



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 310-322 E Washington Avenue  
**Application Type:** Planned Development (PD) in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 4  
Initial/Final Approval and an Advisory Recommendation are Requested  
**Legistar File ID #** [68154](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Mark Binkowski, MRB Holdings | St. John’s Lutheran Church

**Project Description:** The applicant is seeking Initial/Final Approval of a Planned Development (PD) for the redevelopment of the St. John’s Lutheran Church site with a 10-story mixed-use building. The ground floor would include worship and community space with 126 residential units located on the upper nine (9) levels.

**Project Schedule:**

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on November 9, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on January 9, 2023.
- The Common Council will review the proposed rezoning on January 17, 2023.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is both an **approving and advisory body** on this request. As an **approving body**, the UDC is reviewing this as new development in Urban Design District 4 (“UDD 4”). This requires that the Urban Design Commission to review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in [MGO Section 33.24\(11\)](#).

The UDC is also an **advisory body** on the Planned Development request, including those related to bonus stories. For Planned Developments the Urban Design Commission is required to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission with specific findings on the design objectives listed in Zoning Code sections 28.098(1), Statement of Purpose, and (2), Standards for Approval (PD Standards Attached).

**Additional Background Information.** Prior to the November informational presentation, Zoning staff determined that the proposal did not comply with the design standards for UMX zoning, specifically the requirement that the average ground story floor elevation is not higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation and the maximum first story height limit of 18 feet above the sidewalk elevation.

Due to concerns with being able to demonstrate that the PD Standards can be met, Planning and Zoning staff have first encouraged the applicant to explore design modifications to the current design concept to avoid the need for a PD Zoning Map Amendment. Recognizing the development team’s desire to continue with the current design concept, the applicant has formally submitted to rezone this property to the PD district. Whether such standards can be met will ultimately be determined by the Common Council after a recommendation by the Plan Commission.

**Adopted Plans.** The project site is located in the [Downtown Plan](#) (the “Plan”) planning area within the Downtown Core neighborhood. Generally, the Plan notes that development in this area should be the highest intensity with a mix of office, employment, retail, government, residential, cultural, entertainment, and other uses to retain the areas’ vibrancy.

The Plan also includes the project site within “Additional Height Area H,” which extends along the north side of East Washington Avenue, between Blair and Webster Streets. The Plan notes, in part, that while tall buildings are appropriate here, the area also functions as an area of transition to some extent. As noted in the Plan, up to two bonus stories may be considered *“In order to encourage taller buildings that provide continuity with the Capital Gateway Corridor and further enhance this important approach to Downtown, up to two bonus stories (beyond the base eight (8) stories) may be considered.”* Consideration of “bonus” stories are evaluated by the Plan Commission against the following standards:

- a. *The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned (if the recommendations in the Downtown Plan call for changes) character of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the scale, mass, rhythm, and setbacks of buildings and relationships to street frontages and public spaces.*
- b. *The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories.*
- c. *The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the projects and create a pleasing visual relationship with them.*
- d. *For projects proposed in priority viewsheds and other views and vistas identified on the Views and Vistas Map in the City of Madison Downtown Plan, there are no negative impacts on the viewshed as demonstrated by viewshed studies prepared by the applicant.*

## Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

Planning Division staff requests that the UDC review and make findings based on the standards for Planned Developments and UDD 4 requirements and guidelines, including the design considerations noted below and those items noted by the Commission as part of the most recent Informational Presentation.

- **Ground Level Activation.** Among the primary design considerations is the adequacy of the ground level activation, which is made more challenging due to the grade changes across the site. Within the underlying zone district there are requirements intended to activate the street frontage, by setting the first-floor level near the sidewalk grade, across a site. Currently, the N Hancock Street side is activated through a lower-level exposure for the residential use, though that does not carry over to the East Washington facade. As noted on the plans, raised steel planters have been incorporated into landscape plan along the street frontage to assist in the screening of blank walls.
- **Related Landscaping Considerations.** Staff also requests that UDC make findings related to the overall proposed landscape plan, especially as it relates to the treatment and ground level activation along East Washington Avenue, near the North Hancock Street corner, screening of blank walls, and in providing year-round color and texture within rooftop amenity spaces.
- **Bonus Stories.** As noted above, the Downtown Plan identifies the maximum height for the project site as eight stories, with the possibility for two bonus stories. The proposed building is ten stories. As such, staff requests the UDC make findings and a recommendation for the proposed bonus stories as it relates to the PD criteria noted above, including those that generally speak to maintaining compatibility/complementary to the surrounding context and scale, both planned and existing, maintaining an environment of aesthetic desirability, presenting a higher quality of design.
- **Materials.** The building material palette is primarily comprised of masonry, including brick, stone and precast concrete, with glass, wood veneer, and fiber cement accents. As noted in both the PD standards and

UDD 4 requirements and guidelines, buildings should be designed to present an enhanced design aesthetic, including utilizing four sided architecture, high quality, low maintenance materials, generally complimentary with context and character, and avoiding blank walls. Staff requests the Commission make findings and a recommendation related to the overall building material palette, especially as it relates to the criteria noted above, including those that generally speak to maintaining an environment of aesthetic desirability, presenting a higher quality of design.

- **Lighting.** The photometric plan appears to have inconsistencies with the City's Outdoor Lighting requirements (Section 29.36, MGO) for medium/low level activity areas, including light levels in excess of 2.5 footcandles in pedestrian areas. As a potential code compliance issue, the applicant is advised that an updated photometric plan and fixture cutsheets, consistent with MGO Section 29.36, will be required to be submitted for review and approval prior to permitting. In addition, building façade lighting is proposed, including at the top edge of the tower as well as under the concrete structures of each individual private terraces. Staff requests the Commission provide feedback with regard to the proposed architectural lighting at the top of the building, as well as mounting details of the proposed fixtures and night views of the building.
- **Signage.** While identifiable sign areas are shown on the elevations drawings, staff notes that a separate review and approval will be required. Staff requests the Commission's feedback related to the sign area noted on the southeast, E Washington Avenue, elevation that spans between columns, which is not code compliant. Each column would be its own signable area; as shown the proposed area extends beyond the column. A Comprehensive Design Review would be required for the proposed signage areas as noted on the plans.

As noted above the UDC is both an advisory body and approving body on this request. Approving as it relates to the UDD 4 requirements and guidelines, and advisory as it relates to the Planned Development amendment, including landscape. Staff recommends the Commission's action be in the form of one motion that has multiple components; one for the design of the proposed building and site improvements, and one for the Planned Development that is based in the PD Standards, specifically as it relates to the bonus stories.

## Summary of UDC Previous Informational Presentation

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

- I remember this project very well. I understand the change in zoning approach with the grade considerations. I'm wondering how many of the comments and suggestions from last time have been incorporated, along with the many changes associated with the zoning approach.
  - Some of the big changes include the residential entrance on the Hancock façade stone wrapping around the corner with punched openings, opening that up to a glassier element along Hancock with the plinth not wrapping around the corner. And the detailing around the St. John's entrance on E. Washington, with the canopies extended through into the partnering organization for more continuity, and the brick has been dropped down for more cohesiveness.
- The project remains a very nice project and achieving some really wonderful ambitious goals about the uses in the space, particularly the goals related to below median income housing units. The material palette suggested this is thought to be a long-term building with the heavy stone materiality.
  - That's absolutely correct.
- How long do we understand a commitment can be made for the income levels of the people living in this building?

- Right now we have committed to a forty-year affordability period. The church has no future plan or intention to not make it affordable housing. We expect it to continue well beyond 40 years.
- Can you speak to the design team's summary of how this project is achieving the PD objectives?
  - Promotion of integrated land use, public and private facilities, the unique mixture of uses with the church and affordable housing, high quality development consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comp Plan and neighborhood plan, fewer parking stalls (sixty-five) due to proximity to the proposed BRT, the Mifflin bike corridor and the Square, as well as the affordable housing component.
- The amount of glass detracts from that. This building doesn't read like housing units, it seems quite cold to me actually. I do wonder if there might be opportunities for fenestration to give us more of that nice materiality you're considering.
- I think it's a really nice project. As always, your attention to details goes a long way. I like your description of the beveled aperture on the corner tower element. The expression and expressive architecture of color and light down on the bottom is really exciting, more exciting than anything we've seen tonight. I like the layering of the landscape into the architecture, into the base and the plinth, as well as the plan selections and furniture on the back terrace. I really like where it's headed.
- I'm not sure about the appropriateness of the wooden planter boxes outside the masonry wall between the sidewalk and the building.
- I didn't notice the details, if they are actually wooden on the inside or if the wood is just a cladding.
- Seems residential on a building like this to have wooden planter boxes along the sidewalk, vs. something more built-in.
- I agree, I overlooked that and thought the photo was associated with the terrace. It does seem a little residential in scale and doesn't really fit with the architecture of the rest of the project.
  - We can certainly revisit that. The idea there was to add warmth in front of the stone.
- You have bike racks in the City right-of-way. I don't have an issue but usually you have to find a home for those within your own property.
- With regard to the amount of glass, some of those bedrooms are pretty small. A bedroom that's 10 x 12 with a bed and floor-to-ceiling glass facing E Washington Avenue southeast, I don't know if I could sleep in a bedroom like that. It will be super cold in the winter and noisy all the time, I wonder if you thought about reducing the amount of glass from a livability and energy efficiency standpoint.
  - From last year to now we actually did reduce that window area. Having more glass at that corner helps break down the overall scale, our experience with other projects is that tenants really appreciate having that much natural light. We do provide black-out roller shades in the bedrooms, generally what we've seen in affordable housing is smaller windows. We think providing more open natural light is actually a positive, but we did reduce the glass area in the brick portion of the façade.
- Kudos to the team for the reductions, it is starting to look more appropriate. Maybe the brick mass is right where it wants to be. I like the glass corner detail a lot, it gives a levity to that corner. My question is how far to bring the width of that fenestration and whether it's appropriate.
- There appear to be mullions that suggest mechanical or ventilation plans.
  - Those are operable windows on both sides of the building.
- Really nice project. Where is the congregation going to relocate to while this is being reconstructed?
  - The congregation is actively exploring that right now for the estimated 18 months of construction. They are looking at a fall of 2023 construction start.
- Currently where do congregation members park?
  - The church has a few parking stalls along the Hancock Street driveway, but my understanding is primarily the congregation members are utilizing street parking or potentially the Brayton Lot across the street.
- Is some of that parking underground dedicated for the new church space?

- We are looking at supplying some of that parking for the church employees, but it will not be a main source of parking for congregants during services.
- I really like the stained glass, it lets people know or at least gives a strong hint of what's inside there. Softly lit from the inside at night will be really nice.
- Kudos for the landscape design, I always like to look at the points provided, this is one of the biggest ratios I've ever seen. The plan is drawn at 15 times what was required by the City, phenomenal.
- I like the fact they are separated by permanent plantings of perennials and spring bulbs. If those beds get planted with tomatoes and peppers they'll get picked by anybody coming down the street, and maybe that's the church's intention. Regarding the sedum levels, maybe the tenants themselves would like a more protected area of community gardening. I can see some of that space being allocated for small raised wooden boxes for the tenants to grow stuff up on the rooftop. Nice project both in its goals and application of solid design to reach those goals. Looking forward to seeing it built.
- I am so excited by this project. I appreciate the social justice move of this, using this real estate in this way. This is primo real estate along with supportive services, good architecture and affordable housing, it's inspiring and I thank the client and the architect for the message you send with this project and how you're going about it.
- We need to make a finding on this ultimately, can you describe how the bonus stories demonstrate for a higher quality building than can be achieved without them?
  - The top two floors contain a total of 27 units. With this site the big challenge is the economics, maximizing the density on the site is critical to the overall financial feasibility, and allows us to do things like the stone along E. Washington Avenue, the framing with the precast at the corner, using the brick, and putting some more money into the façade beyond what you would normally see with affordable housing.
- Integrate the change in grade and minimize the blank wall at the corner.
- I don't have any concerns about the extra eighteen-inches, it's not anything that the architecture doesn't compensate for.
- Really nice landscaping boxes stepping down along there could go a long way. We saw the exhibits on the alternatives and how they complicate things more than simplify them. You're well justified there.
- The planter boxes and the growing food out front is probably pretty aligned with the mission, I doubt they would care if anyone took anything to feed themselves. The only issue I would have with that out front is not necessarily the plants themselves but all the things stuck in the ground around the plants, tomato cages would be more of a detraction from the building than the plants.
- We often see disconnect between landscape and architecture where you have wonderful architecture and the planter boxes follow the grade, so you have this orthogonal rectangular form that's the only thing stacked down the grade. With these strong horizontals it would be really nice if the setting of the planter box was intentioned to keep it orthogonal with everything else.

**ATTACHMENT**  
**PD Zoning Statement of Purpose and Standards**

**28.098 (1) Statement of Purpose.**

The Planned Development (PD) District is established to provide a voluntary regulatory framework as a means to facilitate the unique development of land in an integrated and innovative fashion, to allow for flexibility in site design, and to encourage development that is sensitive to environmental, cultural, and economic considerations, and that features high-quality architecture and building materials. In addition, the Planned Development District is intended to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

- (a) Promotion of green building technologies, low-impact development techniques for stormwater management, and other innovative measures that encourage sustainable development.
- (b) Promotion of integrated land uses allowing for a mixture of residential, commercial, and public facilities along corridors and in transitional areas, with enhanced pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections and amenities.
- (c) Preservation and enhancement of important environmental features through careful and sensitive placement of buildings and facilities.
- (d) Preservation of historic buildings, structures, or landscape features through adaptive reuse of public or private preservation of land.
- (e) Provision of more adequate, usable, and suitably located open space, recreational amenities, and other public facilities than would otherwise be provided under conventional land development techniques.
- (f) Facilitation of high-quality development that is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.

**28.098(2) Approval Standards for Project**

The standards for approval of a zoning map amendment to the PD District, or any major alteration to an approved General Development Plan, are as follows:

- (a) The applicant shall demonstrate that no other base zoning district can be used to achieve a substantially similar pattern of development. Planned developments shall not be allowed simply for the purpose of increasing overall density or allowing development that otherwise could not be approved unless the development also meets one or more of the objectives of (1) above. Conditions under which planned development may be appropriate include:
  - 1. Site conditions such as steep topography or other unusual physical features; or
  - 2. Redevelopment of an existing area or use of an infill site that could not be reasonably developed under base zoning district requirements.
- (b) The PD District plan shall facilitate the development or redevelopment goals of the Comprehensive Plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.
- (c) The PD District plan shall not adversely affect the economic health of the City or the area of the City where the development is proposed. The City shall be able to provide municipal services to the property where the planned development is proposed without a significant increase of the cost of providing those services or economic impact on municipal utilities serving that area.

- (d) The PD District plan shall not create traffic or parking demands disproportionate to the facilities and improvements designed to meet those demands. A traffic demand management plan may be required as a way to resolve traffic and parking concerns. The Plan shall include measurable goals, strategies, and actions to encourage travelers to use alternatives to driving alone, especially at congested times of day. Strategies and actions may include, but are not limited to, carpools and vanpools; public and private transit; promotion of bicycling, walking and other non-motorized travel; flexible work schedules and parking management programs to substantially reduce automobile trips.
- (e) The PD District plan shall coordinate architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with surrounding land uses and create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose of the PD District.
- (f) The PD District plan shall include open space suitable to the type and character of development proposed, including for projects with residential components, a mix of structured and natural spaces for use by residents and visitors. Areas for stormwater management, parking, or in the public right of way shall not be used to satisfy this requirement.
- (g) The PD district shall include suitable assurances that each phase could be completed in a manner that would not result in an adverse effect upon the community as a result of termination at that point.
- (h) When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed in Section 28.071(2)(a) Downtown Height Map, except as provided for in Section 28.071(2)(a)1. and Section 28.071(2)(b), the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans and no application for excess height shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:
  - 1. The excess height is compatible with the existing or planned (if the recommendations in the Downtown Plan call for changes) character of the surrounding area, including but not limited to the scale, mass, rhythm, and setbacks of buildings and relationships to street frontages and public spaces.
  - 2. The excess height allows for a demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional stories.
  - 3. The scale, massing and design of new buildings complement and positively contribute to the setting of any landmark buildings within or adjacent to the project and create a pleasing visual relationship with them.
  - 4. For projects proposed in priority viewsheds and other views and vistas identified on the Views and Vistas Map in the City of Madison Downtown Plan, there are no negative impacts on the viewshed as demonstrated by viewshed studies prepared by the applicant.
- (i) When applying the above standards to an application to reduce or eliminate stepbacks required by Section 28.071(2)(c) Downtown Stepback Map, the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans, including the downtown plan. No application to reduce or eliminate stepbacks may be granted unless it finds that all of the following conditions are present:
  - 1. The lot is a corner parcel.
  - 2. The lot is not part of a larger assemblage of properties.
  - 3. The entire lot is vacant or improved with only a surface parking lot.
  - 4. No principal buildings on the lot have been demolished or removed since the effective date of this ordinance.