



**Project Address:** 1601 N Sherman Avenue  
**Application Type:** Public Building for MMSD Sherman Middle and Malcom Shabazz High Schools  
**UDC is an Approving Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [88482](#)  
**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 middle school and high school to be constructed 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 new parking and greenspace.

**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 the UDC’s approving authority is limited to the buildings themselves; any comments related to landscaping would only be advisory in nature.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff request the UDC provide feedback and make findings as required for public buildings. While staff do not have specific concerns with regard to the proposed building, potential design considerations for the Commission’s review and comments are identified below:

- **Building Design and Materials**, including as it relates utilizing durable, high quality materials, as well as architectural design and detailing to maintain pedestrian scale, clearly define building entrances and positive building orientation to the street, minimize blank wall expanses, relationship and location of proposed building to existing accessory buildings to remain on site and maintaining the same level of design and detailing across all elevations.

In general, and in summary, the UDC’s Informational Presentation comments applauding the blue siding but did note that consideration should be given to incorporating more interest into the middle school entry at the ground level, minimizing and screening blank walls with landscape (i.e., ornamental trees or larger-scale plantings), and incorporating more articulation in the materials and transitions.

- **Lighting.** Staff note that while a lighting plan was included in the submittal materials, the plan reflects the previous site plan layout. Staff note, and the applicant is advised, that the plan will need to be updated to reflect the current site layout. In addition, staff note that while the proposed lighting appears to be consistent with MGO 29.36, Building Inspection staff will review lighting for compliance with MGO 29.36, which will be completed administratively as part of the Site Plan Review process.

## Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Discussion & Questions

As a reference, the Commission's comments and questions from the June 11, 2025, Informational Presentation are provided below.

- The Commission inquired about moving the building north to move the entry to Sherman, acknowledging the existing easement. The applicant replied they would love to, but the costs associated with moving the easement (neighborhood sewer) are too great.
- The Commission questioned the driveway between neighbors on Boyd. The applicant noted that the driveway entry is located on school property, and while some neighbors voiced concerns, they also understood the safety of keeping students off of Sherman Avenue.
- The Commission noted Shabazz is an alternative high school and inquired about alternative outdoor space for the students. The applicant noted outdoor education space has come up on both the schools. That is the importance of the shed, which stores the majority of their supplies.
- The Commission commented on the Logan Street exit being possibly awkward with the pedestrian crossing. The Sherman entrance could benefit from a feature as strong as what the high school has. The masonry color and bay and detailing is confusing. This is a huge scope of work, and we applaud what you're doing, and keep the blue siding on Shabazz.
- The Commission noted consideration for the bike and pedestrian site access where students don't have to cross driveways. The team is also encouraged to save as many Oak trees as possible.
- The Commission commented that the middle school entry plaza makes sense as a paved area, but could have something interesting happening in the ground plane and paving material, like a combination of jointing, sandblast textures or shapes, or permeable pavers, if the budget allowed.
- The Commission noted areas around the building with large blank walls, and recommend ornamental trees and larger scale plantings. It was further commented that the high school entry sequence feels narrow and forced, and suggested the applicant take a serious look at what an alternative to that might be.
- The Commission commented that the materials appear to stop for no reason, and needs more articulation, but praised the blue color. The building is anchoring itself pretty well, nice job with the volumes on both buildings, appreciate the concern with the budget.