

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

October 8, 2025

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION



Project Address: 7103 Millpond Road and 4402 Brandt Road
Application Type: Public Building for the Dane County Sustainability Campus
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [88296](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Allison Rath sack, John Welch, Dane County Dept. of Waste & Renewables | Austen Conrad, Strang, Inc.

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of three buildings as the initial phase of development of the Dane County Sustainability Campus, including a Scale House, Maintenance Shop, and Education and Administration Center. Future phases will include the construction of a residential drop-off facility and business park.

Project Schedule:

- UDC received an Informational Presentation on May 28, 2025.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this project at the October 20, 2025, meeting.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an approving body on this request. Pursuant to MGO Section 33.24(4)(d), “*The UDC shall approve plans for all buildings proposed to be built or expanded in the City by the State of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, the City of Madison, Dane County, the Federal Government or any other local governmental entity which has the power to levy taxes on property located within the City.*”

Staff note that the UDC’s approving authority is limited to the buildings themselves; comments related to landscaping would only be advisory in nature.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings as required for public buildings. While staff do not have specific concerns with regard to the proposed buildings, potential design considerations for the Commission’s review and comment are identified below:

- **Building Design and Materials**, including as it relates to creating a cohesive campus appearance.

Generally, and in summary, the Commission’s Informational Presentation comments are provided below for reference:

- Overall, consideration should be given to building proportions and maintaining more consistent material applications across the collection of buildings,

- Consideration should be given to Incorporating sizing and reveals in materials to accentuate the design of the wood,
- Relocating gutter downspouts away from the building entries,
- Incorporating more masonry into the Education Building to achieve a similar design aesthetic as the Scale House,
- Giving another look at the design of the Maintenance Shop, which appears to be blockier than the other buildings; incorporating a continuous horizontal or vertical articulation may be beneficial, and
- Giving consideration to screening materials, including layering vegetation along blank walls and maintaining consistency in materials and colors if fences or walls are used.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments and Discussion

As a reference, the Commission's comments and discussion from the May 28, 2025, Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission commented that this is a different type of project. They liked the organization and layout of the plan, but suggested the applicant be honest with the materials, incorporate sizing and reveals with materials to accentuate the design of the wood, and to look at moving the gutter placement away from the entries.

The Commission inquired about the material selection and color, lack of articulation and integration of the Education Building in the northwest view. There is no horizontal datum line that carries across the building. The south view of the Scale House, the masonry is carrying the other materials and making the design; is it possible to incorporate that into the Education Building? When designing the northwest view of the Education Building, were you thinking about future buildings and where there are similar materials? These buildings will establish a baseline for the future buildings. The applicant noted that they have been thinking about that, but that it is unclear who will be bringing those buildings forward.

The Commission asked about the color and materials of the mechanical screening on the east elevation of the Education Building being the same. The applicant clarified that that will be a clear anodized aluminum, it is the same color so that it is intended to blend in.

The Commission asked about the depth and angles of the solar shades. The applicant noted that the horizontal sun shading is sized to maximum the shading during summer, while allowing for some solar heat gain in the winter.

The Commission noted that the Maintenance Shop needs another look at the material articulation and integration; it looks blockier and having something continuous horizontally or vertically may be beneficial.

The Commission noted the project is handsome and on the right path, but doesn't show any sustainable features; this is the perfect place to play out those strategies with architecture, algae walls, brise-soleils, berming, etc. The applicant replied that it really comes down to budget on a very large site. There are a lot of progressive things happening on the interior of the buildings. The Commission discussed ways to use recycled materials to showcase sustainability, noting that it doesn't have to be expensive; looking at what identifies the site, some sort of recycled material in plaza or open spaces, or cladding on a blank wall – could be a great place to reuse materials.

The Commission noted the landscaping could be better integrated with the architecture. There are a few areas of that have fairly large blank walls, those are perfect places to layer in mid-level ornamental trees. Tree islands in the parking lot were suggested to help shade the pavement. There is an opportunity for large swaths of landscape material that is more than just aesthetics, but beneficial to pollinators. The site design is complicated, but realize it is a specified use.

The Commission encouraged the applicant to pay attention to proportions, particularly the northwest view of the Education Building, the height of the black brick and the corner look odd.