

From: [Anne Monks](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Cc: [Verveer, Michael](#)
Subject: Plan Commission Nov. 3, 2025 Meeting - Agenda Item 5 - 139 W. Wilson St. conditional use
Date: Sunday, November 2, 2025 5:42:03 PM

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Dear Members of the Plan Commission,

As a resident of Wilson Street and a member of the Bassett Neighborhood Association, I have participated in neighborhood meetings on the 139 W. Wilson project. The developer has assured us that property management will make sure that the many vehicles visiting the building will use the narrow driveway and not block the sidewalk, cycle track or street right of way. They have assured us the micro units will be affordable for \$1600/month. And as recently as the last neighborhood meeting, they have said Epic workers are a target market. As you decide how to vote on this project, please carefully consider if the valuable Wilson Street right of way will be protected and if the housing created is likely to be truly affordable and healthy for people in future years.

The Wilson Street Right of Way

Wilson Street is an important downtown roadway serving many public purposes. A two way cycle track runs along the 139 frontage. Wilson Street is the only westbound corridor on the south side of the square providing access to many government services and many visitors to the downtown. It is across the street from Dane County's public safety buildings with the need to serve residents of the jail, public visitors and emergency and law enforcement vehicles.

City officials should think long and hard before risking safe use of this right of way by approving a project that will burden it in ways more appropriate for an alley. Consider how often large garbage, recycling and service vehicles are needed for 320 units of housing. If they find an open driveway, they will have to back out across the cycle track where bikes can easily travel 30 miles an hour down the hill. Not to mention moves in and out, deliveries, transportation, and many other services for the building and its residents. There's a good chance that heavy police enforcement would often be needed on this block. That's not something people want to live with.

Affordable Housing

Everybody in Madison agrees our community needs more affordable housing. I also believe we need more livable housing that people, such as you and I, might want to live in over time.

Will this project's micro units be affordable? I don't think so. A high rise building on a narrow lot like this is very expensive to build and maintain. The rent on a square foot basis will be very expensive. In Madison's market, it is not a way to achieve truly affordable housing.

Sustainable Good Housing

It is also not a way to build livable housing.

- The view from most units will be the high rise next door.
- The building has very long, straight hallways typically associated with bad public housing that is no longer constructed.

- Only two elevators will often make elevator use difficult and in case of a fire alarm, elevators cannot be used.
- Parking if needed for employment, disability or any other reason must be leased from a public ramp if spaces are available.
- This location is inconveniently 6 blocks from the westbound BRT on the north side of the square.
- BRT routes are creating competition with many more convenient, more affordable walkable housing locations by E. Washington and University Avenue as the downtown continues to struggle with lack of retail and a lack of green space.
- High income workers, like Epic workers, are unlikely to rent units like this.

The 139 micro units will offer a relatively poor quality residential experience. Such housing may be feasible for a short time when there is a shortage of rental housing. When people move in, they will often move out quickly as they find something better. When housing supply catches up with housing demand, apartments like this become a last resort, unable to cover expenses and financially troubled. That's not housing people want to live in.

Members of the Plan Commission, I hope you will consider these issues as you decide how to vote. As someone whose top professional goal has been to have more affordable good housing in Madison, I feel a responsibility to speak out when I see a train wreck coming.

Sincerely,

Anne Monks

343 W. Wilson St.

November 2, 2025

To Madison Plan Commissioners:

**Project Approval Must Be Rejected or Placed on Hold
Critical Deficiencies in Parking and Vertical Access**

The project proposal for 139 E. Wilson Street, as currently submitted, contains **critical deficiencies** related to on-site parking and elevator service that prevent a finding that it meets the City's Conditional Use Approval Standards 1 (Public Safety/Welfare) and 3 (Impairment of Neighborhood Property). Therefore, project approval **must be placed on hold** until comprehensive, professional analyses are provided to the neighborhood. The project should not advance as proposed.

- **Contradictory traffic data:** A Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) for the neighboring Adria project projected a very large volume of new daily vehicle trips. The stalled project at 131 W. Wilson Street and its commercial component would also contribute significant traffic to the immediate vicinity.
 - **Action Requested:** Without a project-specific TIA for this 320-unit building with zero on-site parking, the full impact of adding hundreds of daily vehicle trips to an already congested and constrained Wilson Street corridor cannot be accurately assessed. This project must be viewed as part of three buildings impacting the Wilson-Henry-Hamilton intersection.
 - The project may add many cars to already-congested street parking slots in the Bassett neighborhood. This will impact users of the Dane County Courthouse and people attending Downtown Madison events such as Concerts on the Square as well as contractors serving nearby buildings.
- **Potential code violations for high-rise buildings:** Under Wisconsin law, a 16-story building is defined as a high-rise with specific elevator requirements related to safety and accessibility. While the proposal may meet the minimum code requirements, it fails to meet the functional and performance needs of a building of this scale. A code-compliant system may still be functionally insufficient for 320 units.
 - **Action Requested:** The applicant must provide a detailed elevator traffic analysis for the proposed building to justify the capacity and demonstrate compliance with, or exceedance of, generally accepted design standards for multi-family residential projects of this size. This analysis should account for peak demand periods, including tenant move-ins and move-outs.

- **Building layout:** Elevators should be strategically placed so that the distance to the farthest unit does not exceed 150 feet. The layout of the 16 floors and 320 units will affect whether three or four passenger elevators are needed to meet this accessibility standard.
 - The provision of only two elevators for a 16-story, 320-unit building is inadequate for resident needs and likely fails to meet accepted performance and safety standards.

The applicant has failed to provide the "substantial evidence" required by State law to address these impacts. Absent the required analyses, the Plan Commission cannot make the necessary finding that the project meets the conditional use standards.

1. Failure to Address Parking Externalities and Traffic Safety

The lack of any on-site parking or car-sharing options for residents of a 300-plus unit building is an unacceptable transfer of cost and burden to the adjacent neighborhood, directly violating Conditional Use Standards 1 and 3.

Mandatory Parking and Traffic Analysis

The proposed development's reliance on street parking and its projected high-volume ride-share/delivery traffic **mandates a professionally-developed, third-party parking and traffic analysis**. The applicant's proposal does not establish the necessary data points, including:

- Impacts on the **adjacent neighborhood residents** and existing street parking conflicts.
- Availability and accessibility of alternative parking (e.g., existing or potential shared parking agreements).
- The characteristics of the use, including peak parking demand times.

Exacerbating Existing Neighborhood Parking Stress

The assumption that residents of newer developments will solely use alternative transportation does not align with reality.

- **Existing Capacity Overload:** City of Madison data for the Residential Parking Zone encompassing the Bassett neighborhood indicates **402 permits issued for only 354 permit parking spaces**. This area is already over-permitted and at capacity.

- **Transferring Cost to the Neighborhood:** New residents will be unable to obtain a residential permit under current City policy. This transfers the burden and cost of parking to the neighborhood by generating new demand for non-permit street parking, interfering with existing Bassett residents who purchase Residential Parking Permits.
- **Plan Conflict:** The **Bassett neighborhood plan states on Page 36:** “New developments should provide sufficient parking to meet their needs” and notes that street parking is generally at capacity.
- **Downtown Plan:** The City of Madison’s Downtown Plan did not anticipate a 300-plus unit apartment development with no on-site parking and provides no recommendation for dealing with the externalities created by a project of this nature.

Driveway and Site Circulation Deficiencies: Public Safety Hazards (Standard 1)

The limited site access will create significant and foreseeable public safety hazards.

- **Inadequate Space:** The drive area is insufficient to handle simultaneous high-volume traffic from delivery vehicles, trash/recycling trucks, ride-shares, and tenant move-ins/outs.
- **Public Right-of-Way Blockage:** The designated turn-around area is too small for larger delivery trucks, forcing them to **back into heavily used traffic lanes and block the public cycle track or sidewalk.**
- **Compromised Pedestrian Access:** Combining general vehicle access with the designated pedestrian lake access creates an immediate conflict and **safety hazard** for pedestrians and cyclists.

2. Inadequate Vertical Transportation System (Elevator Service)

A 16-story, 320-unit building with only two elevators is **functionally and logistically inadequate**, failing to meet industry standards for safety, performance, and accessibility.

Violation of Industry Standards and Safety

The proposed elevator service is dramatically undersized for the building's height and unit count, directly compromising resident safety and welfare (Standard 1).

- **Industry Standard:** The widely-accepted guideline suggests **one elevator for every 90 units** in a multi-family residential complex. For this 320-unit proposal, this minimum translates to $320 \text{ units} \div 90 = \sim 3.55$ elevators. Two elevators are less than **60%** of the industry-recommended minimum.
- **Precedent of Adjacent Developments:** All recently built developments on Wilson Street recognize the necessity of providing **three resident elevators** (e.g., The Adria, the approved 131 W. Wilson project, and the newly opened One09 development). The proposed design **ignores this established standard**.
- **Congestion and Wait Times:** With only two elevators, the average waiting time during peak hours will significantly exceed the target of 40-60 seconds, leading to a poor resident experience and functional deficiency.
- **Safety and Maintenance Risk:** When one of only two elevators is out of service for maintenance, repairs, or resident moves, the entire 16-story building's traffic falls on a single unit. For over 300 units, this would cause **severe congestion and create safety hazards** while potentially violating accessibility codes.

The requirement to revise the number of elevators will dramatically alter the floor plates and unit count, which may impact the project's financial viability. This concern, however, does not justify the approval of an inadequate and potentially unsafe design.

For Conditional Use permits the **ordinance requires that the Plan Commission must find that all of the conditions of the applicable Approval Standards are met.**

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Smith

From: [Josh Olson](#)
To: [Plan Commission Comments](#)
Subject: Support 139 W Wilson St
Date: Monday, November 3, 2025 9:08:53 AM
Attachments: [image.png](#)

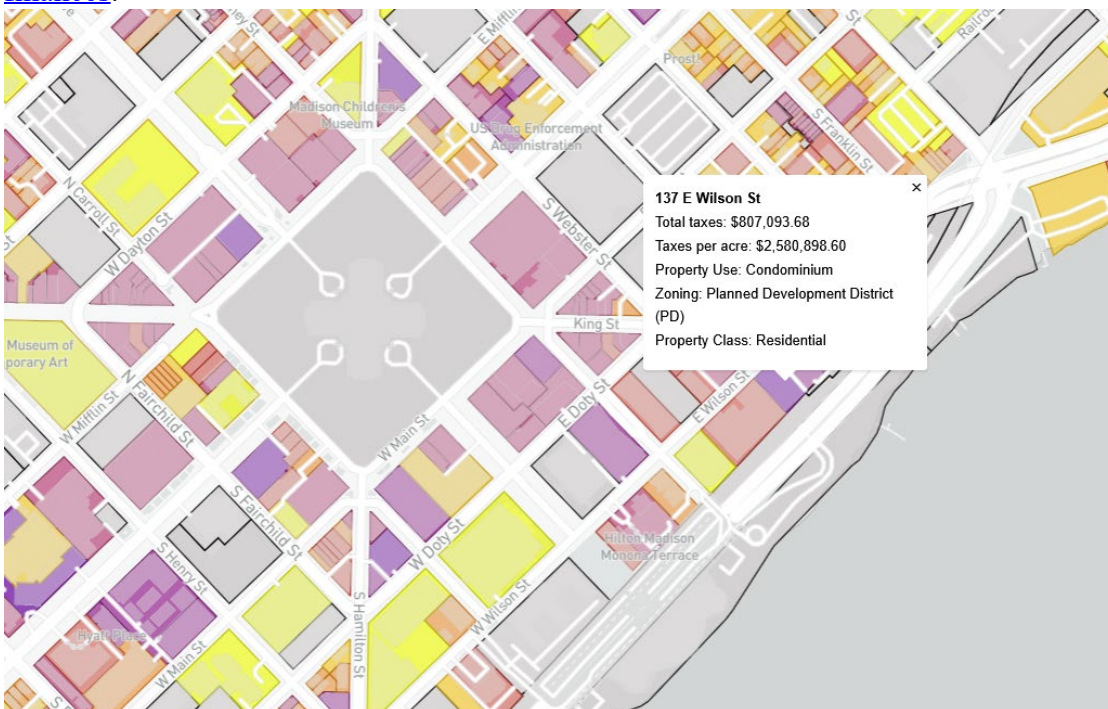
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Hi,

In general I want to be supportive of different styles of buildings in Madison. Far too often we will say no to something that "won't work with the neighborhood/culture/infrastructure" just because no one has done it before. If it might be great; we just need to be willing to experiment with new kinds of housing.

139 E Wilson St. feels like one of these projects. I love the density of the building near our downtown center. I think about the neighboring 137 E Wilson and [it's impact on the city's finances](#):



Property downtown is extremely valuable and with how our current assessment law works, high value properties on small amounts of land takes on a larger burden of the property tax levy. It would also add to net new construction, allowing us to try and reduce the amount we need to take to referendum.

These arguments don't matter for Plan Commission though, it's your responsibility to look at the standards and determine if this building has met them. If it has, then we might benefit from what I discussed above.

I see the opponents arguments about the lack of loading zones. If everyone orders DoorDash

or uses an Uber to get around the City that would lead to congestion.

But maybe the congestion will resolve itself if people see the annoyance of the congestion?

The great thing about this building is that it's near restaurants and Capitol Centre Market. It's on the new bike track and is close to BRT. Is the demand for private vehicles really there or is it a boogeyman trying to stop something different/unsual from being built?

Other cities are able to accomplish this density without these concerns. Maybe we need to look to see what's different with their infrastructure, and what we could adopt to make something like this more feasible. Or maybe we need to recognize that this can work and "first of its kind" is not always a valid excuse to not build something.

I lean yes towards support and I'm interested to listen to the discussion of the merits of standards 3 and 5.

Josh Olson