

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.

MADISON, WISCONSIN

September 18, 2023

Urban Design Commission
City of Madison

Re: 139 West Wilson Street

The Bassett District of Capitol Neighborhoods assembled a steering committee which met recently with John Seamon of the development team for the proposal at 139 W. Wilson St. to discuss that proposal and provide feedback. Over the last year and a half, Mr. Seamon has also attended several Bassett monthly meetings and a larger neighborhood meeting organized by Alder Verveer to talk about this proposal with the neighborhood as it developed. While the neighborhood very much appreciates the time Mr. Seamon has devoted to discussions with the neighborhood and would be very happy to see more affordable housing in the downtown area, we feel that this proposal presents several issues.

The driveway is narrow and while there appear to be two lanes available, the amount of traffic that 320 residential units will generate on a daily basis in terms of deliveries will likely overwhelm that space at times. With no parking provided for residents, there will be a steady stream of Uber, Lyft, and cabs picking up and dropping off in this same space. Move ins, move outs, trash and recycling will all need to use this same space and the development team expects one lane to remain free at all times to provide access for the shared cars housed on-site. The building faces onto a very busy street with a heavily used sidewalk and soon, a cycle track, and none of the delivery, drop off, and pick up activity can be allowed to occur in or block the public right-of-way. Without adequate space to turn around, vehicles backing out of the driveway will need to cross both the sidewalk and cycle track to back into a heavily used traffic lane. Snow removal from this drive space will be problematic without blocking the public right-of-way. The neighborhood feels that the driveway space provided is simply inadequate to handle the amount of traffic that would be generated by the residents of this building.

The neighborhood is concerned that two elevators are not adequate to serve a sixteen story building with 320 units, neither during normal traffic days nor during days that involve tenant move ins and move outs.

The lack of bicycle stalls that conform to city requirements is troubling, especially in a building where many tenants will be without a car due to the lack of on-site parking. The four shared cars to be housed on site seems to be an inadequate number to serve 320 units and the potential need to sacrifice one of these shared cars to provide a handicapped parking space would only exacerbate that situation.

The interior design with one long hall on each floor with micro-units on both sides, none of which will have openable windows, seems to be a design for dismal living conditions, especially considering that some of these units will face the neighboring building which will be a mere ten feet away.

Finally, the materials and design of the building, while improved over the version that city staff found failed to meet city zoning requirements, is still uninspiring. A building with an exposure to John Nolen Drive needs to present a more interesting if not iconic facade as part of the downtown skyline. The neighborhood would hope that the Urban Design commissioners give the use of wall packs on all sides of the building, including the street-facing facade, serious scrutiny before approving such a design. We would also ask the Urban Design commissioners to closely scrutinize all incursions into the Capitol View Preservation Limit space.

The neighborhood has had a number of frank and open discussions with Mr. Seamon from the development team and we very much appreciate the time he has taken to listen to our concerns. That said, given the number and extent of the concerns this proposal raises and their potential impact on both the surrounding area and the potential residents of this building, we feel that the current proposal is not an acceptable design for this space at this location and we cannot support this proposal in its current form.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan Cooper

Steering Committee Chair
Bassett District of Capitol Neighborhoods