



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 20, 22, 30 N Carroll Street

Application Type: Public Building and Development in the Downtown Core (DC) District
UDC is an Approving and Advisory Body

Legistar File ID #: [77005](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: George Austin | Wisconsin Historical Society

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of the existing Wisconsin History Museum and two adjoining properties at 20 and 22 North Carroll Street for the new 100,000 square-foot Wisconsin History Center.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Information Presentation at its April 19, 2023 meeting.
- The UDC granted Initial Approval with conditions at its August 16, 2023 meeting.
- The Plan Commission conditionally approved this item at its August 28, 2023, meeting (Legistar File ID [78194](#)).

Approval Standards: For public projects, the UDC is an **approving body** on the proposed building, 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."*

The Urban Design Commission ("UDC") is also an **advisory body** on this development request as the site is in the Downtown Core (DC) Zoning District. As such the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.

The UDC's initial action included conditions of approval that the Plan Commission also adopted as conditions of approval, including the requirement to return to the UDC for Final Approval.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, within the Downtown Core neighborhood. 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.

In addition, the Plan recommendations for development in this neighborhood generally speak to encouraging the highest intensity of development in this area and encouraging a mix of uses that will help to retain the area's vibrancy.

Summary of Design Considerations

It is the role of the UDC to review the revised drawings for consistency with the conditions of approval as outlined below. Please note that as conditions of approval, they are required to be met. Staff requests the UDC's final action to reflect the following:

1. The applicant update the plans to show an alternate to the materials selection with using the zinc panels more consistently, one that the design team would be open to and comfortable presenting.

As noted in the Commission's discussion on the Initial Approval motion, as the applicant team continues to make refinements to the building design consideration should be given to providing more zinc to provide less contrast, bringing the zinc material down to the ground versus the stainless steel material, as well as the texture and materials from a pedestrian scale/experience perspective along the Mifflin Street side of the building.

2. The applicant provide additional information for the Commission to better understand the resolution of the proposed exterior lighting.

Staff notes that the architectural lighting proposed at 404 lumens, does not trigger the cut-off requirements pursuant to MGO 29.36.

Staff notes that site lighting has been revised to reduce light levels, which are consistent with MGO 29.36, including uniformity ratio and average light levels, with the exception of the light levels at the main entrance. The applicant is advised that as part of the Site Plan Review process an updated lighting plan will be required. Average light levels in this area should be reduced to be 2.5 footcandles.

Staff refers the Commission to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines as part of the Commission's continued evaluation of lighting, including those guidelines which generally speak to maintaining light levels that are appropriate, but not excessive, limiting glare, and visual competition with the Capitol, etc.

Summary of UDC Initial Approval Discussion and Action

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the August 16, 2023, Initial Approval are provided below.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Could you speak to exterior lighting?
 - The intent is to wash the upper portion of the façade and to wash downward on the lower portion. We mistakenly submitted a fixture above 500 lumens. We have modified our design to have a fixture significantly lower, it is now 200 lumens instead of the 800 lumen fixture that is in the submittal materials. We will work with staff to update our submittal and lighting.
- Why did you go to 200, not 500?
 - We have to work with the City on the final fixture. We know we can work with 200 lumens; we have to figure out the proper strategy for lumen ratings and lighting control.
- You might as well not do anything if are going to use a 200-lumen fixture. The architecture and composition is so unique, the light enhances that in the evening.
- I also struggle with the material changes. Initially it was all the same material, which made sense, but now that the materials altered, it loses something. Now it is two different materials, on the same form, and it loses a little bit of that dynamic appeal. It was much stronger when the whole massing was the same material.
 - Part of it was in response to what we heard last time, but also to give the building a little more definition and character. It also helps our metaphor of changing perspectives and how we think about history and how we observe history in different ways. As you move towards Mifflin Street, this façade reads the same – the stainless steel, but as you move around you start to move toward this dynamic.
- It's not a deal breaker, I just thought it was stronger as one material.
- There was also some concern about the activation of the street – you reoriented the door from the plaza to Carroll. Seems to be meet the requirements with moving the door.
- A lot has not changed but something is off, it is the contrast because it's the State Historical Society; it's an institution and when I think of other institutions in town and around the Square, they've all done really well with one material and one primary color, but articulating it in so many different ways with rich texture. There's too much contrast between the stainless and the zinc and not enough subtlety. The form really gives you the bold statement. Thinking about is being more subtle and a more deliberate contrast between the yin and yang. It would make the building a little bit more timeless.
- I'm trying to understand the detailing between the primary panel and the strips, is there a reveal?
 - Yes, it is just a standard half-inch joint between the two. The two panels don't touch.
- So it really is flush?
 - Yes.
- Is the glass in the main lobby bird safe?
 - Yes, all the glass is bird safe.
- Could you speak to what we'd see related to that bird safe glass and how that compares to what's called out as the fritted glass?
 - The fritted glass on the upper box is a 40% frit, a small ¼" dot with ¾" spacing in a warm gray color. We thought about an orange color at one point, but now it became a warm grey frit. For the bird safe glass that frit is further spaced away. Like 2-4 inches, Zoning may call for a 2 x 2 spacing, but a tiny quarter-inch dot in a grid pattern.
- You like to envision the bird safe glass as not being there, it is not intended to be part of the design other than its function. I'm curious if there was consideration to bring some harmony between the two? To accomplish both an aesthetic thing with both the bird safe areas and relate that to the fritted glass.

- The element of the specialty exhibit wall is presented quite publicly, I don't think we know much about what is going on behind that wall. Could you tell us more about the special wall?
 - We're trying to figure that out too. We see it as an opportunity for story telling for the museum, something to draw you into the museum. An element that people see from the outside of the building, and draw them in. Back to the question about the frit, we thought about doing a gradient frit, we never really landed on something we thought worked well and felt harmonious with those two. With the distance between the stainless steel on the lower box before it gets to the fritted glass on the upper level, you would never perceive the two together. So it would make sense for the two to read as separate instead of together as one.
- The ceiling of the lobby is another opportunity, could you speak to that.
 - We're playing with the notion of the zinc box turning itself into the lobby. We're proposing the ceiling of the lobby space to be a zinc color, if we cannot get zinc material due to cost, but the whole thing will read as that zinc box.
- Where there is glass on this building is related to environmental concerns. Could you speak to what the function is that has the fritted glass?
 - We have a multi-purpose room for community gatherings, workshops, the solid portion is all gallery space, and as you get to the fifth floor this is all event space with views to the Capitol building. This lenticulation is all glass with the frit. Where it opens up completely is the fifth floor terrace, it softens that edge of the building, but that is also protected by the perforated panels on that edge.
- I can't stop looking at the zinc example, it's gorgeous. I would like to take a closer look at what happens at the street on this building because a lot of pedestrians will be around. That is where the building will be experienced. We talked about street furniture, interacting with the facade of the building. There is something nice about the zinc because it is earthy and warm. I sure wish the zinc were down lower where people could interact with it. The zinc is really unique and I wish people could get near it.
 - We do provide a little opportunity near at the edge closest to the Churchill building. We are proposing a taller granite piece here, and on top of that, we will have stainless steel. On the short side of that stainless steel will be zinc. You'll get the smaller piece coming down at the street. It will be closer to the public realm, but just in the narrow strips.
- If you revisit the warmer tone and the texture of it and play on color, if more of that came to the street it would be helpful and tie into the staircases. Are school buses coming in on Mifflin?
- (Secretary) Yes, but Carroll Street is an option as well.
- Either way, the precast that you have there, there is so much wonderful texture on this building and people will be walking by the corner. Not to say those panels shouldn't be used, but maybe it doesn't have to look like such a back door. Maybe school buses will get dropped off, but there will definitely be pedestrians. The way it is rendered right now it looks like an afterthought compared to the rest of the beauty of that building. That could use another look.
 - The buses will be on Carroll. It's also the service side so it needs to be more durable.
- Pedestrians are still on Mifflin – that texture is hard on your shoulder as you brush past.
 - The base here is granite about four feet high, and the ribbed precast panel above that. This is also the service side of the building, which is why we went with precast. We're still trying to bring texture and human scale texture. Durable material but something that we can shape to be more interesting.
- I am hoping that maybe there will be some street furniture or some building that steps out to become furniture.
 - That's also why we have opted to push the building back five feet. We definitely agree that street furniture would be a wonderful element.
- The staff memo talks about encroachments of the right-of-way? Is that handled by pushing it five feet?

- Yes, the entire building fits within the property line. The only thing in the right-of-way is the transformer vault, that's the only thing not entirely within the property line. We are reconfiguring that piece. Everything above ground is within the property.
- (Secretary) To clarify, the encroachment is shown on the landscape plan and it's the metal panels on the Carroll Street side. The only sheet that it is on is the landscape plan. If there is an encroachment, there is a separate process for Privilege in Streets.
 - That's incorrect, this is an old plan.
- I agree, revisit that material change, I think you had a stronger project from overall massing, pedestrian experience. Composition, not to say that you have too, but I think looking at it.
 - We studied the materiality significantly, from the Society's perspective for a bold, forward-looking building, to be clear in our study, one building with one color would be really maybe cleaner but we had a lot of conversations about what that means. Looking at other institutions that are one mono-color, and that says something. We felt intentional about the contrast between the two materials being bold, they are cleaner, one solid mass. We felt that one clean white box felt too museum-ey and less inclusive of the curiosities that are being introduced.
 - Another thing that is lovely about the zinc in such a prominent articulated way is that it is a weather material. Overt time it will change and it is a play in how things evolve. This building, in essence will be a living manifestation of that.
- In my opinion it's more zinc and less contrast. You do have the stainless steel accents that we are not seeing from other perspectives. You also have glass, stone, concrete, and perforated metal materials as well. This is going to be anything but a white box even if it you made it all stainless steel. There is something timeless to an institutional building like that could really stand to be one primary warm color. I agree with the comments about the zinc, not only is it warm and mined locally, but it also evokes that limestone warm color. On a cold winter's day – a bunch of stainless steel panels that are ice cold are not as warm or welcoming, as if they there strips inside an alternating lenticular wall system that would have all these subtle changes in orientation and direction and I guess I am talking about more subtlety and less of a polychromatic solution.
 - What is hard to see here is that the stainless steel will reflect its environment – if a tree is planted here, it will reflect green, on a bright sunny day it will be blueish. On a cold day it will be whitish grey, it takes on the characteristics of its context. Again this is a reflection of Wisconsin and part that is literal and metaphorical. You can literally see yourself here – that is the reason we are considering that as the primary material of the base of the building.
- In some districts, there is some restriction on highly reflective materials.
- (Secretary) Correct. We have been working with the Zoning Administrator who has determined that the stainless steel panel we are seeing today has been determined to be non-reflective.
- I know you are going to be using the Mifflin Street plaza as a staging area, will the redesign of that be coming back to us as a separate project down the road?
- (Secretary) That is up in the air at this point. It is a Public Works project and no changes are proposed at this time.
 - Yes, we will be replacing it in kind.

The Commission discussed the following:

- (Secretary) To kick things off, and offer a few considerations. First, with regard to architectural lighting, ultimately, some language should be included in the motion that speaks to architectural lighting. No information was provided in the submittal packet related to architectural lighting although it was provided in the presentation materials. The fixture that was provided did not meet requirements. I recommend the Commission consider a condition of approval that talks about providing a light fixture for architectural lighting either at 200 lumens or a fixture with a higher lumen rating that is code compliant. In addition, additional details with regard to light levels and how the fixtures are mounted to the building. Then we had a lot of conversation about the contrast between the stainless steel metal

panel and the zinc, also in terms of increasing the zinc and providing less of a contrast. Then with regard to the Carroll Street elevation and the extents of the zinc panel and bringing that down to the ground versus the stainless steel metal panel to create warmth and texture at the ground, and there was conversation about the Mifflin Street plaza elevation in terms of material palette there to provide more color and texture at the pedestrian scale.

- I've liked this project from the get-go, a really bold move in a prominent location. It didn't change a lot from the original submittal, but I found that when I looked at the first version versus the second, I thought the tweaks all look better to me. I'm definitely team zinc, I like the contrast of the stainless steel and the zinc, I am glad to hear that it is not particularly reflective. Good to hear it passes muster on reflectivity. The general massing and twisting and pivoting is really dynamic and interesting. Sometimes we hear about the philosophy behind the missioning of the building and how it manifests in the architecture. I think this team has really articulated in a meaningful way how the composition and materials reflect their mission. I often don't feel that way with some of the presentations. It's going to be a great addition, I can't wait to be inside when it's finished. I am pretty pleased with how this has been adjusted in the process.
- We have to make a motion, I think the project is better, but I don't think it's worth holding up the project. Is the request for Initial or Final Approval?
- The request is for Final Approval. We have to make the best recommendation we can, I'm not so certain that moving it through as quick as possible is the biggest concern of ours. We should be fair in our judgment, that's why we have this portion of the meeting.

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Harper, to grant Final Approval. Colors and textures are subjective. I think this meets most of our requirements in terms of pedestrian scale. With the conditions that were listed in terms of light fixtures, where they are placed and light levels, etc. and others on the Secretary's list.

- So the conditions are limited to the lighting, not the material contrast?
- Correct.

Discussion on the motion:

- Does it mean anything to approve something that could change at Plan Commission? Help me understand the process and where the project is now.
- (Secretary) This will head to Plan Commission on August 28th. Last time it was referred for a Zoning Code amendment related to glazing requirements in the zoning district.
- So, hypothetically, the Plan Commission could say no to demolition of the historic buildings, and then what would happen?
- (Secretary) If the Plan Commission denies the request for demolition, there is no demolition. However, it is possible for the development team appeal the Plan Commission's decision.
- I think we owe it to this project to see it again. It's very difficult for me to say, I don't think we've seen a more prominent location. While I have a lot of confidence in the design team, I would like to appeal for an Initial Approval. We saw a big change from last time with the materials and while I really like a lot of aspects we owe it this project to let it go to the Plan Commission to be discussed with an Initial Approval and ask to see it again.
- What would you like to see come back?
- There were questions about the lighting. Sounds like the team has a great plan in place to work it out but there are still some open questions there. We'd like to see some of the results of that deliberation. I'd like to see, it sounds like the design team has played with options on the material selection but we were not privy to seeing some of the other options. I would be asking to see some of those options come back for more zinc on the building as something to review as a body.
- The motion is for Final Approval, and we have to vote on that motion.

The motion failed on a vote of (2-3-1-1) with Asad and Harper voting yes; Rummel, Klehr and Knudson voting no; Von Below recused; and Chair Goodhart non-voting.

A motion was made by Knudson, seconded by Klehr, to grant Initial Approval, recommending the project return to the UDC to show an alternate uniformity to the materials selection with using the zinc panels more consistently, one that the design team would be open to and comfortable presenting, and to understand the resolution of the exterior lighting.

Discussion on the motion:

- With regard to the lighting, it's hard to replicate the ambient light around the Square. This building isn't going to be just this black thing because there is all sorts of ambient lighting. I sympathize with them because I'm sure it's difficult to replicate, but it will be a benefit to those on the roof terrace. But I agree, we want to see the details, especially on the mounting of that.
- If they were going to reconsider street furniture or details on how the building meets the street. That would be nice to see if they choose to do it.
- It would have to be in the confines of the property line. We can't compel them to provide street furniture in the right-of-way.
- In my opinion this is not a prescriptive command to change materials, it's about looking at the use of materials and maybe providing more zinc, but also some subtle contrast in the materials so that we are not designing the building for them.
- (Secretary) To clarify, how the building meets the street, was the Commission entertaining a friendly amendment or more of a comment?
- More a comment about street furniture, I understand that is not part of the purview, so never mind.
- (Secretary) We did talk about having the zinc panel come down versus the stainless steel. I wasn't sure if that was part of your commentary or not.
- I did talk about that and I think it is understood that that should be reconsidered and come back in the alternates that we will see.
- I'm a little conflicted, it's a gorgeous building but I struggle if it's in the right location. On our most historic block in the whole State of Wisconsin and, while it is a gorgeous building I am not sure this is the right place for this. The living manifestation of stories, those stories in the existing buildings. I will abstain and see what happens at Plan Commission.

Action

On a motion by Knudson, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-1-1-1) with Knudson, Klehr, Harper, and Asad voting yes; Rummel abstaining; Von Below recused; and Chair Goodhart non-voting.

The motion passed with the following recommendations:

1. That the project return to the UDC for final review and approval.
2. The applicant update the plans to show an alternate to the materials selection with using the zinc panels more consistently, one that the design team would be open to and comfortable presenting, and
3. The applicant provide additional information for the Commission to better understand the resolution of the proposed exterior lighting.