



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 139 W Wilson Street
Application Type: New Residential Building in UMX Zoning – Second Informational Presentation
Legistar File ID # [70108](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: John Seamon, SEA Design

Project Description: The applicant is seeking a subsequent Informational Presentation for the demolition of an existing multi-family building and construction of a 16-story, 332-unit building. The proposal includes no on-site resident parking, though the applicant is considering alternatives such as a vehicle-share program or other off-site accommodations.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on March 9, 2022.
- The applicant anticipates filing a combined Land Use and UDC Final Approval application on August 22, 2022.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) will be an **advisory** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *“All new buildings that are greater than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four stories shall obtain Conditional Use approval. In addition, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.”*

Related Zoning Information: The property is zoned Urban Mixed-Use (UMX). The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a conditional use under the Zoning Code. In addition, the Capital View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development. As noted in the zoning code, the maximum ground story height is 18 feet, minimum 12 feet, and the maximum story height for upper stories is 14 feet.

The UMX zone district also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX zone district are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area. 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.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Height.** As noted above, the Capital View Preservation Limits will apply to the project site. Based on the information provided, the proposed building **does not** appear to meet those requirements. Overall building height is measured from grade to the top of the parapet wall, which is noted as 163' 9 ½" where 163.8 feet (163' 2/3") is the maximum height permitted.

Limited projections and elevator overruns above this height limit are only allowable with Conditional Use approval and staff has urged the applicant to explore solutions that eliminate or minimize such projections. Limited information is currently provided to evaluate these projections. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the overall building height, and the rooftop mechanical in excess of the Capital View Preservation Limit.

- **Building Entry Orientation and Street Activation.** As noted on the floor and site plans, the main building entry is recessed. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the building's relationship to the street, including creating more visual interest and architectural detail, as well as locating active use areas within the building along the street frontage and/or incorporating more glazing into the building design, including on upper floors where there are common, shared spaces.
- **Building Design and Composition.** The overall proposed building design is relatively simple in nature with minimal articulation and façade modulation. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the overall building composition as it relates to the design guidelines, including those that speak to mass and scale, proportions and articulation (vertical/horizontal), size and rhythm of windows, positive termination at the top of the building, etc., including the longer east and west elevations, especially as they relate to the surrounding development, proposed at grade open spaces, and blank walls.
- **Longviews.** Due to the prominence of this site from Lake Monona and John Nolen Drive, consideration should be given to the composition of the highly visible rear façade as part of the overall cityscape.
- **Wall Packs.** As noted on the elevations, wall pack units are proposed on all elevations. It has been the current practice to not locate wall packs on street facing facades, though they have been approved in some situations when found to be well integrated into the façade's design. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the integration of the wall packs with the overall building design and materials.
- **Materials.** The building material palette consists of an etched concrete panel system. Staff notes the building material standards per the UMX zone district, footnote C, states that concrete panels (precast or tilt-up): *"Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials."* As proposed, while the proposed concrete panels appear to have dimension, staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the material and its detailing. It does not appear that there is a secondary façade material proposed and the Zoning Administrator would ultimately have to confirm whether this development could be found to meet the requirement for a "palette of materials."
- **Open Spaces.** As noted on the site plan, the proposed at-grade open space is located on the north side of the building, significantly below the adjacent development. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the successful planting of the space, as well as softening the west elevation along the ground floor.

UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the March 9, 2022 Informational Presentation are provided below:

- I got super excited when I first saw this, I love purple. Curious to see how this would play out. As you develop this has to have a 3D rendering to show us exactly how these materials work together, especially so many striations and punches. This could be a very dynamic and cool building if it's done correctly, or it could be a huge failure if it's done incorrectly. The pedestrian experience, opening up some of that lower level, as much push and pull as you can, and using some of those tectonic gestures to give interest to what could easily become a dorm looking building. Glad to see something not like everything else before us, something with some color and excitement that could be a very landmark or iconic building. The location lends for that, I'm excited to see the progression of this. But definitely look at how you can bring some interest to your massing and how that complements the material choice.
- The ground story glazing strikes me, it doesn't do anything to activate the street. The wallpaks face out, I don't see that illustrated. We need to see where those are, how they're integrated or screened, how they integrate with this unusual façade material. I would definitely want to see the video you mentioned. It can't exceed the Capitol View Preservation Height Limit.
- I understand the material changes color, you mentioned change of texture, is that the striations?
 - The façade moves and is dynamic based on the color shifting qualities of the paint, and shadow associated with the texture.
- I agree, I was excited about a new material and this long skinny slot of a site. I think it's depending too much on that skin, there could be more development of how the punched openings relate to one another, in particular that front facade. It definitely needs more glazing outward to connect to the pedestrian experience. Not sure if this is actually even accurate, right now the walpak is in one bedroom and seems like it should be in those narrower slots where the forested image is located. First floor has to have more of a presence and a pedestrian connection to the inside. The windows could afford more glazing, it would make the apartments much nicer too.
- You definitely have to stay under that height restriction. Some more thought has to go into the accessibility for parking as well.
- Exciting project. I can get behind purple. You included some detail here about how this panel and wall will be put together, which is nice. Can you speak to this building envelope you're trying to achieve? It's a simple mass relatively speaking, is there another goal you want to speak to from a sustainability perspective?
 - We like the idea of higher and better use for this site, and there is a strong need for more affordable housing downtown. We would maximize the land use density, and create a really efficient design that maximizes the efficiency from a use standpoint but doesn't sacrifice function. To do that we think we need to treat this building as a canvas and bring design to that canvas as opposed to lots of articulation and material change. Using one material that has multiple textures and colors that changes and shifts seems fantastic. It will never appear as the same building ever, really.
- I agree with everything I'm hearing and I'm not looking at being more conservative, this is something that's unusual and I think we like that. Once you put this into context in a 3D model you're going to see that this is not a big long façade that's exposed, it's really that narrow façade that will be a swath of color as a punctuation without being really obtrusive. It's probably a curse and a blessing, this site, it's giving you this beautifully slender building. Along the street and façade on John Nolen Drive could be a fantastic gem there, encourage you to keep going.
- I'm going to challenge you. Affordable housing design is often dumbed-down. That's dated and we don't want to go down that road, this could be integrity of design for affordability as well. There's a way to do it and still have a well-designed project. An elegance can happen with some rhythm and proportions, how they relate to some of the context, you can have a successfully designed building that maximizes usage while being affordable at the same time.

**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 maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. 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.

Table 28E-1: Building Materials in Downtown and Urban Districts.

Building Materials	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	Standards (see footnotes)
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Concrete Panels (Tilt-up or Precast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	C
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			D
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			D
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Transparent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

- A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than thirty-three percent (33%) of any building.
- B - Wood and fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story except between the sidewalk and the bottom of storefront windows or as an accent material.
- C - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.
- D - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used on building facades facing State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.
- E - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal
- F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.

(g) Equipment and Service Area Screening.

1. Outdoor loading areas or mechanical equipment are not permitted in the front yard. When visible from an abutting public street or walkway, they shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall, or screen of plant material.
2. No doors or openings providing access to parking or loading facilities shall about the Capitol Square, State Street or King Street.
3. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the principal structure.

(h) Screening of Rooftop Equipment.

1. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
2. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials. (Am. by ORD-15-00104, 10-15-15)