



Project Address: 1402 Wyoming Way

Application Type: Public Building for MMSD Gompers Elementary and Black Hawk Middle Schools
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [88480](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Scott Chehak, Madison Metropolitan School District | Susan Bowersox, OPN Architects

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a new two-story combined elementary and middle school on the unused portion of the site while the existing school remains open. Upon completion of the new construction the existing building will be demolished and replaced with surface parking and greenspace.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on June 11, 2025.
- The Plan Commission approved this request at their September 15, 2025, meeting.
- The UDC granted Initial Approval on September 3, 2025. The Initial Approval included the condition that the building design be refined to incorporate more color where feasible, including for example window frames, metal panels, window mullion extensions, fence color, etc.

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 as an item returning for Final Approval, the UDC's subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item is limited to the Initial Approval condition. It is the role of the UDC to focus only on whether that condition has been addressed.

Zoning Related Information: The project site is located in the Suburban Residential – Consistent 2 (SR-C2) zoning district. As noted in the Zoning Code, schools, public and private are allowed through the Conditional Use process. In addition, staff note that the maximum height for nonresidential uses in the SR-C2 zoning district is 35 feet.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the UDC's continued review and evaluation of this proposal for consistency with the conditions of approval as outlined below. The UDC's role is to ensure that the previously established condition has been met. The UDC cannot waive or change these requirements.

- The building design shall be refined to incorporate more color where feasible, including for example window frames, metal panels, window mullion extensions, fence color, etc.

As noted in the applicant's Letter of Intent and as reflected in the elevation drawings, color was integrated into the inside surface of the perforated sunshade panels and the metal panel insets in the window openings on all four sides of the building.

Staff believe this condition has been met.

Summary of UDC Initial Approval Discussion and Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments and questions from the September 3, 2025, Initial Approval are provided below.

The Commission commented on the missed opportunity to add color and whimsy to a school building. The Commission asked the applicant team if they had considered any other locations to add color. The applicant team indicated that they could study that more but noted that schools are 50-year buildings and the goal is the design and materials to be timeless. The applicant also cited budget constraints as a concern as often time color materials are more expensive.

The Commission noted it is a well-thought-out project, the massing works pretty well, but it needs more color in the architecture. A school screams activity, all things color, but this is a very bland building with the exception of the two entries. The applicant noted that these are the first two schools in the project list, and we want to be responsible with our budgets for the other schools to come. The Commission noted other places with metal panels that could take more color at the same cost.

The Commission noted that this is a complex project for both school populations. The trees and playground are the most exciting things because your eyes are drawn to color, for kids even more so. The northeast perspective drawings it seems like the building is still institutional looks and not in an educational way. While the endless debate about budgeting for school buildings is understandable, this is setting a precedent, we would encourage you to set a precedent for color. The Commission encouraged the applicant to study where color could be added. It is supposed to be a beacon in these neighborhoods where learning and creativity happens that are exciting – a study of where additional color could be. Whether that is mullion extensions or window frames. Every little bit would add something.

The Commission inquired about circulation, particularly #4, Golf View Road coming in from the north, is the turnaround straight across from that? The applicant noted that they are aligning the right-turn/left-turn exit with Golf View Road and have worked with Traffic Engineering and the MMSD traffic safety team.

The Commission discussed the series of stones forming an amphitheater to the west, near the bioretention basin and why that area was chosen as the location, given that you have to traverse a parking lot to get there? The applicant replied that it is necessary to keep a certain distance from the ball field, but they can absolutely look at it. The Commission further noted that the north corner of the building could work, where you could use the amphitheater to watch the sports happening, and somewhere you don't have to cross a parking lot to get to it.

The Commission inquired as to details of the chain link fence. The applicant replied a black color coated epoxy chain link fence is proposed around the 4-K playground only. The Commission commented that nothing screams cheap and dated like chain link fences. There is an opportunity for that element to take on a playful color, we would strongly recommend against using galvanized chain link fence anywhere; it would be well worth the small increase in budget to use a nicer, higher quality fence in those very public facing site design spaces.

The Commission talked about the roof area and that being an opportunity to demonstrate sustainability. The applicant noted they are planning on a PV array as-is practical and feasible. The Commission noted that if a vegetated roof could also come into the fold this would be the perfect place for it with the grade change and long views.

The Commission noted the beautiful major move with the landscape plan depicting significant areas as tall grass prairie; this is awesome that it's not all turf grass and has significant spaces. The oaks in the planting plan are good, you may consider diversifying them with other oak species within the White Oak family. Good ecological plan with beautiful spaces created bike access in a logical and prominent space near main entries, you have addressed our comments with trails and path access towards the northwest corner. You have a timeless and elegant design at both main entries, that composition is nice, but there are some really large expanses without color, including the northwest and east elevations.

The Commission talked about the lack of sustainability demonstrated in the architecture. The style of today may not be the style of tomorrow, using color can date a building. There is also a balance in not taking away from the intuitive wayfinding at the main entries but incorporating color on the very monotone east and west elevations. The solar is positive but wish there was more green use on such a vast space and recognize the budget constraints. If there's a place for color and whimsy it's a school. Overall, the Commission felt the project could use more visual excitement.

Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** with the condition that the building design be refined to incorporate more color where feasible, including for example window frames, metal panels, window mullion extensions, fence color, etc.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (4-0).