



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 307 E Wilson Street
Application Type: Façade Alterations for Summit Credit Union in UMX Zoning
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [76206](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Steve Polacheck, Summit Credit Union | Alec Hembree, Strang, Inc.

Project Description: The applicant is proposing exterior façade alterations and parking lot landscape improvements to the existing Summit Credit Union Downtown Branch. The proposed alterations include the redesign of the front entrance volume, addition of a metal canopy structure, painting all facades, and adding metal panel accent band on the John Nolen Drive façade.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **approving** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *“All new buildings and additions that are less than twenty thousand (20,000) square-feet and are not approved pursuant to (a) above, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#).”*

At the June 14, 2023, UDC meeting the Commission referred action on this item to allow the applicant to address a number of design-related considerations. The Commission’s subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item should focus on whether those items have been adequately addressed.

Related Zoning Information: The property is zoned Urban Mixed-Use (UMX). While the UMX zone district outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings and modifications thereto, the applicability of those standards is only triggered with the addition of floor area. It is staff’s understanding that the floor area is not being added as part of this request.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area. As such development on the project site is subject to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

Summary of Design Considerations

It is the role of the UDC to review the revised drawings for consistency with the comments and conditions as outlined below from the Commission’s June 14, 2023 referral. Staff requests the UDC’s final action include consideration of the following:

- **Building Design.** Staff notes that positive changes to building design have occurred that seemingly address the Commission’s previous comments, including the redesign of the entry volume in mass and height, as well as changes to the color palette to reflect a more cohesive design across elevations and elements, including the canopy. Staff requests the UDC review the updated plans for consistency with their previous comments/conditions as noted below, and make findings.

UDC Comments/Conditions:

- Reduce the height of the entry volume to be more in line with the second floor window datum (dark grey datum or where the proposed Summit sign is located) on the E Wilson Street elevation.
 - Explore a way to more purposefully terminate the bottom of the metal panel accent feature on both sides of the building.
 - Minimize number of gray colors on the John Nolen Drive elevation.
- **Landscape.** Staff notes that based on review of the updated plans, the bike parking has been relocated, however the remaining comments/conditions pertaining to incorporating a tree into the landscape plan and a landscape wall along the E Wilson Street frontage have not.

UDC Comments/Conditions:

- Relocate the bike parking to the other side of the driveway, closer to the front entry and incorporate a tree into the landscape plan to replace the tree that was removed.
 - Incorporate a landscape wall into the E Wilson Street façade.
- **Lighting.** Based on review of the updated lighting plan, the site and rooftop lighting appears to be consistent with MGO 29.36. Staff notes that the proposed bollard fixture produces hot spots on the rooftop patio in excess of five footcandles. Bollard fixtures are typically associated with illuminating pedestrian pathways versus lighting patio areas. The Downtown Design Guidelines generally speak to fixtures being appropriate for the use and complimentary to the architecture. As such, consideration could be given to utilizing a fixture alternative that is better suited for the space, like a wall mount, low level in-ground, or railing mounted fixture, that would reduce the hot spots, as well as maintain the clear pedestrian pathway.

UDC Comments/Conditions:

- Commission Action - Lighting shall be revised to be consistent with MGO 29.36.
- **Signage.** As noted previously, while signage **is not part** of this application request, potential sign locations are shown on the elevations, including locations above the second floor on the John Nolen side of the building. While the UDC has approved some signs at the second floor level in the Downtown area, including recently on the adjacent property, locating wall signage above the first floor has always been given careful consideration. Staff further notes that new signage along this façade would require consideration of a signage exception by the UDC. Staff encourages that future signage is not placed at a height taller than its current, existing placement on the building or adjacent structure and that consideration should be given to alternative signage area in the façade design.

The applicant is advised that subsequent review and approval by the UDC will be required for the proposed signage.

Summary of UDC Referral Discussion, Comments and Action

As a reference, the Commission’s discussion and comments from the June 14, 2023, referral are provided below.

Questions for staff and/or the development team:

- Did you change anything?
 - Yes, we lowered the entry volume and increased the depth. We also provided additional information and more detail about where we are using materials.
- There is a tree shown in the landscape on the site plan, viewed from E Wilson Street, but I don’t think I saw that in the planting plan. I notice an electrical pole close to that. I’m wondering if you can provide

justification as to why the bikes are shown there, as opposed to the other side of the driveway where it would be closer to the entry. Would you consider moving those racks to the other side of the landscape, so you can have space for a small ornamental tree? Something of smaller stature like muscle wood, service berry, or crabapple.

- It should be noted that the canopy that extends over the entry to the parking lot has significant amount of depth to it, roughly 10-12-feet wide to the adjacent building. We had significant concerns about planting trees in that area because they would be completely underneath the canopy. We don't want to plant something we know is going to die. There used to be a tree where our rendering shows a tree that I believe has been removed.
- That tree must have been removed in just the last few years. [Looking at page 33 of 34 of the UDC submittal materials] You can see where the bike racks are, I think if it's feasible it might make sense to have that pad on the other side of the driveway, and have more space where the bikes are currently shown for a small stature tree, or a high branching larger shrub for more green screening from the street to the parking lot behind. I would ask that you consider that for a stronger site plan design.
- What's the program in this entry volume, is it just stairs to the roof?
 - Yes, it's an entry vestibule as well as a stairway going down to the basement.
- What's the height floor to ceiling?
 - Roughly 23-feet from floor to ceiling.
- From the finished floor to the ceiling, 23-feet?
 - Correct.
- What is the height of the second level, what is that height?
 - It is a one-story building on the E Wilson side.
- From the roof of the first floor to the roof of the second floor?
 - 12'-6".
- You have a seven-foot door or an eight-foot door?
 - We are aligning with some of the existing window heights there, I can't tell you off hand what the height of the windows are.
- I still think this is way too tall. This elevation is a little misleading, you're not going to experience this volume like this. I wonder if you could just have enough room for the door and that be the maximum height. This volume is way too tall.
- There were a number of comments on the number of materials on this building. I don't know that sticking with this number is the right move, those concerns are still here. Now I'm even more concerned where you have an orange colored grout between the brick.
 - No, that is a sample. The brick has some layers of fiberboard between the coursing of brick. The grout is not going to be that color.
- I can go either way on one more shade of gray or one less shade of gray, but that volume is still way too high from the E Wilson Street façade and looks out of place.
- There's a lot of excitement over what's happening out on Lake Monona and John Nolen Drive. Is there anything proposed at all from a public experience perspective on the backside of this building? Other than what's happening on the building itself, any plantings, anything to speak to on the John Nolen side?
 - Not on this project, we are working within their budget for these façade changes.
- It's something noteworthy from planning this building to accommodate and be contextualized with some improvements to the public experience back there.

The Commission discussed the following:

- They really didn't change very much. I was surprised to hear there was any change to the front entry lobby, I think the increase in depth must be pretty insignificant, I didn't notice it in trying to compare the Informational Presentation to this presentation. The Commission was pretty clear about the two-story entry volume being too high, not too shallow.

- Last time we had comments about the pillars holding up the entryway, the landscaping felt skinny and unsubstantial. We suggested considering a small wall in that area, I still support those comments. I worry about maintenance and it looking shabby without more substance to the design.
- Is this volume existing currently?
- No, there's the arched entryway.
- Behind the second arch over the building, there's nothing behind there?
- No. It's just a parapet.
- I don't know where that height comes from then, it is way too tall.
- I think the existing building is better looking than the proposed. The John Nolen side is probably okay, but I don't think it's there yet on the E Wilson Street façade.
- Any other discussion by members. We are the approving body here, so it would be appropriate for a motion.
- (Secretary) I do have some draft conditions if that helps with a motion.
- There were quite a few comments during the Informational Presentation that I believe still apply here, because mostly it hasn't changed. I'm not hearing a lot of support after hearing the explanation. If you would read the draft conditions that you have heard.
- (Secretary) Relocate the bike parking to the other side of the driveway, closer to the front entry and incorporate a tree into the landscape plan to replace the tree that was removed; incorporate a landscape wall into the E Wilson Street façade; reduce the height of the entry volume to be more in line with the second floor window datum (dark gray datum or where the proposed Summit sign is located) on the E Wilson Street elevation; minimize number of gray colors on the John Nolen Drive elevation; and lighting shall be revised to be consistent with MGO 29.36.
- Any additional comments or a motion?

A motion was made by Arnold, seconded by Klehr, to Refer consideration of this item with the conditions as noted by the Secretary.

Discussion on the motion:

- The height of that volume did not particularly bother me. I'm curious speaking to the architects on the Commission, what do you envision happening to that to make it palatable to you? A certain point of bringing it down would conflict to the physical usability of it. I'm fine with the back, the three colors of gray with the copper accent is a perfectly acceptable number of colors. We should keep in mind that there are grand things planned for this stretch of John Nolen but quite a ways off in the future. We should be thinking in terms of something that is clean, modern and decent looking, which is what they have here. The landscaping choices are some nice selections but probably not going far enough. I always thought the arches were weird looking. Bringing it down real far, I don't know.
- It's all about scale and proportion. You have this tower that just sticks up, the thinness of it, compared to everything around it is out of scale and out of proportion. A thicker volume for more program would be more justified. A singular stair tower that pops up, as it relates to everything else in the project is out of proportion. It's literally the scale of that on the project. It has the John Nolen portion elevated so you'll see it even more.
- During the presentation it was stated that the stairs go down to the basement, not up to the roof. It's an expression but not a requirement. In the condition you mentioned a recommended height, you said to the top of the upper gray banding.
- We understand highlighting the entry for more hierarchy, but it's just out of scale.
- The shadow line cast underneath where the orange comes down, is it prowed of the brick, and if so why? It's also on the other façade. I find it a little odd.

- Is there a perspective of the metal panel, how that's going to look three dimensionally? Maybe to keep that off the ground and touching the sidewalk, it could use a masonry base if you're not comfortable with it approaching but not touching the ground.
- It's pretty heavy to be hanging there. If we're going at proportions hanging there, that wide and that deep is odd.
- An amendment to the motion would allow them to explore a way to terminate the bottom of the orange metal panel accent feature on both sides. We're not dictating what it does, but a more purposeful termination.

Action

On a motion by Arnold, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item to a future date. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0). The motion included the following conditions:

- Relocate the bike parking to the other side of the driveway, closer to the front entry and incorporate a tree into the landscape plan to replace the tree that was removed.
- Incorporate a landscape wall into the E Wilson Street façade.
- Reduce the height of the entry volume to be more in line with the second floor window datum (dark grey datum or where the proposed Summit sign is located) on the E Wilson Street elevation.
- Explore a way to more purposefully terminate the bottom of the metal panel accent feature on both sides of the building.
- Minimize number of gray colors on the John Nolen Drive elevation.
- Lighting shall be revised to be consistent with MGO 29.36.