

# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

August 16, 2023



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 20, 22, 30 N Carroll Street

**Application Type:** Public Building and Development in the Downtown Core (DC) District  
**UDC will be an Approving and Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [77005](#)

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** George Austin | Wisconsin Historical Society

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the redevelopment of the existing Wisconsin History Museum and two adjoining properties at 20 and 22 North Carroll Street for the new 100,000 square-foot Wisconsin History Center.

### Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Information Presentation at its April 19, 2023, meeting.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this item at the August 28, 2023, meeting.

**Approval Standards:** For public projects, the UDC is an **approving body** on the proposed building, 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."*

The Urban Design Commission ("UDC") is also an **advisory body** on this development request as the site is in the Downtown Core (DC) Zoning District. As such the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.

**Related Zoning Information:** The project is zoned Downtown Core (DC). Pursuant to Section 28.074(c): All new buildings and additions greater than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four (4) stories shall obtain conditional use approval. In addition, the Capital View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development. As indicated on the elevation drawings, the proposed building **appears to meet** the Capital View Preservation Limit standards and will not have projections above.

The Zoning Code also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in both the UMX and DC zoning districts. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX and DC zone districts are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, and materials. Staff notes that a recent Zoning Code Text Amendment allows for an exception to the window and opening requirements on the ground floor and upper floors of buildings for civic and institutional uses.

**Design-Related Plan Recommendations:** The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, within the Downtown Core neighborhood. As such, development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). As noted in the Downtown Plan, the maximum recommended height is up to the Capital View Preservation Limit.

In addition, the Plan recommendations for development in this neighborhood generally speak to encouraging the highest intensity of development in this area and encouraging a mix of uses that will help to retain the area's vibrancy.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC review the development proposal and make findings on the aforementioned standards and include findings related to the below considerations.

- **Building Design and Composition.** Staff believes that the overall design and composition remains similar to what was presented at the April Informational Presentation, though some modifications have been made. The entry sequence and door orientation have been revised and now comply with Zoning standards. Some modifications to the window patterning have been made, including the wrapping of some upper level glass along the upper rear elevation. While the composition is largely similar, additional details regarding the materials have been provided and this information is found as a supplement attached to the legislative file.

Comments from the UDC's informational presentation are noted at the end of the report. In summary, members of the UDC previously discussed the importance of incorporating appropriate pedestrian-scaled details along both the Carroll and Henry Street facades. A variety of comments were also provided regarding the façade detailing, including various considerations related to the angled metal panel elements. Staff also note the high visibility of the rear elevation. In pre-application discussions with the design team, the team also recognized this consideration. Until redevelopment occurs on abutting properties, this will be a prominent façade. The applicant team has clad the wall in metal panel, intended to be complementary to the street facing walls. Recognizing that there would be building code limitations in fenestration of this wall and programmatic limitations based on interior gallery space, staff request UDC provide feedback on the adequacy of this wall's articulation.

Staff requests the Commission's review and findings on the overall building composition as it relates to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those related to building and entry orientation, proportions and articulation, balancing vertical/horizontal proportions, ground level activation, overall massing/scale of components, size and rhythm of windows, and termination at the top of the building, etc. S

- **Materials.** As noted in the application materials, the material palette is primarily comprised of pre-weathered zinc, steel and aluminum metal panels, glass, and masonry. As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, *"An integrated palette of high quality, durable building materials can enrich the pedestrian environment through the use of scale, color, texture, and architectural details."* As proposed, while the metal panel application on the street facing elevations appears to have texture and articulation to the building, the southwest (alley) elevation is primarily comprised of flat aluminum metal panel.

As a note, some of the plan sheets show that edges of the angled metal panels have small encroachments into the right-of-way, though this is not consistent on all plan sheets. If an encroachment is sought, that would require separate approvals and agreements that are outside of the Urban Commissions review.

Staff requests that the Commission provides feedback and makes findings on the proposed material palette and composition, especially as it relates to creating an enhanced design at the pedestrian level, as well as the materials, material transitions and details related to the flat aluminum metal panels.

- **Long Views.** Due to the prominence of this site at the top of State Street, at the corner of Mifflin and Carroll, visible from multiple directions, consideration should be given to the overall composition of the building as part of the overall cityscape and how it reads from a distance. As noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, a similar design composition and quality of materials should be used on all sides of the building. Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the proposed treatment of the less articulated walls of the southwest elevation as well as the upper floors of the building.
- **Lighting.** The proposed lighting plan appears to be inconsistent not only with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines related to lighting, which generally speak to maintaining light levels that are not excessive, limiting glare, and visual competition with the Capitol, but also the maximum light levels permitted pursuant to the City's Outdoor Lighting requirements ([MGO 29.36](#)).

The applicant is advised that refinements to the average light levels will be required in order for the proposed lighting to be consistent with maximum light levels pursuant to MGO 29.36. Staff recommends that this be carried forward as part of the UDC's advisory recommendation.

In addition, as noted in the as noted by the light fixture cutsheets, architectural lighting is proposed. Fixture XL3, is an up-light that is intended to lighting the zinc panels, however information regarding the location and number of fixtures was not included on the lighting plan. Staff would also need additional information on how the light would be cut-off. Given that limited information that was provided with regard to the architectural lighting, staff has questions related to the overall lighting plan with whether the proposed architectural lighting can be found to be consistent with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

## Summary of Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the April 19, 2023, Informational Presentation are provided below.

- Staff report noted that the entry location shall be on Carroll Street that is non-negotiable with UDC. Until we hear otherwise from Zoning, that will affect the design of the building.
- Going back to a perspective that shows the courtyard entry of the building. The courtyard entry area, I understand the desire to activate the plaza, but you're entering into a lobby. If it's non-negotiable to have the entrance into the same lobby on two different sides...it's a great looking project, it should stand out from everything on the Square and it does. The bird glass ordinance is going to be a thing, good luck with that. I'm liking the direction it's going.
- I really like the serrated elements on the lower half but I'm wondering if it's too much, if you need relief from that severe geometry for the part that's above. When you have too much of a special thing it stops being special. It needs more relief from the main body to the top. Maybe it's the rendering, I'm unsure if it's going to be able to be detailed like that, and if we'll see more lines to cap things, I'm wary of that. Has the design team thought about taking that strong element and reinterpreting it for the piece above? I agree the entrance should be off of Carroll Street.
  - Regarding the entry piece, we do have mass quantities of people coming here.
- We have no power to say it is okay.
  - Regarding the relief in the massing, can you clarify a little?
- You've got this serrated envelope feature all the way up. Seeing it with the skyline beyond it, it's too severe because it's the same element wrapped around. Has there been any consideration in reinterpreting the serrated panel system for the element that is above it? The corner element, it looks nice and taught and it caps that glass element really well. As it goes up it should be less of a huge mass

because I think that can be sensitive to these smaller buildings on the Square, could it be reinterpreted, something still interesting and mimicking the feel of that serration but not quite a serrated edge?

- We'd have to take a look at that conceptualization, it takes longer than 10 minutes to walk you through how we got to where we are. It's symbolically meant to take from different cultures in Wisconsin, addresses and how they layer. We have this idea of the building itself twisting and trying to look away from the Capitol. The history and stories of this building go beyond this location.
- I'm not arguing about the twisting, I like the massing, I'm talking about the serration.
  - Having that overlay of the motif that creates that form, once that geometry locks with the bottom volume they want to resolve in some way. It's the same form that's twisting, when they become two different things the story changes and gets lost. That's why that serrated form goes all the way up the building taking shape from the round plane to the top of the building.
- It's a detail that I'll be curious to see how those simple openings and that glass plane work, it looks almost impossible to see that hovering over all that glass without a lot of framing behind it. We'll have to see how that develops. It could be strong element.
- I'm excited by the shade and shadow this façade could cast, it could be really dynamic. I too am excited to see a little more detail will be interesting. I might say the serrated belongs at the top as well. Questions about the glass façade: I am thinking about how much pedestrian traffic there is around the Square and people seeking places to sit and watch people go by. Is there opportunity with how the building meets the sidewalk to make room for public engagement, perching and people watching? I'm particularly looking at along where the glass ends and you have the serrated edge coming all the way down; if there might be room to imitate the structures in the Mifflin Street plaza area where people can sit and stop and just watch people go by. If that might be an addition you may be willing to consider. There's a lot of pedestrian traffic around the Square; an opportunity for people to engage with the building as well.
  - We are looking into that and how much street furniture we can provide with our design. A transparent piece that engages and widens that streetscape, and be a backdrop for things happening. Trying to create an interior environment that mimics the exterior environment, really engage the public. I agree that is something that we are looking at, what are the ways we can incorporate street furniture. Link around the corner to Mifflin Street as well.
- I would implore the design team to continue to look at light, transparent glass and not do what happened on University Avenue with the School of Music building. The darkness of that glass doesn't really have a functional benefit and would have been nice as transparent glass. What you are communicating here is a transparent glass. What would we expect to see in the upper volume of that top atrium?
  - We have a two-story condition that is the temporary gallery on the second level. We are creating that "atrium-esque" environment along Carroll Street, and could be an opportunity to have artifacts on display or things that talk about interpretive elements in the museum, it's kind of TBD but envisioned to have interpretation for exhibits on the interior of the building. That particular wall will not be glass due to light conditions needed for those gallery spaces, but there is opportunity to have interpretive graphics added to that wall.
- I'm glad to hear that right now you're thinking about it and that it's not an atrium, there's more complexity to deal with. Personally I think that the project would be just as attractive if that top section of glass was potentially made into the serrated material. I think that I'm questioning how that's going to read and whether that last section of glass at the top is really giving you much from a design perspective. Are we seeing a perforated metal at the top levels there?
  - Yes. Where you see glass at the fourth and fifth floor levels that create that L shape are multi-purpose event spaces. The fifth floor is a true rentable event space with dining that spills out into an outdoor event space. The idea is where the glass would stop, where we see the metal wrapping, the building will dematerialize and the metal would dematerialize so the outdoor event space doesn't seem so enclosed. We're envisioning some frit pattern on there as well.

- I don't have a problem with it, just wanted to understand why it looked different than the other sections of glazing. Wonderful project, looking forward to more.
- I was imagining the lenticular panels above the upper roof plaza as just being gone. I can see that this building would seem so much less massive without that large spandrel piece. With the wind and everything it's not going to be held up with those mullions. It's likely to be heavier. I'm imagining the long views, having more interest and certainly a lot less mass by not having that additional upper spandrel piece at the upper terrace.
- Question for Jess (Secretary) regarding the design guidelines and requirements for downtown and it states that street facing facades above the first floor shall have a minimum of 15% window glazing. Does that apply to the Mifflin Street side? The Downtown Design Guidelines that you attached to the staff report.
- (Secretary) To confirm, you are referring to the Zoning Code; item # e 2?
- Item e3.
- (Secretary) Yes, that would apply and ultimately, I haven't sat down with Zoning to look over the proposal, we wanted to get UDC's input first, but that's certainly a Zoning Code requirement that cannot be modified.
- So that the stories are large here, the second story is really above the lobby and that is where we are looking for the percentage of openings that goes for Mifflin also?
- (Secretary) Yes.
- In defense of the design team you're saying the entrance has to be on the street, for the purposes the entrance you're saying Mifflin is not a street, but for the purposes of glazing along that façade you're saying that is a street?
- (Secretary) No, item #3 just says for all buildings upper story openings shall comprise a minimum 15% of the facade area per story, it doesn't really take us back to the street like item #1 does.
- We have a lot of buildings downtown that are right on the lot line, and the code would not allow 15% openings on side elevations, I think that needs to be clarified, there are plenty of buildings built to the property line perpendicular to the street that simply don't have 15%, sometimes they have zero percent openings. Since items 1 and 2 above it specially talk about street-facing façades, I thought #3 was also talking about street-facing façades.
- (Secretary) I'm not reading #3 as street-facing facades, to me that reads as just upper story openings being 15%. Item 1 definitely refers us back to the street.
- I think that should be clarified, again on a zero lot line project that doesn't come into play at all in other projects. It would be good to know exactly how that particularly effects Mifflin Street because again, if it is a street then they should get their entrance there, it's not a street then it shouldn't be required.
- (Secretary) The key to that conversation with the Zoning Administrator has been 'what's the primary street,' and that is Carroll, not Mifflin, and that plays a role in that discussion. I will work with Zoning to get clarification.
  - We understand the requirement for glazing percentages, our understanding is that we comply with that in what you see here today. We will certainly keep track of that as we move forward.
- My concern is of lenticular above the roof and how it effects what the building looks like. You would still maintain the native headdress concept just as effectively to the passerby.
  - Looking at slide nine, that shows the vision of the upper floors and how the top band dematerializes to bring down massing.
- How you effectively break up that wall that's facing west (Henry Street). If you're right on the property line there's not much you can do, but it cantilevers six-feet over, the part below the cantilever is off the property line, maybe there can be openings there. Being able to do something, some variety, some articulation of that façade would be something this Commission looks at very carefully and closely.
- The tall narrow silver gray element separating it from the Churchill building next door, what is the connection between the new museum and that building? I thought I saw a stairwell behind there. Is this

building going to go up flush against the Churchill building and cover all the side windows on that building or is there open space behind that tall vertical element at the junction?

- We are at a zero lot line so the museum will abut right next to it. Its recessed back from the new volume to give some distinct relief between the two but in essence our building will be directly adjacent to the Churchill building.
- There was in part of our packet a public comment in writing from the neighboring property owner with regard to this project.
- That was one of the reasons I asked.
- Certainly an exciting project and an overdue project. We are excited to be part of the process.

**ATTACHMENT:**  
**28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
  - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
  - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
  - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
  - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.
2. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.