

December 15, 2025

City of Madison
Planning Division
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 017
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-4635

RE: 2103 Sherman Avenue
Land Use Application

Dear Commission members:

On behalf of SARA Investment Real Estate, Sketchworks Architecture, LLC is submitting this letter of intent for a proposed mixed-use development located at 2103 Sherman Avenue.

Within this letter, we are requesting Conditional Use Permits for:

1. Quantity of dwelling units
2. Building height

Existing Conditions

The subject property is approximately 0.68 acres (30,022 SF), current use is a public parking lot void of any structures, limited terrace trees, and a few power poles. It is zoned Neighborhood Mixed-Use (NMU).

Development Overview

The new development seeks to help bridge the housing gap in an area of Madison underserved by available and lower cost housing options. SARA Investment Real Estate plans to bring a more affordable housing option to the Sherman Avenue corridor with this pet-friendly 5-story mixed-use building. It will have 86 residential apartment units, placed across all stories for a variety of living spaces and access points. The facility will house a fitness center, a 2nd floor club room with outdoor patio and green roof, individual storage rooms for residential tenants, and approximately 1,084-sf for a commercial tenant fronting Sherman Avenue.

The site is positioned on Route 28 and Route D of the Metro Transit System linking this housing development to places like EPIC in Verona, Mineral Pointe neighborhoods, University Avenue neighborhoods, downtown Madison and the Capitol, the Dane County Regional Airport, and as far east as Door Creek Park between Highway 94 and Cottage Grove Road, giving future residents a vast array of possibilities for employment and travel.

Zoning

The Neighborhood Mixed-Use district allows for the proposed plan. We are requesting a Conditional Use on two items. Below is an outline of the zoning regulations and how this building performs:

Uses:

- Dwelling units in mixed-use buildings
- >60 units (Conditional Use)
- Designed: 86 – **Conditional Use**

Side Yard Setback:

- North property line and McGuire Street are proposed Side Yards.
- Requirement: 5' (Distance between curb and property line is <15').
- Designed: 7'

Rear Yard Setback:

- Fordem Street is proposed rear of building.
- Requirement: 20'
- Designed: 25'

Maximum Lot Coverage:

- Requirement: 75% maximum coverage
- Designed: 72.5%
- Approximately 2,500-sf green roof for Storm Water Management

Maximum Height:

- Current text: 3 stories or 40 feet
- Generalized Future Land Use: 4 stories
- Designed: 5 stories / 65'-10 1/2" – **Conditional Use**

Site Design & Parking

The east to west building orientation provides two separate and distinct building entrances. Furthermore, Sherman Avenue and Fordem Avenue have a 6' differential that allows for two separate parking structures with internal ramping of the floor. Much of the remaining site will be pedestrian level accessible routes with landscaping beds, raised terraces and walk-ways, and multiple pedestrian entrance points.

The commercial tenant space is accessed directly from the Sherman Avenue sidewalk with storefront windows facing both Sherman Avenue and McGuire Street. The two stairs that provide residential access to all floors are located along McGuire Street, providing easy access to any direction needed for public transit, parks, and shopping.

The development team acknowledges this new building could have an immediate impact on its neighborhood. With input from Alder Julia Matthews and discussions with the neighboring business owner (Banzo), we have elected to incorporate a 24' wide drive lane on the northeast corner of our lot to assist Banzo with continued vehicle access from Fordem Avenue. Banzo currently accesses the back of their restaurant and neighboring building for food deliveries and catering vans via the existing parking lot. This access point will be restored during the construction process by this drive lane, allowing Banzo to maintain typical operations of their services and deliveries.

Parking is located on two different levels, providing 87 total parking stalls including 1 van accessible stall and 3 standard accessible stalls. The lower-level parking is accessed from Fordem Avenue with 2-way traffic inside, and the first-floor parking is accessed from Sherman Avenue with 2-way traffic inside. The two levels are accessed via stairs and elevators once inside the building.

Floor Plans

The lower level starts with the residential lobby, containing the mail and package room with seating area, one of two elevator and stair lobbies, the fitness room, long-term bicycle parking and tenant storage. This level also contains 49 parking stalls including a van accessible EV stall, one standard accessible stall, one standard EV stall and 10 EV ready stalls.

The first floor provides a 1,087-sf commercial tenant space that fronts Sherman Avenue and McGuire Street, including 5 residential units that are accessible from the inside of the building as well as walk-up access from McGuire Street. This level also contains the second covered parking garage with 38 parking stalls which include 1 standard accessible stalls, 1 standard accessible EV stall, one standard EV stall and 8 EV ready stalls.

Floors 2-5 contain the remainder of the residential apartments, including a 815-sf club room with 450-sf of outdoor terrace on the second floor overlooking McGuire Street. The building has a mix of unit types ranging from studio units to a 3-bedroom unit.

Residential dwelling unit summary:

Studio:	15 (17%)
1-bedroom:	54 (63%)
2-bedroom:	16 (19%)
3-bedroom:	1 (1%)
Total Units:	86

Exterior Design

This mid-rise, mixed-use structure utilizes contemporary design principles blended with traditional materials. Its massing, façade articulation, and ground-level treatment activate the streetscape while providing residential familiarity above. The massing is broken into distinct vertical sections to avoid a monolithic appearance. Step-backs at the upper levels and at the corners create visual interest and provide human scale at the base.

Material Palette

The façade utilizes a combination of materials to bring depth and character:

- **Primary Material: Sage Siding**
The majority of the upper residential floors are clad in horizontal siding, lending a timeless and durable appearance. This material roots the design in a traditional context while complementing the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Secondary Material: Light-Colored Cladding / Stone at the Base**
The ground floor and podium level use a lighter colored cast stone masonry and with warmer tones provided by light brown brick to visually differentiate the retail/commercial base from the residential levels above. This lighter banding expresses structural stability and enhances street presence.
- **Metal and Glass Accents:** Modern metal paneling and extensive glazing, especially around the corner balconies and recessed window bays, introduce contemporary contrast to the traditional brickwork.

Fenestration and Balcony Design

The building features:

- **Large Vertical Window Groupings:** These bring natural light deep into the units and create a rhythm along the façade.
- **Modern Framed Balconies:** Located primarily along the building's corner and select bays, the aluminum framed balconies project outward to animate the elevation. The corner stack of balconies emphasizes that portion of the building, creating a focal point.
- **Recessed Window Bays:** Subtle setbacks in the façade add shadow lines, breaking up the mass and giving the building a refined, layered appearance.

Ground-Level Treatment

The base of the building reads clearly as a retail podium, with:

- Large storefront glazing that enhances transparency and supports walkability.
- Metal canopy elements that provide shading and create a pedestrian-scaled environment.

- Repetitive structural bays that hint at the flexible retail unit divisions while maintaining an ordered architectural language.

The podium's lighter color and extensive glazing contrast with the upper floors, helping to visually ground the building while inviting street-level engagement.

Corner Emphasis

The building's prominent corners are expressed through increased transparency, vertical glazing, and stacked balconies. This gesture helps anchor the intersection and establishes the structure as a landmark within the streetscape.

Roofline and Upper Floors

The top floor features a mild shift in material to distinguish it from the main façade. Subtle parapet detailing provides a clean, modern termination to the elevation.

Contextual Integration

Surrounded by trees and sited along a wide suburban–urban transition street, the building balances scale with approachability. Its articulation and material hierarchy help it fit comfortably within a transitioning neighborhood.

Development Summary:

- Current Zoning: NMX (Neighborhood Mixed-use)
- Property Area: 0.68 acres (30,022 SF)
- Five-story mixed-use building
- 20,259 sf building footprint
- 86 residential dwelling units
- 1,087 sf commercial space
- 87 structured parking stalls
- 88 long-term bicycle parking stalls
- 12 short-term bicycle parking stalls
 - 10 for residential
 - 2 for commercial
- 2,500 sf green roof
- 12 TDM points required

Development Team:

Owner:

SARA Investment Real Estate
Dan Schwartz
dschwartz@saraInvest.com
1955 Atwood Avenue, Suite 201
Madison, WI 53704

Owners Representative:

Power Contracting & Development
Jon Powers
jpowers@powerscontracting.com

Architect:

Sketchworks Architecture, LLC
Ross Treichel
rtreichel@sketchworksarchitecture.com
2501 Parmenter Street, Suite 300A
Middleton, WI 53562

Civil Engineer:

D'Onofrio Kottke & Associates, Inc.
Bruce Hollar
bhollar@donofrio.cc
7530 Westward Way
Madison, WI 53717

Structural Engineer:

Echelon Structures, LLC.
Thomas Boehnen, Jr.
tboehnen@echelonstructures.com
3530 Timber Lane
Cross Planes, WI 53528

Project Schedule:

With this submittal, we are seeking approval for the two conditional uses and will be submitting for Site Plan Review shortly after approval. Construction start is planned for April 2026 with occupancy in summer of 2027.

Respectfully,



Ross Treichel, Project Manager
Sketchworks Architecture, LLC