

**LETTER OF INTENT**

**2902 East Washington Avenue, 2812 East Johnson Street, 401 North Lawn Avenue**

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**May 20, 2020**

**To: City of Madison Planning Department, Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission  
215 Martin Luther King Blvd, Suite 017**

**From: Anne Neujahr Morrison, 2902 East Washington Avenue, LLC  
Urban Land Interests and New Year Investments, 10 East Doty Street, Suite 300**

**Re: Development Approvals for 2902 East Washington Avenue, 2812-2814 East Johnson Street  
and 401 North Lawn Avenue**

**Dear Members of the Urban Design Commission and Plan Commission:**

Please accept this Letter of Intent and associated applications for the approval of a mixed-use development at 2902 East Washington Avenue. We seek to create a sustainable and attractive development that adds needed housing, improves its surroundings and is well within the limits of what Zoning and the Comprehensive Plan allow. We have received great feedback on this project from neighbors and City Staff for many months and we have worked diligently to incorporate that feedback.

The existing zoning is CC-T which allows for 5 (or more) story buildings. No rezoning is requested. Plan Commission approvals are required primarily because the Project includes multifamily housing which is a Conditional Use within CC-T. Housing is a use that is encouraged at this location within the City's Comprehensive Plan. The addition of moderate density housing in this transit-oriented location aligns closely with the City's Bus Rapid Transit initiative. The Project has frontage along East Washington Avenue which is an Urban Design District. The design reflects the stated goals of the Urban Design District while complementing and elevating the existing architectural context.

**PROJECT ADDRESS:**

The current addresses include 2902 East Washington Avenue, 2812-2814 East Johnson Street and, 401 North Lawn Avenue. The Project Team will work with City Engineering, to identify new addresses to be used for the residential and commercial spaces.

**PROJECT TEAM:**

Owner/Developer – 2902 East Washington Avenue, LLC

Architect – Potter Lawson with MoTiS  
Landscape Architect – Graef  
Site/Civil Engineer – Wyser Engineering

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PROPOSED USES:**

The proposed Project includes the construction of a mixed-use development along the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route. The Project includes the following elements:

### **Housing:**

The Project will include 4-5 Stories of residential apartments, 135 units total, fronting both East Washington and North Lawn Avenues. There is great demand for housing throughout the Madison community. Housing is particularly desirable in areas such as this area which is well served by mass transit and bike infrastructure and is close to conveniences such as the Hawthorne branch of the Madison Public Library and grocery stores such as Pick n' Save.

The Imagine Madison Comprehensive plan calls for us to 130 units/acre and the current proposal is for approximately 80 units/acre. The Project will include an extensively landscaped garden courtyard, a resident gym and other attractive amenities. It will serve single residents, couples and smaller families looking to find a place in the neighborhood.

### **Commercial Space:**

The Project includes approximately 8,000 sf of commercial space along East Washington Avenue. We have had preliminary discussions with non-restaurant users about the commercial space. Our goal is to serve a local business or non-profit rather than a drive-thru fast-food user. We will seek tenant(s) that create a positive sense of life for the surrounding neighborhoods.

### **Car and Bike Parking:**

Efforts were made to keep the parking access and curb cuts similar to current conditions. We intend to actively promote the use of mass transit and nearby bike infrastructure.

The Project will include approximately 107 underground parking stalls to serve the residential uses (.8 spaces/unit). The underground garage will enter and exit off of North Lawn Avenue, next to the existing Car X facility. An 11-space surface parking lot serves the ground floor uses and enters and exits off of East Washington Avenue.

We anticipate vehicular traffic will be modest as compared to existing nearby uses since this is primarily a residential building. We have commissioned a traffic study which will be available prior to Plan Commission Approval.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS AND CURRENT USES:**

### **CURRENT USES:**

The Project is located near the intersection of East Washington, East Johnson and North Lawn Avenues, just behind the existing Car-X which was approved by UDC in 2018. The site is comprised of three parcels that are all zoned CC-T. No rezoning is necessary to accommodate the proposed uses.

#### **Former Ella's Deli**

The portion of the site at 2902 East Washington Avenue was home to Ella's Deli, a much loved Madison-institution that closed at the start of 2018. Before Ella's closed, all of the interior fixtures were auctioned by the then owner. No toys, furniture or restaurant fixtures remain in the 5,561sf building. The building is in poor condition. The Ella's property also includes a very large surface parking lot with approximately 75 surface parking stalls.

#### **Vacant Rental Home**

Next to Ella's Deli at 2812-2814 East Washington Avenue is a small house that had been carved into three small apartments and was primarily used as an Ella's Deli office and workshop. The house is currently vacant and the apartments, and structure are in poor condition.

#### **Office Building**

The portion of the site at 401 North Lawn Avenue is a former 1970s-era church building that has served as the offices for the Wisconsin Tax Payers Alliance (now Wisconsin Policy Forum) for nearly two decades. The Wisconsin Policy Forum plans to relocate its offices.

## **APPROVALS REQUESTED**

### **Zoning and Urban Design**

The current zoning is CC-T and no changes are requested. Similar to many other Madison zoning districts, multifamily housing is a Conditional Use within CC-T and therefore Conditional Use approvals are requested here.

### **Certified Survey Map**

A new legal description and Certified Survey Map will be recorded with this proposed development.

### **Demolition**

The proposed development will require the demolition of three structures as indicated above. Those three structures are the former Ella's Deli building at 2902 East Washington Avenue, the house structure at 2812 East Johnson Street and the office building at 401 North Lawn Avenue. All applicable provisions of the demolition ordinance will be complied with and a reuse and recycling plan will be submitted for approval prior to the issuance of the demolition permit.



**COMPATABILITY WITH APPROVED MASTER PLANS:**

The proposed development is in keeping with the overall goals, character, and pattern of development recommended in the Imagine Madison Comprehensive Plan and in the Emerson East - Eken Park Neighborhood Plan. It will create needed housing and neighborhood commercial space in an attractive and sustainable development, along a walkable corridor, adjacent to existing and planned transit.

The Imagine Madison Generalized Future Land Use Map shows this Project Site as "Community Mixed Use" with a maximum height of 6 stories and density of 130 units/acre.

**NEIGHBORHOOD AND CITY PROCESS:**

The Project is located on the very edge of the Eken Park Neighborhood. We began engaging the neighborhood in September 2019 as we worked to determine the future of the site. With input from the neighborhood we have significantly reduced the scale of the Project from what we originally envisioned and what zoning allows. We have found the neighborhood to be very engaged and thoughtful and have enjoyed and incorporated a lot of what we've learned about the area into our design and program.

Neighbors received a postcard in April 2020 inviting them to attend a formal neighborhood meeting regarding this Project. On April 20, 2020 Alder Syed Abbas, and the Eken Park Neighborhood Association promoted and hosted the meeting regarding the Project. The Project was well received and there was a particular enthusiasm for the art piece and for the mix of housing options at affordable rents that this Project will provide. We will continue to meet with neighbors as we continue to work through the details of the Project.

**SITE DEVELOPMENT DATA**

**Site Details:**

Gross Lot Area:	71,407sf/ 1.64 acres
Dwelling Units:	135 DU
Density:	82 units/acre
Building Height:	4 stories (North Lawn) and 5 stories (East Washington)
Usable Open Space:	26,987sf
Lot Coverage:	79.8%

**Program Details:**

Residences

One Bedroom:	109
Two Bedroom:	26
Total New Units:	135

Vehicle Parking

Cars:

107 underground stalls

11 surface stalls

Bikes:

135 indoor spaces

18 outdoor spaces

**PROJECT SCHEDULE:**

Construction is anticipated to start as soon as approvals are granted and conditions to permitting satisfied. Our assumed schedule is as follows:

September 2019-Present	On-going neighborhood communication
April 13, 2020	Public Notice of official neighborhood meeting
April 20, 2020	Publicly Noticed Neighborhood Meeting
May 13, 2020	Urban Design Commission Informational Submittal
May 20, 2020	Full Land Use Submittals
July 1, 2020	Urban Design Commission
July 27, 2020	Plan Commission
September 1, 2020	Start Demolition/ Construction
April 1, 2022	Construction Completion

We are excited to create a project that will be a positive addition to the community and will greatly contribute to the vitality of this transitional area. Please refer to the attachments to this letter listed below. We look forward to the working with you on this important project.

Kind regards,



Anne Neujahr Morrison

**ATTACHMENTS**

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- 1) Project Design Narrative
- 2) Supporting documents in the form of a drawing set dated May 20, 2020 showing the proposed development plans are bound separately and are a part of this letter of intent by reference

## **ATTACHMENT 1: PROJECT DESIGN NARRATIVE**

### **ARCHITECTURE**

The architectural team carefully considered the existing fabric of the East Washington corridor and the primarily residential context within Eken Park. We looked at the criteria set forth in Urban Design District 5 to create a project that is thoughtfully designed on all sides with high quality, low maintenance and harmonious materials. After engaging with stakeholders and working to find an appropriate design solution, the team opted to downsize the development and break the single mass into two forms-one that faces East Washington and one that fronts North Lawn Avenue. We see the two forms having architectural identities that are related, but distinct.

#### **North Lawn Avenue**

The 300-400 block of North Lawn Avenue is a transitional block. On the corners are the Car-X and the African Store, followed by the existing Policy Forum office building and then a series of single family and multifamily homes. Our design seeks to sensitively transition from the busier commercial avenue to the residential neighborhood.

The North Lawn portion of the building is set back from the sidewalk similar to adjacent structures to create a gracious front yard and we have followed the City's guidance to create relief and setbacks as the building abuts the residential area.

The North Lawn portion of the building is clad in vertical siding similar to many of the other multifamily buildings found throughout Eken Park. The building is designed with windows that maximize natural light into the units while still providing excellent acoustical separation from outside noises. The face of the building shifts slightly, stepping back and forth 2' for every 24' of frontage to create rhythm and break up the mass. The first floor of the building has a small horizontal canopy element to create a visual base and provide a unique ground level treatment that is distinct from the upper floors.

#### **East Washington**

East Washington is a high traffic, loud and colorful corridor. Our Project seeks to complement, and elevate its surroundings. The exterior of the East Washington form is predominantly lighter colored brick with wood toned cement board accents. Great care was taken to use a light palette of high-quality, sustainable and durable materials, consistent with the quality we hope to see in the future along this corridor.

We are avoiding the creation of large unbroken facades in several ways while also avoiding making any cartoonish loud moves. The East Washington facades have a consistent window pattern that is then broken down with the addition of varying sized fiber cement panels within the brick surrounds. The brick itself is detailed with relief bands at every floor. An angled brick detail appears adjacent to many of the windows. The amount of fiber cement varies from floor

to floor and is a consistent design element that ties the form together and relates back to the North Lawn façade.

The East Washington elevations have a clear base and top. The base is storefront with careful additions and subtractions of volume. At the top of the building there is an additional detailed brick relief band to give the form a tailored finish.

## **MURAL ART**

From a vehicle, the detailed brick and plank sides of the East Washington building are very visible, but as you drive or walk by, facing directly against East Washington, the building will feature a privately commissioned art piece that will add a flamboyance that matches the rhythms, colors, and characters of the surroundings. The site is surrounded by bright signs and colors. The sign for one nearby liquor store, for example, is nearly a story tall and bright orange. The large mural art piece will be an inspiring addition to the cacophony of East Washington while the more restrained facades will make the building a welcoming home for residents.

The mural will be a framed element that is set back within the brick façade. The muraled façade is slightly taller than the other brick facades to create a distinctly framed area for the art work. By creating the frame, the rest of the building can have the more elaborate brick and fiber detailing in a way that supports but doesn't compete with the art work.

The painting will be done on the same brick that occurs throughout the building so that the underlying building maintains its integrity. The art will be designed and painted to last for around 30 years or more. It will not be signage or advertising—it will be art. For our privately commissioned mural art piece, the team has sought proposals from three experienced artists. We are waiting to commission the art piece pending the approval of our land use application but we understand that UDC may require that we return to have the mural separately reviewed once the design of that element has progressed. We look forward to that step.