



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1605-1609 Monroe Street
Application Type: Informational Presentation
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Reviewed By: Jay Wendt, Principal Planner

The following project is before the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for an informational presentation. Based on the information provided, a formal approval request would require approval of two demolition permits and multiple conditional uses.

The Conditional Use approval standards state that the City Plan Commission shall not approve a conditional use without due consideration of the recommendations in the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan and any applicable, neighborhood, neighborhood development, or special area plan... Additionally, Conditional Use Standard 9 states, in part:

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. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation.

The Planning Division has concerns with aspects of this proposal that are not consistent with the City's adopted plans. This includes the specific recommendations of the Monroe Street Commercial District Plan (adopted 2007), that provides specific block-by-block redevelopment guidelines for properties along this corridor, including the subject site. Among the key recommendations for the subject block is having building heights between 2-4 stories (with the third and/or fourth stories set back from the front façade). The general design guidelines note the desirability of "dominant" corner entrance features on corner sites and that the base of buildings should be detailed to enhance the "human scale qualities of the building." The Plan is available at <https://www.cityofmadison.com/planning/pdf/monroe.pdf>.

The Planning Division requests the UDC provides specific feedback on the following issues:

- **Building Height.** The five-story proposed building height exceeds that recommended in the plan. No proposal has yet been approved in the Monroe Street planning area where height exceeded that recommended in the Plan. The applicant has provided justification for the proposed height noting this is a low point from a grade standpoint and the desire for excess height to better frame the public Crazy Legs plaza, on the opposite side of Monroe Street.
- **Exposed Building Base / Relationship to Street.** Due to the proposed parking configuration and grade change along the street, portions the parking level are exposed up to five-plus feet near the sidewalk level. The Planning Division has concerned about this relationship. The introduction of a stair along Oakland Avenue has improved access at the corner, but the Planning Division remains concerned. The building is setback about a foot to add a planting area to soften this edge, though Planning also has concerns about the adequacy of this planting area and whether the suggested planting concept would survive.

- **Residential Entrance Orientation.** The Planning Division also seeks feedback on the residential entry location, which is accessed from the side of the building, not along the front.
- **Articulation.** The Planning Division looks for UDC's feedback on the side elevations, which are anticipated to be visible along the corridor. Staff appreciates the large amount of masonry utilized on all sides and does not object to metal accents. The end facades are articulated with both changes in plane and materials, and staff looks for feedback from the UDC on whether some simplification of these facades would be desirable.