

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.

MADISON, WISCONSIN

December 1, 2025

Plan Commission
City of Madison

Re: 139 West Wilson Street

At your November 3 meeting this proposal was referred allowing the development team time to respond to concerns Commissioners brought up concerning Conditional Use Standards 3 & 5. In particular there were concerns with the function of the driveway access including: move ins / move outs, short term delivery and ride shares, refuse pick up, and service contractor vehicles.

The revised plans that were submitted after the November 3 meeting have not changed the dimensions of the driveway in any manner. The number of short-term parking and loading zone spaces has not changed. What has changed is that at a building exit with a new landing and stairway has reduced the area available for vehicle turn arounds. The short-term loading area farthest from the street is right up against the building with difficult backing and turning conditions for vehicles to maneuver to drive forward out to the street. Only small vehicles will be able to effectively use this space.

Approval Standard 3: The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner

Approval Standard 5: Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, parking supply, internal circulation improvements, including but not limited to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided.

The driveway is simply too narrow and too limited: The driveway/loading zones are inadequate to handle the amount of traffic from food and package delivery vehicles, trash and recycling trucks, ride shares and taxis, as well as move-in, move-out vehicles that a 320 unit building without parking will generate daily. Much of this traffic will be unscheduled and not schedulable. Such traffic will likely overwhelm that space at times and lead to blockage of the sidewalk, cycle track and likely the traffic lane.

Inadequate turn-around space for large vehicles: The designated turn-around is too small for larger delivery and sanitation trucks. This will force them to perform high-risk, multi-point turns, potentially backing out into Wilson Street's heavy traffic. These maneuvers will create a significant hazard for pedestrians and cyclists as the vehicles back across the adjacent cycle track and sidewalk.

Turn-around path is not functional: Even for smaller delivery vehicles the designated turn-around space is too limited to function adequately. The development team stated to the neighborhood steering committee that all vehicles except for refuse trucks will be able to turn around and drive out in a forward direction to Wilson St. This proposition seems unlikely at best, especially at times when multiple vehicles are in the drive at the same time.

The code-required pedestrian exit path from lake side of the building will also be sharing this space. A designated pedestrian path is not provided. The visitor and resident cyclists will also be traversing through the vehicles in the driveway to their respective parking areas.

We also believe the proposal fails to meet Conditional Use Standard 1.

Approval Standard 1: The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.

Vehicles backing into the public right of way: All large trucks and many other vehicles will be backing out from the drive across a public sidewalk, a cycle track and into a single lane busy street. Conflicts and safety concerns abound for all other users of this public space.

Potential for public right-of-way blockage: During peak usage times, vehicles will have no choice but to drive away or block the public right-of-way, including the cycle track and sidewalk, creating a severe public safety issue.

Conflict between vehicles and pedestrians: The plan combines resident access to the lake side with a building exit and both visitor and resident bike parking areas with the primary drive area. The volume of vehicle traffic will place pedestrians at risk, directly contradicting the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

Snow removal: Snow removal from this drive space will be problematic without blocking the public right-of-way. The management plan indicates that snow will be removed to the rear or side of the building. Much of this area is covered with pergolas and amenity fixtures as well as trees and other landscaping limiting the area where snow can be piled. When removing snow from the site is required the development team suggested that dump trucks will pull into the drive and somehow turn around before exiting. As noted above, the layout creates severe turning radius limitations.

Comments on the management Plan:

The management plan is very short on details while expansive on aspirations to manage the inherent conflicts that will arise in the loading area.

There is no indication of what hours the manager and assistant manager will be on site. Assuming a standard 40 hour work week and that there is no overlap in their time on site this pair would at best cover 11.5 hours each day of a 7 day week. This timeframe is not likely to cover to full extent of the activities in the drive and loading zone areas. Clearly the managers will have many other obligations around the building, leaving driveway management to fill in the gaps in between those responsibilities.

The management plan indicates that for the peak 6 month turnover period there will be 16 move-in or move out events each week. On average this will be more than 2 each day 7 days a week.

While a manager or a live on-site staff person may be available 24/7 “to address emergency concerns” the likelihood that driveway congestions will meet the standard of an emergency seems remote. Likewise, residents reporting this type of issue seem unlikely.

It would be far better to design a site that inherently creates effective operation than to rely on manager intervention and unread signage. The development team has consistently resisted the neighborhood’s encouragement to create a functional design.

Recommendation:

We urge the Plan Commission to find that a number of the Approval Standards have not been met and to **deny** the request for a Conditional Use permit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan Cooper and Peter Ostlind
for the Bassett Neighborhood Steering Committee,
Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc.