



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 131-133 W Wilson Street
Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building in UMX Zoning – Advisory Recommendation Requested
Legistar File ID #: [73562](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Kirk Keller, Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP | The Moment, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is seeking an Initial/Final Recommendation to the Plan Commission for a proposed fifteen-story mixed-use building containing 263 luxury residential units, 6,887 square feet of commercial space, and approximately 251 enclosed vehicle parking spaces.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **advisory** body on this request. Section [28.076\(4\)\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: “All new buildings that are greater than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four stories shall obtain Conditional Use approval. In addition, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.” More specifically, as it relates to the conditional use standards, the UDC should give consideration to:

Conditional Use Standard 9 states, in part, that: “When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district.”

As noted above, the UDC is an advisory body on this request. Staff recommends the Commission’s findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission be framed as a motion based on the applicable review criteria, including those that pertain to conditional use requests. Additionally, while the UDC utilizes the Initial/Final Approval framework in certain situations, as an advisory recommendation, staff believes it would be procedurally preferable to provide a singular motion with the Commission’s findings and recommendations.

Related Zoning Information: The property is zoned Urban Mixed-Use (UMX). The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a conditional use under the Zoning Code. In addition, the Capital View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development. As noted in the Zoning Code, the maximum ground story height is 18 feet, minimum 12 feet, and the maximum story height for upper stories is 14 feet. The proposed building is **not** consistent with these requirements as the ground floor story height is only 11 feet.

The Zoning Code also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in the UMX zoning district. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX zone district are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

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](#). As noted in the Downtown Plan, the maximum recommended height is up to the Capital View Preservation Limit.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development and provide findings and recommendations based on the aforementioned standards, as well as the comments noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments:

- **Building Height and Projections into Capitol View.** As noted above, the Capitol View Preservation Limits will apply to the project site. Based on the information provided, while the proposed building **does** appear to meet those limitations, the elevator overrun **does** project into the Capitol View Preservation Limit just over five feet. Overall building height is measured from grade to the top of the parapet wall, which appears to be a little more than a foot below the maximum height. Provided the data is correctly represented, the maximum permitted height that would be permitted is shown as CVPH on the building section plan.

While there appears to be a projection into the Capitol View Preservation Limit, limited projections and elevator overruns above this height limit are only allowed with Conditional Use approval. In accordance with State Statute and City Ordinance, such projections are only allowed with conditional use approval, which is the jurisdiction of the Plan Commission.

- **Long Views.** Given the number of recent development proposals along the East and West Wilson Street corridor and the prominence of this site from Lake Monona and John Nolen Drive, consideration should be given to the overall cityscape and how the proposed development contributes the changing “skyline.” Staff refers the Commission to their Informational Presentation comments which encouraged a more dynamic or distinguishable approach to the overall building design in terms of roof forms and footprint, as well as coloration. Staff requests UDC provide findings related to the long views of the building.
- **Building Composition and Design.** As noted in the Commission’s informational Presentation comments, with regard to the overall building design, the Commission previously identified the following design considerations:
 - The amount of glazing on the building and the consistent application across all four facades on the upper creating a “glass box” appearance,
 - Incorporating elements of the upper floors into the design of the building’s base, and
 - Rethinking the “layer cake” top of the building,
 - Simplification and consistency in the treatment of columns.

Staff requests the Commission make findings and a recommendation on the overall building design and composition as it relates to the design guidelines, as well as the Commission’s Information Presentation comments.

- **Materials.** The building material palette primarily consists of a metal panel system, cast stone, and glass. Staff notes the building material standards per the UMX zone district, footnote E, which states that: *“Metal panels shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal.”* As proposed and shown in the renderings, the proposed metal panel does not appear to meet this standard. Staff requests the Commission make findings and a recommendation related to the overall material palette and composition specifically as it relates to conditional use standard No. 9, as noted above.

- **Landscape.** As shown on the landscape plans, there are limited landscape elements proposed along the street side of the building on the project site with the exception of two beds flanking the concrete drive access to the underground parking garage and small individual planters on raised porches. As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, the Commission encouraged consideration be given to providing adequate room for landscape along the street frontage of the property versus building to the property line, layering of the public and semi-public realms, and incorporating ample landscape in the rooftop amenity spaces. Staff requests the UDC make a recommendation related to the overall landscape design, especially as it relates to creating an active streetscape and enhanced pedestrian environment along W Wilson Street, providing year-round screening for blank wall expanses, softening hardscape areas and providing texture and color in useable open spaces, as well as the shade tolerance of the proposed plantings.

*Staff notes that the landscape improvements shown in the right-of-way are not part of the UDC's review purview, which is limited to improvements on privately owned property. It is important to note that even if approved, right-of-way landscape cannot be counted towards satisfying the required landscape points on site. All improvements in the right-of-way would be subject to further review and approval by Real Estate, Traffic Engineering and Forestry and are subject to change based on the execution of a developer's agreement.

- **Lighting.** The photometric plan appears to have inconsistencies with the City's Outdoor Lighting requirements (Section 29.36, MGO) for medium level activity areas, including light levels in excess of 10.0 footcandles in pedestrian. In addition, lighting details were not provided for the rooftop amenity space on the lakeside of the building.

As a potential code compliance issue, the applicant is advised that an updated photometric plan and fixture cutsheets, including those for the under canopy lighting, consistent with MGO Section 29.36, will be required to be submitted for review and approval prior to permitting.

- **Signage.** While signage is shown on the elevations, separate review and approval will be required. Staff notes that the signage shown on the east elevation is not allowed by the Sign Code as it is a non-street/non-parking lot facing façade. In addition, along the W Wilson Street elevations, only one sign is allowed per street facing façade per tenant, where there are five signs currently shown. As depicted on the plans, special approval as part of a Comprehensive Design Review is required for the proposed signage. Staff requests the UDC provide comments related to the proposed signage, in terms of location (identifiable sign areas) and size.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the September 21, 2022, Informational Presentation are provided below:

- Overall the project is decent, but it's just like every other project we see. We talk about adding to the skyline, why do we continue to take the safe approach with the same materials and forms? I would love to see something more dynamic in terms of design. It's not unique or as special as it could be. Do something outside the box to really enhance the skyline.
- The wood tones and beiges are very safe and familiar. That's something the UDC could be convinced to move away from.
- The downtown area is redeveloping, but all of them look the same with nothing new. It's a mistake to not want to distinguish yourself from all the other new development in this area. There is a group of people in the Capitol Neighborhood that think the opposite, that we should maintain some of that 1970s

architecture before it is all lost. There are some historic buildings in this neighborhood that use the brick and mortar tones. I would look at breaking up the façade so it's not one tall box, layering it a bit more.

- I appreciate the amount of detail at this Informational level, it gives us a lot to talk about. It's a unique position to see the other proposed designs and many of them are approved and going up. I do think that given the passion in your intent, this does seem to be a block with some projecting balcony fins. The overall mass is still quite dominant, I agree that the top story is a nice touch but this doesn't look a whole lot different than some other projects we reviewed tonight. I'd encourage you to keep going and go further.
- Is that Kalwall proposed as thinner bands with darker orange?
 - Yes, bringing wood tone material underneath the roof and balcony forms to integrate it onto this to get some motion along this side of John Nolen Drive. The lighter pieces you see would be the Kalwall material, with a hammered textured and colored concrete along the base in a mixture of materials.
- There's a little more character in that base expression, can some of that energy start to find its way to other parts of the project?
- I commend the L-shape you have so that the portion facing the lake is seventy-feet, then steps back. That's an interesting idea, I also appreciate the moving trucks going inside the building, Wilson Street is already congested. The replacement building next door will be ten or twelve stories and no longer purple. That's affordable housing, as we watch these buildings its good for us to consider what the streetscape feels like, that it's inclusive. We see beautiful façades rendered, not everyone is living in a penthouse.
 - We are very aware of the 139 project and have kept a good separation from this property to be able to step back more than fifty-feet in areas.
- I do like the cap you have, and I appreciate pursuing timelessness, but you may be erring on the side of being safe. On the opposite side is consideration of that streetscape and space for street trees. I'm not sure how this is impacted by some of the City's latest zoning efforts to create space for a tree canopy but this appears tight between the sidewalk and terrace. I'd encourage you to think about those street trees and how important they are. The previous building had this deep setback, a plinth, and an outdoor patio instead of just building right up to the public realm. The activity you're showing here is much nicer, but I want to make sure there is that appropriate void space for the public realm and space for the street trees. Incorporate layers between public and semi-public realms.
- On the terrace it would be nice to layer in some planting there, incorporate substantial real greenery. If you could see that from John Nolen Drive, that would be wonderful, but also for someone using the space.
 - We have a cistern and green roof, and are reusing gray water before dispersing it, as well as solar panels and green absorption.
- Every side of this building has the same treatment. The lot next to it will eventually be developed with a very tall building, with people looking at each other just a few feet away, but you've pretty much designed a glass box. Aside from having shades everywhere, I wonder if there could be more deliberation of how each of these façades are treated. The elevations show explicitly that each side is more or less a glass box with some interruptions. I struggle with that, I'm not sure if the result of your design intent is really going to be effective.
- The base of the building from the John Nolen side is a little busy. I'm not opposed to color or articulation in the Kalwall, but now it's seen as potentially four different segments. Bring one of those design intents around the corner, you could simplify that quite a bit and still have interest and color without fracturing what is essentially a solid base.
- The terrace needs a lot more green, I would encourage something more permanent there.
- The front of the building has a lot going on, you can see the exposed concrete columns through the glass inside the building, you have traditional paneled columns at the front. Simplifying your language of elements would go really far into making this truly timeless.

- With the affordable housing proposal next door, I'd like to highlight how important it is to work with that developer who will be your neighbor. People who are middle to low income, when they drive down these streets, to know there is affordable housing next to this. I've heard way too many times the idea that 'I want to live here but I don't want those people living next to me.' We don't want to create spaces where there is tension between neighbors. Work together rather than developments growing against each other.
- It's a dynamic skyline along here and resonates with me, but we're seeing a sameness with everybody wanting to max out the height, and it's starting to grate on me, having everyone asking for this exception. The long views of these projects, lay a ruler along the top because they're all building to the same height, it's getting ridiculous.
- There are a lot of things to like, the shape, it steps back, some of the treatments, the wood look underneath introduces a texture and color I find appealing, But you are missing opportunities to do more. The tannish sections in the middle between the balconies with champagne mica, why can there not be articulation in there, or substantial color changes? A dozen stories of beige is a missed opportunity to do something there. It's a luxury high rise, if you're calling it the Moment and marketing it as such, you should design it so. I agree with the neighborhood that this design doesn't reach that level.
- I agree about getting substantial greenery on the terrace, and I'm glad to hear about potential solar.
- I'm glad there's some thought going into making the base of the parking garage an attractive part too, but I'm not sure why the orange just stops and becomes a concrete wall. The surfaces here are crying out for some other type of expression to the people driving by every day.
- Rethink the layer-cake top. The top could be something special, maybe a different color and more attitude given to the rest of the conservative composition.

**ATTACHMENT:
28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
 - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
 - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
 - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
 - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.