

CAPITOL

NEIGHBORHOODS, INC.
MADISON, WISCONSIN

Plan Commission
City of Madison

May 23, 2022

Plan Commissioners

Re: 519-541 W. Washington Ave.

The Bassett District of Capitol Neighborhoods has formed a steering committee to engage with the development team for the referenced proposal. The development team will be bringing their design to your May 23rd meeting for review.

Affordable housing:

As a signature along with three other downtown neighborhoods to *"Promoting Affordable Housing: Neighborhood Guidelines for Affordability of New Rental Construction,"* Capitol Neighborhoods is dismayed that the developer has indicated that incorporating any affordable housing into the proposal has not been considered.

Loading area:

Along the east side of the building extending off the driveway the original proposal shows a paved loading area large enough for a single truck. This space will be used for trash removal, move in/move out vehicles, delivery vehicles and service vehicles. The lane adjacent to the street parking is a dedicated bus lane. Double parking on W. Washington will not be an option. Given the limited access points to the building as well as the limited street parking, congestion could result in vehicles using the broad terraces for parking. In fact, this has been a common occurrence on these blocks over the years.

The steering committee feels that extending the paved loading area such that it can accommodate two vehicles, although stacked, would be an improvement. Another suggestion to help restrict the use of parking on the terrace is to include a provision in the residential leases that prohibits vehicle parking on the public terrace between the sidewalk and the curb as well as the front yard of the property.

Building demolition and salvage options:

There is a range of opinions within the neighborhood regarding the demolition of these buildings. Some view the replacement of the existing structures with a new building as a significant improvement. Others are concerned that the demolitions will further degrade the character of the neighborhood and that the design of the new building is not in keeping with the historic character

of these blocks nor does it enhance the grand entry of the gateway into the downtown as called for in the Downtown and Mifflandia Plans.

Photos of the existing buildings indicate that there are clearly architectural elements and other materials that are suitable for salvage. The committee has asked that for any items the developer does not intend to salvage for their own use that they reach out to both non-profit and for profit entities with the opportunity to salvage appropriate items.

Proposed project start date:

The developer has indicated that due to uncertainties involving construction and financing costs their current plan is to delay the start of construction until November 2023. The existing buildings are currently being leased with 12 month leases ending in August 2023.

A Conditional Use approval now will expire prior to the proposed construction start. A two year extension can be approved by the Director of Planning and Community Development in consultation with the Alderperson. This could result in up to a three year delay in the start of construction during which time considerable deterioration could occur to the current structures with limited incentive to make appropriate repairs. To minimize the burden on Building Inspection or the neighborhood in ensuring that proper maintenance occurs a specific condition of approval requiring compliance with city building standards is recommended.

Site and street trees:

With the three most recent developments to begin construction in the Bassett District issues have arisen regarding street trees which required attention from the neighborhood and City Forestry. In one instance, after Plan Commission approval, the building contractor was requesting/insisting that a street tree designated for protection would need to be removed for access for construction. At all three of these sites the neighborhood has brought to Forestry's attention deficiencies in the tree protection early in the construction process. Forestry made a site visit to all three sites and had to return for a second visit at one site.

With the current proposal, information on which trees are to be removed and which will stay is buried under utility information on sheet C2.0. A person looking for this information and requirements for protection of trees has to be dedicated in their search. We have asked the development team to provide this information in a much more readily visible way. We would also suggest that the Plan Commission consider making it standard practice that this information be clearly presented in all proposals brought before it.

The neighborhood is appreciative that for this proposal the applicant has designed to avoid conflicts with street trees and has not requested removal or substantive pruning of any of the trees in the terrace.

Recommendations for Conditions of Approval:

Should the Plan Commission find that the proposal meets the standards for Conditional Use approval we recommend that the following additional conditions be added to the motion for approval. Our understanding is that the applicant is in agreement with having these additional conditions.

1. The loading area along the east side of the building will be enlarged to accommodate two vehicles.
2. A provision will be included in all leases for the units in this building that specifically prohibits vehicle parking on the street terrace between the curb and the sidewalk as well as the front yard.
3. The applicant shall make substantive effort to engage with both non-profit and for profit organizations interested in salvaging items from the existing structures which the applicant is not intending to salvage for their own use.
4. During the period between the approval of the Conditional Use and the start of construction the applicant shall consistently maintain all properties in accordance with the City of Madison property maintenance standards.
5. Information regarding trees to be removed or to remain, both on public and private property, shall be clearly presented on the approved drawings. This shall include the City requirements for tree protection.

Thank you for your consideration,

Peter Ostlind
Steering Committee Chair
Bassett District of Capitol Neighborhoods