

June 16, 2025
Updated July 18, 2025



Ms. Meagan Tuttle
Director, Planning Division
City of Madison Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Ste 017
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

Re: Letter of Intent - Land Use Application Submittal
654 Williamson St (New address: 656 Williamson St)
KBA Project #2215

Ms. Meagan Tuttle:

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

Organizational Structure:

Owner:
John Fountain Inc.
P.O. Box 694
Madison, WI 53701
(608) 279 -7962
Contact: Brandon Cook
johnfountainrealty@gmail.com

Architect:
Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC
8401 Greenway Blvd., Ste. 900
Middleton, WI 53562
(608) 836-3690
Contact: Kevin Burow
kburow@knothebruce.com

Engineer:
Snyder & Associates, Inc.
5010 Voges Rd.
Madison, WI 53718
(608) 838-0444
Contact: Brian Arcand
barcand@snyder-associates.com

Landscape Design:
Paul Skidmore Landscape Architect
13 Red Maple Trail
Madison, WI 53717
(608) 826-0032
Paul Skidmore
paulskidmore@tds.net

Introduction:

This proposed mixed-use development on the site currently addressed as 654 Williamson Street occupies the corner of Williamson Street and South Blount Street. Revised address for the proposed development will be 656 Williamson St. Located within the Capitol Neighborhood, the site most recently was the location of the Red Caboose Daycare, which relocated their facility in 2023. This application requests approval for a new 5-story mixed-use building. The site is currently zoned TE (Traditional Employment) and will remain unchanged. This site is also located within the Third Lake Ridge Historic District. The proposed project was recently presented at the Landmarks Commission public hearing on 07/07/2025 and received unanimous approval. A formal Certificate of Appropriateness was issued on 07/09/2025.

The project is a major alteration / revision to the building design approved by the Plan Commission on March 27, 2023.

The scope of the changes from the original project include:

1. 8 additional dwelling units
2. Reduction of commercial space
3. Removal of the step-back on floors 4 and 5 along Williamson St.

Project Description:

The development will include 53 apartment units with 48 underground garage parking stalls. The building is 5 stories in height with a modest outdoor roof deck on the fifth floor above the corner entry. Per Landmark requirements, no visible balconies are located along the public street frontages so only the units along the rear face of the building include outdoor balconies. In designing the building we have incorporated a number of details to make it compatible with the historic nature of the Third Lake Ridge Historic District. The design addresses the general massing, rhythm, materials and ornamentation found within the immediate vicinity of the project as well as the historic district as a whole. Within the southwest edge of the district, the contributing building forms and materials skew heavily toward an industrial style. The proposed building is designed to continue the adjacent historic buildings' forms and materials, while introducing itself as a modern structure with complementary detailing and material accents.

Parking is provided on two separate garage levels. The first floor parking is accessed from Williamson Street and basement parking is accessed from South Blount Street. The site also has a public bus stop directly in front of the building, allowing for easy access to many areas of the City.

The proposed building's size, scale and use are consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan for this property, which calls for Community Mixed Use development. We have met or exceeded all the standards of TE zoning. This project is also located within the TOD Overlay.

City and Neighborhood Input:

We have met with City staff to discuss the proposed alterations to the originally-approved design. The meeting occurred on May 5, 2025, and included Zoning, Planning and Landmarks representatives. The project has been submitted for Landmarks Commission review on July 7, 2025.

The revised project was presented to the Marquette Neighborhood Preservation & Development Committee Meeting on February 11, 2025. The Board of the MNA voted to support the proposed revisions to the project on February 17, 2025. A copy of the MNA letter of support is included in the Land Use submittal documents.

Conditional Use Approval:

The proposed development requires conditional use approval to allow for dwelling units in a mixed-use building in the TE Zoning district. This project will provide critical housing along a desirable, walkable transportation corridor bridging downtown Madison with the Near East neighborhoods.

Williamson Street Design Guidelines (Build II) Compliance:

We acknowledge that the proposed design is inconsistent with a specific portion of the Build II guideline and respectfully request approval consideration given the following explanations:

- *Limitation of building height to 3-4 stories in order to preserve the view of the capitol from the sidewalk at mid-700 block of Jenifer St.*
 - **Building Height:** Similar to the 2023 approved version of this building, the proposed building height is 5 stories. Following approval in 2023, the originally-approved design was determined to be financially infeasible due to market-driven construction costs. Two re-design strategies were explored: (1) reduce the exterior masonry cladding and replace with more economical siding options; or (2) retain the higher-quality masonry cladding and increase the rentable area where possible. In conversations with Landmarks staff, the second strategy was preferred for historic district cohesiveness. The updated proposal eliminates the step-back along Williamson St, allowing for (6) additional residential units on floors 4 and 5. These 6 units in addition to (2) residential units on the first floor have been confirmed by the Owner/developer to support the construction costs of the project.
5 story building height is allowable for both the zoning district (TE) and the generalized future land use designation (CMU) for the site. The immediately adjacent building at 702 Williamson (The Edge) is a 6 story building.
 - **Capitol Dome View:** The attached massing view study of the prescribed capitol dome protected vantage point illustrates the reality of the “capitol view”. Due to existing canopy trees along both sides of Jenifer Street, the capitol dome is fully or partially obscured from the sidewalk view at all times of the year. Even during winter months, the alignment and density of the tree branches significantly obscure the capitol dome view from the sidewalk. We have included an illustrated massing of a hypothetical dome view, assuming the trees were removed to allow such a view to occur. Given these conditions, we respectfully request consideration of the proposed partial obstructed capitol dome view in order to allow for the construction of much needed housing units.

Demolition Standards

Demolition approval for the existing vacant building, most recently used as the Red Caboose Daycare, was granted at the March 27, 2023 Plan Commission meeting. Please reference LNDMAC-2025-00061 for current status of the demolition approval.

Site Development Data:

Densities:

Lot Area	16,279 S.F. / 0.37 acres
Dwelling Units	53 D.U.
Lot Area / D.U.	307 S.F./D.U.
Density	143 units/acre
Lot Coverage	13,625 S.F. / 83.6 %
Usable Open Space	Not required in TOD Overlay District
Building Height:	5 Stories / 67'-11"
Commercial Space	985 sq.ft.

Dwelling Unit Mix:

Studio	12
One Bedroom	30
<u>Two Bedroom</u>	<u>11</u>
Total	53 D.U.

Vehicle Parking:

Underground	48 (Includes 3 tandem stalls)
Surface parking lot	0
Total	48 vehicle stalls

Bicycle Parking:

Garage Wall-Mount	12
Garage Floor-Mount	41
Commercial Surface	4
<u>Guest Surface</u>	<u>6</u>
Total	63 bike stalls

Project Schedule:

It is anticipated that construction will start in Spring 2026 and be completed in the Summer of 2027.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely



Kevin Burow, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
Managing Member