.

308 E Washington Ave. is a 2-story brick building, built in 1902 with the addition of the second floor added in 1956 with subsequent renovations in the late 1990's.

Neither of the existing buildings are listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places.

Given that the buildings are not registered as historically or architecturally significant and that the proposed redevelopment is consistent with the city and neighborhood plans, it is our opinion that the standards for demolition can be met.

The site is located on a prominent corner of the city that is currently underutilized and could be better utilized as a mixed-use property. A Re-use and Recycling Plan will be submitted prior to the deconstruction of the existing structure. Due to the size and construction of the buildings, it is not feasible to move or reuse the existing structures.

Project Description:

The proposed project is an 11-story mixed-use development consisting of 76 dwelling units and approximately 9,000 square feet of commercial space, over 2 floors, which will be used for new updated gym space for Capitol Fitness Center.

The massing of this building is scaled appropriately for the site and will enhance the contextual corridor of East Washington Ave. Contemporary in style and color; traditional brick veneer and masonry techniques are utilized to reinforce the fabric of the neighborhood and invoke a sense of permanence. Two brick masses are separated by a metal composite panel ribbon. This paneling begins at the ground plane and runs vertically and opens up at the top of the building to form a dynamic sloping roofline. The rust-colored accent adds a colorful flair to the building design, using a resilient material that will not degrade over time. This roof form is visible from multiple approaches to the building. Secondary elevations carryover a similar design language relying on large amounts of masonry and accenting metal paneling to add visual intrigue when viewing this project from different vantage points. Residential HVAC grilles have been thoughtfully placed on minor, recessed wall locations. Louvers are then masked by decorative metal paneling in a dark complimentary color to the brick veneer.

At the pedestrian level, the primary street facades host large segments of wall space devoted to glass storefronts. This not only increases the attractiveness of the building's exterior but also promotes the overall concept of 'wellness' by flooding the interior of a renovated Capitol Fitness with natural light and visual connections to the streetscape. The large-scale window walls are continued on the residential levels to form a holistic composition.

The 11th floor contains a communal gathering space with large curtain walls to maximize light and views. An adjacent rooftop terrace not only adds a dimensional setback to the top of the building but ensures that all tenants in this building have inclusionary access to outdoor living space and rooftop views.

The site is located in an ideal spot for taking advantage of alternate transportation modes, it is within walking distance of multiple options for dining and shopping and is a block away in each direction to a Bus Rapid Transit station. Bike parking will be supplied at both the interior and exterior of the building and the site is located directly adjacent to the Mifflin St Bike Boulevard. A limited number of vehicle parking stalls will be added beneath the building. These will be accessed via the existing underground parking and will not require additional access point to the nearby streets.

City and Neighborhood Input:

We have met with City Staff on several occasions for this proposed development including: a pre-application meeting on October 1, 2024, DAT meeting on February 27, 2025, UDC meeting on April 30, 2025 to give an informational presentation, and a neighborhood meeting on June 5, 2025. When this project was first discussed with the City, Alder Bennett was the Alder and since the April 2025 election, Alder Will Ochowicz is the Alder for this site; they have been informed of this project and Alder Ochowicz attended the June 5 neighborhood meeting. This input has helped shape this proposed development.

Rezoning and Planned Development Amendment

The majority of the proposed development is within an existing PD 279 that includes all of the existing buildings along N Butler St between E Mifflin St and E Washington Ave. In consultation with city staff, the preferred zoning compliance strategy for the proposed redevelopment is an amendment to the existing PD. Amendment to PD 279 includes the following modifications:

- Enlargement of the PD to include the parcel at 308 E Washington (Parcel #070913324095) currently zoned UMX. The revised PD boundary will be recorded in a new CSM as a component of the Land Use Application.
- Removal of existing buildings:
 - 302 E Washington- 13,500 sf commercial space on 3 floors (Partial Capital Fitness)
 - 308 E Washington- 4,250 sf commercial space on 2 floors (Existing Eisenberg Law Office)
- New construction: 302 E Washington- 11 story mixed-use building including:
 - 8,893 sf commercial space on 2 floors (Capital Fitness)
 - 76 Apartment units and support infrastructure.
 - Garage Parking:
 - Removal of (6) existing stalls in demolition area
 - Addition of (16) new stalls
 - Net gain of 10 stalls
- Plaza redesign and reconstruction of the street side and rear plaza located at 21 N. Butler St

We feel that the Standards for approval for Planned Development major alterations outlined in MGO 26.098 (2) can be found to have been met. Please see summarized standards and commentary below:

Standards for Approval of Zoning Map Amendment.

The standards for approval of a zoning map amendment to the PD District, or any major alteration to an approved General Development Plan, are as follows:

(a) The applicant shall demonstrate that no other base zoning district can be used to achieve a substantially similar pattern of development. Planned developments shall not be allowed simply for the purpose of increasing overall density or allowing development that otherwise could not be approved unless the development also meets one or more of the objectives of (1) above. Conditions under which planned development may be appropriate include:

1. Site conditions such as steep topography or other unusual physical features; or
2. Redevelopment of an existing area or use of an infill site that could not be reasonably developed under base zoning district requirements.
 - Due to multiple existing buildings within this PD, rezoning to a standard zoning district that meets all the standards would not be practical. Significant topographic changes across the site and connecting buildings also contribute to the unique requirements meeting the need for an expanded PD.

(b) The PD District plan shall facilitate the development or redevelopment goals of the Comprehensive Plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.

- The proposed project is in line with the City's Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan. The Downtown Plan and Generalized Future Land Use Map call for this Site's future use to be Downtown Core Mixed-Use.

(c) The PD District plan shall not adversely affect the economic health of the City or the area of the City where the development is proposed. The City shall be able to provide municipal services to the property where the planned development is proposed without a significant increase of the cost of providing those services or economic impact on municipal utilities serving that area.

- Municipal services to the property are existing and any utilities found to be inadequate would be replaced or upgraded during the design and construction process.

(d) The PD District plan shall not create traffic or parking demands disproportionate to the facilities and improvements designed to meet those demands. (Am. by [ORD-24-00001](#), I-17-24)

- As summarized within the project description, this site is located in an area ideal for alternative transportation. The limited vehicle parking stalls that are proposed will be accessed through the existing underground parking limiting any new access points and limiting impact to neighboring streets.

(e) The PD District plan shall coordinate architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with surrounding land uses and create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose of the PD District.

- The project aligns with the architectural forms and the material composition of the proposed and existing buildings along E. Washington Ave. Primarily utilizing masonry veneers, this building can transition from the main view corridor to the residential district beginning along Mifflin Street. The roof form echoes the AC hotel located one block to the South. Since the new building is of a different era and within different height area when compared to the other buildings within this PD, the architecture has intentionally taken on a different style and form appropriate for this height and scale of a project. We feel this is appropriate for this area and situation. Other landscaping and streetscape designs are compatible in character.

(f) The PD District plan shall include open space suitable to the type and character of development proposed, including for projects with residential components, a mix of structured and natural spaces for use by residents and visitors. Areas for stormwater management, parking, or in the public right of way shall not be used to satisfy this requirement.

- The project will incorporate individual unit balconies and a large, shared roof-top community terrace. This carries on the tradition established in its predecessor buildings in the Butler Plaza, of which this new project is connected on several levels. In addition, the ground level plaza located behind 21 N Butler will be reconstructed, this plaza will incorporate a fountain, shade areas, and heavily landscaped planters, it will be used by both residential tenants and as a restaurant seating area. The landscaping and street frontage of 21 N Butler St will be upgraded, as well as a new set of planters that step down the E. Washington street frontage.

(g) The PD district shall include suitable assurances that each phase could be completed in a manner that would not result in an adverse effect upon the community as a result of termination at that point.

- This project will be completed in one phase with a similar timeframe and temporary disruption as a similar project of this scope.

Conditional Use request for extra stories as allowed by the Additional Height Areas Map:

The proposed building height is 11 stories/ 129' (Avg 124' on the South 132' to the North). As outlined in the Downtown plan, the project is located in the 8+2 bonus story area. The developer seeks the two additional bonus stories (10 story/144') based on the standards listed below. The developer will also include a voluntary land use restriction agreement to provide income-restricted dwelling units in exchange for permission to include an 11th story, provided that the total building height does not exceed 144 feet. All elements of the proposed building will terminate below the Capital View Preservation height.

Bonus Height Standards:

- The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned character of the surrounding area:**
The project height is consistent with the planned height of the surrounding building along the East Washington corridor, including The Continental located one block north on the 400 Block of E Washington Ave. and the AC Hotel located one block south on the 200 block of E Washington Ave. In addition, a 10-story planned redevelopment of the St. John's Lutheran Church site directly to the north on the same block as the proposed project.
- The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building:**
The proposed additional building height facilitates the revitalization of the Capital Fitness facility, which has faced significant financial challenges and a substantial decline in membership post-pandemic. Without the allowance for an additional two stories, the development of the new two-story commercial space would not be viable.
Architecturally, the commercial space will feature a prominent glass façade on the lower two floors, harmonizing with the existing commercial structures along Butler Street. This proposal ensures the availability of high-quality, sizable commercial spaces along E. Washington Avenue for the foreseeable future, a rarity in today's commercial market.
Additionally, this proposal incorporates a substantial investment in the plaza at the rear of Butler Plaza. This redesigned space will serve dual purposes: as a communal area for residential tenants and, during business hours, as an outdoor dining venue for Naples 15 restaurant. The investment in this area will contribute significantly to the long-term success and appeal of both the restaurant and the broader development.

- c. The scale, height and mass of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the project:
This standard is not applicable as there are no landmark buildings within or adjacent to the project.
- d. There are no negative impacts on the priority viewsheds:
The viewsheds up and down East Washington Avenue are not negatively impacted as demonstrated by our viewshed studies.

Conformance with UDD No. 4 Requirements

This proposed design addresses the following Urban Design District 4 criteria:

- **Public Rights-of-Way-**
 - Terrace and sidewalk enlargement along East Washington will comply with Traffic Engineering standards. Public areas for circulation and bike parking are provided with required clearances. Landscape planters will be added along E Washington Ave and the street plaza in front of Butler Plaza will be reworked to provide an engaging pedestrian experience.
- **Off-Street Parking and Loading Areas**
 - Due to the presence of the Bus Rapid Transit Line and limited surface lot space, off-street parking on grade is limited to site bike parking stalls accessed via a shared driveway easement accessed from East Washington Ave. The remainder of new parking spaces are included in underground parking levels accessed from the existing building. This includes a substantial new bike parking area. All underground parking will connect through the existing parking beneath Butler Plaza and will not require any new curb cuts or parking entrances onto the streets.
- **Signs**
 - Building Signage will comply with MGO standards for group 2 districts
- **Building Design**
 - The primary material choice of masonry and glass complements the adjacent buildings along both N Butler St and East Washington Ave. The composite panel accent feature offers a modern detail, to the view corridor along East Washington Ave, particularly as it will sit adjacent to the forthcoming redevelopment of the St John's Church site.
- **Lighting**
 - Accent sconce lighting at various heights of the building façade provide a modern visual decoration. The quantity and placement is restrained. Functional lighting at grade is provided via exterior sconces and under canopy lighting, providing safe levels of lighting without excess glare. Additional lighting is provided on the community terrace with consideration to dark sky lighting design principles.
- **Landscaping**
 - Terraced landscape planters along East Washington provide a rich layering of hardscape and plantings against the building.
 - Enlargement of planting beds along North Butler St will provide additional planting variety in the existing concrete terrace.
 - A private outdoor plaza with ornamental trees, shrubbery and seating areas will provide an attractive gathering space for residents and restaurant guests.
 - All plantings have been selected as hardy species, fully compatible with the climate/growing conditions associated with an urban site.
- **Utility Service**
 - All utility services will be routed via underground service lines and connections.

Site Development Data:Densities:

Lot Area	30,745 S.F. / 0.70 acres (Parcel A & Lots 7&8)
Dwelling Units	76 D.U. (New project only)
Lot Area / D.U.	405 S.F./D.U.
Density	109 units/acre
Lot Coverage	25,906 S.F. / 84% (Parcel A & Lots 7&8)

Building Height:	11 Stories / 128'-6" (avg across slopes)
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Commercial Area:	8,893 S.F.
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Dwelling Unit Mix:

Studio	19
One Bedroom	37
Two Bedroom	19
Three Bedroom	1
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Total	76 D.U.

Vehicle Parking:

Underground	16
Surface parking	0
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Total	16 vehicle stalls

Bicycle Parking:

Garage Wall-Mount	23
Garage Floor-Mount	63
Commercial Surface	12
Guest Surface	8
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Total	106 bike stalls

Project Schedule:

It is anticipated that construction will start in spring of 2026 and be completed in Fall of 2027.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,



Duane Johnson, AIA, Partner