

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.

MADISON, WISCONSIN

October 17, 2025

Urban Design Commission
City of Madison

Re: 139 West Wilson Street

The developers for this proposal first brought their plans to the Bassett neighborhood over 2 1/2 years ago. Over the course of the last two plus years, the neighborhood has had many conversations with members of the development team. We are appreciative of the time they have spent with us and we are pleased that there have been significant improvements in the architectural design of the proposed building. Nonetheless, the neighborhood has had serious concerns regarding this proposal from the beginning and many of those concerns remain. The neighborhood's memo to the Urban Design Commission dated January 19, 2024, outlines several of those concerns. While the latest iteration of the plans for this proposal do attempt to address some of the concerns both the neighborhood and UDC raised at the January 2024 UDC meeting when the UDC commissioners chose to recommend denial of approval, many of those concerns remain. Similarly, concerns raised by the commissioners at the recent June 11, 2025, informational presentation remain unaddressed,

At that January 2024 meeting, commissioners expressed concerns regarding the design's adequacy to meet the requirements of Conditional Use Standard #6 regarding the handling of "vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and other necessary site improvements," as well as Downtown Urban Design Guidelines related to vehicular site circulation. While the current design has attempted to improve traffic flow, the drive space is simply insufficient for the types and amount of traffic from delivery vehicles, trash and recycling trucks, rideshares, food deliveries, taxis, and move-in, move-out vehicles that a 320 unit building will generate on a daily basis, most of which will be unscheduled. Move ins, move outs, delivery vehicles, trash and recycling, taxis and rideshares, and food deliveries will all need to use this same space and the development team expects one lane to remain free at all times. Members of UDC expressed concern about the adequacy of the allotted space for these functions at the June informational presentation and it is likely this traffic will simply overwhelm the available space at times and create safety hazards for pedestrians, bicycles, and motor vehicles attempting to use the area. With no onsite parking and no onsite car sharing options provided for residents, there will be a steady stream of Uber, Lyft, and cabs picking up and dropping off in this space. Shared cars to be housed off site seems to be an inadequate approach to serving 320 units without on-site parking. Residents who do own cars as well as guests visiting the building will further tax the already inadequate amount of street parking in the surrounding area.

Pedestrian access to the lake-facing back of the building via the eastern side of the driveway, a required exit path from the stairway at the lake side of the building, was previously a separate lane. It is now merely designated in the informational mural as one usage of the drive area. The building faces onto a very busy street with a heavily used public sidewalk and 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. While a turn-around space is now designated in the plans, this space is inadequate for both the length and the height of larger delivery vehicles such as those used by Amazon and UPS. 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. Many delivery drivers will likely opt to block the cycle track in front of the building rather than try to navigate the narrow drive space. Snow removal from this drive space will be problematic without blocking the street, cycle track, and sidewalk in the public right-of-way.

The neighborhood feels that the driveway space provided is simply inadequate to handle the amount and types of traffic that would be generated by the residents of this building and will present safety issues for those who do attempt to use it.

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 interior design, with one long hall on each floor with micro-units on both sides 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. The neighborhood remains 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 neighborhood recognizes the effort that the development team is making in attempting to bring much-needed housing to the downtown area. We have had a large number of frank and open discussions with them and we very much appreciate the time they have 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 do not believe that the current proposal is an acceptable design for this space at this location.

This proposal does not meet the standards for UDC approval and the neighborhood does not support this proposal in its current form.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jonathan Cooper

Neighborhood Steering Committee Chair
Bassett District of Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc.