



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 222 South Bedford Street
Application Type: Demolition, Rezoning and Conditional Use
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Planning Division
Reviewed By: Jay Wendt, Principal Planner

The following summary report has been prepared for the consideration of the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for their meeting of April 27, 2016. A full report will be prepared prior to the Plan Commission consideration of this item.

There are three requests included with this proposal. The applicant first requests approval to rezone a portion of the site from DR-2 (Downtown Residential-2 District) to UMX (Urban Mixed Use District). Over half of the site is already zoned UMX. The second request is for a conditional use for a multi-family building with more than eight (8) units. The third request, which isn't before the UDC, is a demolition permit for the existing building. This project was before the UDC for an informational presentation on February 10, 2016.

Approval Standards and Downtown Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Commission is an approving body on this request and is not just advisory to the Plan Commission. Per the Zoning Code, new buildings proposed in the UMX zoning district must be approved by the UDC based on the design standards in Section 28.071(3) and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. The Zoning Administrator has reviewed the project for conformance with the standards of Section 28.071(3) and other portions of the Zoning Code. As a condition of approval, Zoning requests clarifying details to determine the project confirms with the garage door standards of Section 28.071(3)(a)3 and that door and window opening requirements of Section 28.071(3)(e) are met.¹

The [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) (Adopted December 2012) also apply to this project. They are intended to provide additional guidance on the design qualities of buildings within the Downtown Core and Urban Mixed Use Zoning Districts. These are considered to be expectations that must be addressed, but may be achieved in numerous ways. They are also intended to serve as a checklist to staff, the UDC, and Plan Commission of the primary elements to be evaluated when reviewing development proposals. The Planning Division believes the project could be found consistent with these guidelines with the following key exceptions:

- 1c. "Orientation." The street level of a building should be designed with active uses and architecture that engages the street/sidewalk in a contextually appropriate manner, and integrates the building architecture and the landscape architecture. (Site Design and Building Placement, p. 5)
- 2a. "Access and Site Circulation." Parking facilities beneath a building should not be considered a valid reason to establish an occupiable first floor more than three (3) feet above the grade of the sidewalk along any adjacent street, nor to include long segments of blank wall. (Site Design and Building Placement, p. 6)

¹ Per Section 28.071(3)(a)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. Per Section 28.071(3)(e), For street-facing facades, ground story window and door openings shall comprise a minimum of 15% of the façade area. The upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of 15% of the façade area per story. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.

- 2a. "Building Components." The lower levels of street facing facades should generally incorporate a higher level of visual interest and richer architectural detailing. One way to achieve this is to locate active use areas on lower level street side spaces within a building, which could be reflected in the exterior architecture of the corresponding facades. (Architecture, p. 12)

That review is in addition to 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. The Downtown Plan includes the site is within the Tobacco Warehouse district of Downtown, which is recommended to "continue its revitalization as a residential and office area blending new buildings and restoration of historic structures. Future emphasis should be on strengthening connections to surrounding areas and enhancing the streetscape and open spaces." 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.

Design Comments

The Planning Division raises the following design-related concerns:

- **Relationship with Street.** The Planning Division's primary design-related concern on this request is the building's relationship with the street, especially South Bedford Street. Concerns relate to both the height of the exposed building base above grade and the resulting stair, landing, and guardrails, which are located in close proximity to the sidewalk due to the proposed setback.

The proposed building would be set approximately 5.5 feet from the property line on Bedford Street and is about 6.5 feet from the back of the sidewalk. The landing/balcony guardrails will be located about two (2) feet from the edge of the sidewalk. (Please see the applicant's section drawings). Even with landscaping, the Planning Division is concerned with the impact of these features on the pedestrian environment considering their height, mass, and close proximity. As proposed, staff does not believe this relationship is consistent with the aforementioned guidelines from the adopted Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

From a context standpoint, front yard setbacks for nearby larger residential buildings generally vary between about five (5) and 10 feet. The Fourth Ward Condos, across West Doty Street to the north, is set back just over 10 feet while the Bedford Crossing project, located across South Bedford Street to the east is set back five (5) feet.

Since the last UDC presentation, the applicant has taken some efforts to improve the building's relationship with the street, though staff believes further modifications are necessary to fully address the guidelines. With the current proposal, the first floor / exposed base height along South Bedford Street ranges from about 3.5 to 5 feet above the sidewalk level. This also assumes a rebuilt sidewalk elevation where the abutting terrace has an increased 8% slope to raise the sidewalk level. City Engineering does not object to this sidewalk section. The applicant has also brought the level of brick lower to mask portions of the base.

Staff has met with the applicant to discuss the concerns and the possibility of providing a deeper setback along South Bedford Street. While increased setbacks could help address concerns, the applicant stated concerns that even moving the building back one foot to match the proposed Doty Street setback was concerning to them from a financial and programmatic standpoint.

- **HVAC Penetrations.** The known HVAC penetrations are located within a series of vertical louver strips that are integrated into façade recesses. While street-facing, these are oriented into the façade. Staff requests the applicant clarify there are no other penetrations as part of their presentation to the UDC.

Conclusion

The Planning Division believes that there are many positive aspects to the project's design and believes that the building would be complementary in character to the surrounding residential and office structures in the "Tobacco Warehouse" District of Downtown. While generally pleased with the architectural details above the building's base, staff concludes that design modifications are necessary to meet the adopted guidelines and improve the building's relationship with the street.

The Planning Division recommends the following specific modifications for the consideration of the Urban Design Commission, noting other modifications to building or setbacks may be required after UDC consideration of this item.

- The first floor of the building shall be set closer to grade, which now ranges from 3.5 to five feet above the sidewalk level. Such details shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission and by staff. Note, that this may result in the loss of some parking stalls and that possible impacts on the steepness of the ramp to underground parking will need to be reviewed with Traffic Engineering.
- Due to the proximity of the building to the property line, the applicant shall provide a revised base treatment beyond the proposed board-formed concrete proposed to add greater design interest. This treatment should be architecturally integrated into the building. This shall not include purely landscape solutions such as trellis features with climbing vines. Such details shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission and by staff.
- That the required guardrail details be approved by the Urban Design Commission and staff and should feature as open as a design as possible to limit their visual impacts on the sidewalk.

Please note, an attachment to this document includes the comments recommended by City reviewing agencies.