



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 430, 432, 444 State Street

Application Type: New Development in the Downtown Core District – Initial/Final Approval is Requested

Legistar File ID # [69486](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Joe McCormick, JD McCormick Properties

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Initial/Final Approval for the development of a 5-story mixed-use building containing approximately 23-26 dwelling units and ground floor commercial space.

Project Schedule:

- The Landmarks Commission reviewed a Demolition Permit request for 430-444 State Street on January 31, 2022, and made a recommendation to the Plan Commission that the buildings have historic value.
- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on February 9, 2022.
- The UDC referred this item on September 21, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on January 9, 2023.
- The Common Council is scheduled to review the proposed CSM on January 17, 2023.

Approval Standards: The project is located within the Downtown Core. Pursuant to Section 28.074 (c): All new buildings and additions greater than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four (4) stories shall obtain conditional use approval. If formally submitted for review, the Urban Design Commission (“UDC”) would be an **advisory body** on this development request. As a new development in the Downtown Core Zoning District, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission.

Downtown Plan Guidelines and Recommendations: The [Downtown Plan](#) (the “Plan”) includes the project site within the State Street Subarea that recognizes that while there are opportunities for some larger scale redevelopment within the State Street Subarea, the Plan recommends that heights along the State Street frontage be maintained at 2-4 stories. Generally, the Plan includes recommendations that speak to buildings being designed to maintain the predominant smaller-scale rhythms of the street frontage, reserving ground floor spaces for retail sales and services uses, and encouraging the preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of sound older buildings that contribute to the districts character.

Summary of Design Considerations

Planning Division staff requests that the UDC provide feedback and findings on the design considerations noted below based on the aforementioned standards and guidelines for development in the Downtown Core.

As noted above, the UDC is an advisory body on this request. Staff recommends the Commission’s findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission be framed as a motion based on the applicable review criteria, including the Downtown Design Guidelines and the Zoning Code. Additionally, while the UDC utilizes the Initial/Final Approval framework in certain situations, as an advisory recommendation, staff believes it would be procedurally preferable to provide a singular motion with the Commission’s findings and recommendations.

For the Commission’s reference and consideration, staff has identified the following design considerations:

- **Building Mass and Scale:** As noted in the Downtown Plan and DC zoning district requirements, there is a four-story height limitation along State Street frontage and a six story height limitation 30 feet back from the State Street right-of-way line. As proposed, taller redevelopment is generally consistent with adopted plans and the building appears to be consistent with the building height limitations. Staff requests the UDC’s feedback and findings on the overall building mass and scale, specifically as it relates to the surrounding context, height and stepbacks, tower element, and the proposed loft space as they relate to and contribute to the overall building’s architectural design and mass.

- **Building Design:** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines speak to building facades being oriented toward public spaces, including guidelines that encourage active uses and entries being located at the street level, maintaining sensitivity to context and rhythm by incorporating similar façade modulation, vertical and horizontal articulation patterns, and pedestrian scale design details, etc. into the overall building design. In addition, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines speak to incorporating enhanced design of “Terminal Views and Highly-Visible Corners.” Staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings on the following building design considerations:
 - Consider the overall façade composition, which is organized in pattern that staff believes “reads” wider than the smaller/narrower storefront rhythm that is more commonly found in surrounding blocks.
 - The proportions and patterns of voids and solids within the façade, especially along the ground level,
 - Applying exterior materials in a manner that accentuates or further delineates pedestrian scale details and building articulation,
 - Design of building corners or end walls, including those directly abutting Lisa Link Peace Park and the east elevation. Consideration should be given to designing these elevations for the current condition, which is adjacent to a building that is significantly smaller in height and that will be visible from the street, and
 - The proposed floor plans. As noted on the floor plans, there is a lower level commercial space that shares an entrance with the residential portion of the building. Consideration should be given the separation of these entrances, which may lead to exterior building changes in articulation and rhythm. Staff requests the Commission’s feedback and findings on the proposed shared building entrances and how delineating those spaces more may translate to potential exterior building changes.

Lastly, for the Commission’s consideration, attached is a letter from the City of Madison Parks Division noting their concerns regarding the proposed development and potential impacts to Lisa Link Peace Park, including those associated with construction phasing and staging, the relationship of the proposed building to the park. While the development team is actively working with City staff to resolve these issues, the timing of the resolution or resulting impacts to design is unknown.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation and Referral Comments

Staff refers the Commission to their comments from the February 9, 2022, Informational Presentation:

- A brick building...I struggle with this one and the two similarly colored masonry materials that are not complimenting each other. Again there is one that comes only to the ground that works okay, I don’t know if the other one is needed. This building is missing something. I struggle with the very close fake

balconies, it's too much in such a little space. Not every building needs to look historic, but this one isn't giving what it's intended to give.

- It's hard to let go of the thought of small commercial spaces that might be diverse and might be owned by not large teams of people. On that first level, my mind doesn't even get past one commercial space displacing several, and if the one doesn't succeed that's a big empty space. Very conflicted about that.
- Our role is to review the building design and not the ownership structure or who is leasing. The building is not historic by any official designation, and the Plan Commission will be responsible for granting the demolition of those projects. We need to focus on the building materials, expression of details, color and also the context of State Street, which is probably one of the most sensitive areas in town.
- Were there any thoughts with the design to encourage or promote a certain business owner in that first floor?
 - The desired user is a restaurant that would have a two-story dining room area with additional outdoor space on the 2nd level.
- Any appetite at all for planning for smaller footprint occupancies? I ask because that change could be fundamental to the design.
 - It will need to be flexible in some regards, we're just representing what we feel would be an ideal user for this location.
- I'm not particularly fond of the design, I do question the impact and the precedent that this project may set in terms of breaking up the rhythm of State Street, the height in context with the other buildings around it. I appreciate the rendering quality and the presentation, but I do worry about precedent setting given the location and context.
- It's two of these balconies per studio?
 - Yes.
- That's overkill. It's way too much going on in a very small space. Reexamine your number of punched openings and the size of them.
- I love State Street and I share the conflict because there is a scale. There's a definite scale to State Street, places like The Hub look like they're on steroids, it's too big and the openings are huge. It's a new building and that's what to expect, but I think the rhythm as you go down State Street, the precedent is alarming that we could end up with a canyon of five- and six-story buildings on either side of State Street. The scale feels too large for that location. We don't have any influence on the owner deciding to tear down those buildings if he has a right to do so, but the scale of what replaces it should be in keeping with what is remaining.
- I would echo a lot of the same things. The staff report states the building does not meet the 4-story height limitation along State Street. What does that mean to this project?
- This presentation packet has removed the tower element and they are now within the 4-story height limitation along State Street.
- On the topic of scale, having worked on Lisa Link Park, how a lot of design and planting and topography builds up against those existing buildings, there would be significant alteration to the design and quality of the park space, or some significant coordination to recreate or retain those conditions along those existing building edges. In general I'm frustrated, just because they don't have a historic status doesn't mean they're not historic. I still think that is significant to the urban design of the project and the space. Those buildings are contributing to an urban design quality we would lose with this project. Being careful of the scale against the park, as well as State Street is important to me. Agree the balcony repetitions are too much.
- I was impressed with the building design as a first pass when I saw it, particularly after the tower element was removed. We have a lot of boring brick buildings, but brick and masonry are appropriate on State Street, particularly if it was something unusual like a white brick vs. brown we see everywhere. It's got some nice corners, a stately infill piece in the middle, it's busy with all those French balconies, but that could be modulated with thinner pilasters and columns within the units. The restaurant location

is shown as an open dining area, the design team is still working on this, but eyes on the park and activity on State Street has a lot going for it. A lot of thought went into the planning of State Street and saying four stories is an appropriate height. There's some potential for more activity and vibrancy on this block.

- In terms of successful infill on State Street I look to the 100 Block, what appears to be series of smaller scale facades, but the interior is one continuous floor plate. It kept the scale and rhythm of the street. I struggle with the long horizontals, the width of this building. Think about the American Bank project on the Square. I don't like the Juliette balconies.
- Something to think about, if those corner pieces are making you think it looks like one long building, maybe it could be those two strong corner elements and the middle section broken up into two. I hope we're not suggesting replicating a historic look. A new contemporary expression using the existing pattern of development along State Street as an inspiration is the way to go.
- I don't mind the white brick, but not white brick plus white CMU. Historic structures have their place, but not everything old needs to be saved. I can see replacing things with modern interpretations of, or something that is appropriate. As far as the uses and tenants, that's not our purview. I do like the treatment of the railing at the top. There's potential here but there's too much going on.

Staff further refers the Commission to the comments from the June 29, 2022 referral:

- The staff report asks that we comment on building mass, scale and design elements.
- The overall façade composition reads wider than the smaller, narrower storefronts seen on surrounding blocks. The 100 Block of State Street (opposite side of street) has newer buildings that aren't the mega student apartment buildings, but a nice example of modulating a façade so it does not appear wider than it is taller. It can be done and it has been done successfully.
- There aren't a lot of balconies facing State Street. The corner element with the cap we see a lot of, you might think that's the building entrance but that's an entrance for the commercial. The apartment entrance is not expressed, there's an opportunity there to modulate the façade so you have distinct expressed entrances.
- Overall the building is a difficult problem, this is a very prominent site. You have this real conservative five-bay element, a freeform six-story part around the corner that conforms to where the stepback needs to be. Why isn't the building a bit more of a modern expression that takes advantage of the unique geometry it's faced with?
- The challenge of this project is somewhat precedent setting. We heard great commentary from the public that I very much appreciate. Everybody wants to protect our beloved State Street. I remember my first experience of this pocket park, it's a vivid memory. As much as that experience resonates with me, the Downtown Plan is such that we do envision increasing heights of buildings in this area. I have not heard that this is necessarily a direct solution to affordable housing, but it is more housing nonetheless. As much as the shading analysis is valuable, I don't know there's much we can do related to the growth of our city and the need to densify and build upward. I do agree with the earlier comments, we've made them before and I don't know they are yet resolved. This design is so disruptive to what is there currently and the context around it. I would potentially be supportive of this building height-wise, but I don't know that this particular design can help me support this project.
- There's not a lot of finesse. We just saw a good example of when you have a good brick material, how you can articulate openings and elements with little finesses to break down the scale and mass. If brick is your choice of materials, more articulation could be used. The big openings at the corner may be working against you, it has a heaviness to it and are not in keeping with the rhythm at the pedestrian level. Then you have this typical articulation of the cornice, there's a lot of opportunity here to break down the mass of this with lighter materials. In keeping with what they're doing at the Hub and much larger buildings, you want to start articulating the pedestrian level in quaintness. I am concerned with

the precedent of the four-story flat up against the property line. You start that rhythm down State Street and pretty soon you're in a canyon. This precedent setting for a replacement building, it has to have a lot more sensibility to breaking down at the pedestrian scale. The contradictory elements with the more modern style, the Juliet balconies with fussy grading, maybe one or the other has to go. All in all, it just has a mass that is off putting for continuing the rhythm of State Street.

- We have a responsibility to make some recommendations the best we can so the designers have the best opportunity to give us something approvable.
- I'm in agreement with the detailing comments, the human scale of being around this building. It is hard to see things change, but people might very well respond to those balconies in a favorable way. Understanding that aesthetic here on State Street, there is a sense of playfulness; turning that corner gray gives it a much more somber tone. It's right next to a park, an ideal place to be more playful with architecture and color.
- The architecture is rather attractive and a nice combination of materials, in a different context. It definitely changes the character of the streetscape and sets a precedent. The design of Lisa Link has this amphitheater grade change bowl-like experience. Right now those existing buildings are retaining four-feet of grade against that one wall and it really contributes to that topography that you're nestled in. You're losing all of that with this project, until you get further back in the park. It changes pretty dramatically and I think what is there now is very successful, not to mention it has a big mural on the wall for the color that Jessica was referencing. I don't have an issue with the corner tower element or the Juliet balconies. The proposed mural brings color and creativity if you're on that side to see it, but in order to be an approvable project, it needs to have that break down of more division along State Street, less width of the appearance of a single building and more of that rhythm we know and love about State Street itself. One story less in height would certainly help the approval process. This is not moving in the right direction for State Street.

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Knudson, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED TO REFER BACK TO URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).

The Urban Design Commission found that this proposal sets a precedent and recommends that the building as proposed not be approved based on the following:

- The proposal needs to relate better to the pedestrian scale.
- The proposal needs articulation of materials that is not matching, but that is not foreign to the other architectural elements on State Street.
- The corner tower element is too heavy for the scale of the building and needs articulation and more of a unification of the front, back and side façades.
- The project would benefit from, if not a complete removal of a floor, perhaps a portion going from four to three-stories at the street.
- More articulation along the State Street façade with a slight setback to appear less sheer along the sidewalk.
- Look at the rhythm of the bays so that they are more vertical and the building reads as a series of vertical elements vs. a more egg crate design.
- The Commission recognizes that having units facing Lisa Link Peace Park on the other side is a good thing. However, it is unfortunate the building goes the full six-story height along there, whereas it's much lower along that side now.
- It is a blank wall right now and could be pretty neat to have lit apartments there at night vs. a blank brick wall.

- There are many successful infill projects that use more variety of modern materials in a creative way without mimicking the exact period of architecture next door, while still having very pedestrian scale elements.