



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 437-445 W Johnson Street, 215-221 N Bassett Street, and 430-440 W Dayton Street  
**Application Type:** New Residential Building in UMX Zoning – Second Informational Presentation  
**Legistar File ID #** [75228](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Chad Matesi, Core Madison Bassett, LLC | Brian Munson, Vandewalle & Associates

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the construction of a student housing project comprised of two residential towers, one 12 stories, located along W Johnson Street and one six stories, located along W Dayton Street. The proposal includes 254 housing units ranging in size from studios to five bedroom apartments and including some first floor townhome units with individual entrances. As part of the development proposal, the applicant is proposing to rezone the property to Urban Mixed Use (UMX).

**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 currently zoned a combination of Urban Mixed-Use (UMX) and Planned Development (PD). With this proposal, the applicant would rezone the entire property to the UMX district, as noted above. 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. As noted in the Downtown Height Map, the maximum recommended height is 12 stories along W Johnson Street and six along W Dayton. As proposed, staff believes that as a result of the proposed mezzanine level, the project is **not** consistent with the recommended height limitations.

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](#) (the “Plan”) planning area within the Johnson Bend district, which is an area recommended for higher intensity residential development. As noted in the Plan, this area is characterized by its high-density apartment building, however is “...contains a variety of building types, styles and character that do not relate well to one another.”

## 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.

- **Height and Proportions.** As noted above, as a result of the proposed mezzanine levels, both building towers appear to be in excess of the maximum permitted height as noted in the Zoning Code, Height Map. Staff note that the UDC cannot grant a waiver to this provision and ultimately, compliance with the Zoning Code must be determined by the Zoning Administrator. From a design standpoint, the proposed mezzanine level increases the ground floor, floor heights and changes the “read” of the buildings’ proportions and story-heights. Staff requests that UDC provide feedback to design considerations such as the resulting building proportions and scale of building components, especially along the pedestrian level.

Staff notes that rooftop amenities are also proposed. The applicant is advised that, as part of a Conditional Use approval, rooftop access (elevator overruns and stair towers) is limited to the minimum necessary to maintain Building Code compliant egress.

- **Building Design and Composition.** Staff again wishes to emphasize that both the Johnson and Bassett facades should be designed as prominent front facades. With the current design, there appears to still be considerably more architectural detailing on the W Johnson tower than the W Dayton tower, including clear building entries, materials/colors, residential balconies, railings, etc. As noted by the Commission in their initial Informational Presentation comments, which focused on utilizing the “grid” as an organizing element, creating strong horizontal and vertical elements, and recognized that differentiating the design between the two towers would be acceptable given the context and intensity between W Johnson Street and W Dayton Street.

Staff requests the Commission’s feedback on the overall design of both building towers, including those noted in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines related to massing, proportions and relationships of architectural components relative to surrounding development, shade and shadow, architectural detailing of street facing facades, positive termination at the top of the building, integration of rooftop equipment, etc.

- **Building Materials and Composition.** The proposed building material palette of the W Johnson Building primarily consists of masonry base with metal and composite wood panels on the upper stories along with “the grid” detailing, however it is unclear what the materiality of this element is. The material palette of the W Dayton Street Building is comprised of fiber cement and metal panel, as well as “the grid.” Both buildings have blank walls expanses along pedestrian pathways, some of which will be visible from the street, including the northeast corner of the W Johnson tower and the W Dayton Street façade and southwest elevation of the W Dayton tower.

Staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the overall building material palette and its detailing giving consideration to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which generally speak to utilizing high quality, durable building materials and appropriate scale, color, texture, architectural detailing to create an enhanced pedestrian environment, as well as providing continuity in the finish and detailing of all four sides of each of the building components.

- **Longviews and Sensitivity to Context.** Due to location of this site within a major transit and W Johnson view corridor, consideration should be given to the composition of the overall building design and materials as part of the overall cityscape, as well as how the proposed building relates to the immediately surrounding context and transitions to scale of development along W Dayton Street, which is significantly different than the W Johnson Street frontage. As noted in the Downtown Plan and Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, consideration should be given to how buildings and their architectural design, not only relate to each other in the immediate context and scale, but also within the larger cityscape.

- **Unit Entry Orientation.** While there are multiple at-grade building and unit entries shown on the site plan creating a strong building orientation towards the street, some unit entries are oriented towards adjacent rear and side yards. If the adjacent properties are redeveloped, these buildings would be allowed to be built at or near the property line, which would result in very narrow pathways to which these units would open. As such, Staff continues to have significant design concerns related to how the unit entries relate to the surrounding development, both existing and future, and whether the individual unit entries are appropriate in these locations. As noted by the Commission in their initial Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the design, lighting, security of these unit entries. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the building design along the internal pedestrian pathways, including limiting blank wall expanses, providing an adequate landscape buffer, lighting, etc.
- **Building Entry Orientation.** While the plans appear to successfully orient the building to W Johnson Street, which appears to serve and function as the main building entry, there does not appear to be a clear common building entrance from N Bassett Street. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the overall building entry orientation, as well as the location and accessibility for service oriented activities.

## Summary of UDC First Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the January 11, 2023, Informational Presentation are provided below.

- I saw the precedents and I got super excited: I saw some lightness, design, greenery, I thought "this project is about to be something different." Then I saw the renderings and was super disappointed. You have time to make that better. The grid wasn't successfully applied, you have this frame but there are no voids, it's all solid. You have a flat façade all the way down with no undulation, pushing and pulling, the tectonics are missing. I see the attempt at a grid, but it's oversized and the proportion isn't right for this massing. On the lower tower there's no grid at all, that framing doesn't hit the mark. Look at your massing and see how you can lighten it. I understand this is student housing, but you shouldn't skip or limit the design potential because of those populations. You're in a prime location to have an outstanding building that contributes to the skyline in a highly dense neighborhood.
- It's the precedent versus the actual renderings presented. I really like the examples with the difference in windows, it seems bright and light with the greenery. The precedent is completely different, this is copying it in a cheap manner. Go for the grid style and not try to parse it out.
- What does "price conscious room sharing" mean?
  - We are including double occupancy units as well as studio units. We're trying to achieve a unit type that is price conscious for occupants that are willing to double up. Identify a price sensitive unit that would effectively be utilized by students seeking a unit that needs a more price sensitive option. We're achieving that by providing double up units within this building as a part of the mix and we're trying to find options at a lower price point with smaller units.
- We need to be conscious about the type of language we use. Equitable housing prices versus discount housing prices versus affordable housing prices. I find that extremely important, especially here where I believe you would be tearing down what is naturally occurring affordable housing in the downtown area, putting up "price conscious units" that are more expensive is misleading. That said, I strongly also believe rooftop pools and hot tubs are not necessary. We are not in a pool shortage, I don't see the value in something that gets used three months out of the year. Prioritize a green roof, a development that doesn't look and feel exactly the same as the others on this block. The precedent serves light and activity and greenery to this area and that's something we don't see with dark panels and wood accents. I would also be conscious of the fact that in this neighborhood, with all these luxury developments going up, it's creating this vertical column going down Johnson Street, that's not something that serves our

City to have this dark tunnel. If there's a way to work around bringing around the light accents from the precedents, breaking up that column like look.

- Would the townhomes have access on the front floor and how would you provide safety at the back entrances?
  - All of those units would have access from the front and back. The sidewalk connections would be landscaped, lit and have controlled access at both doors.
- It's not serving what was presented to us.
- The whole building itself. When we see the precedents, you have light or white looking coloring, clear square windows expanded across the entire building. The actual renderings show dark brown masonry, the windows are rectangular and don't expand across the full panel. It looks completely different. Use lighter colors, have the windows expand across the full panels.
- The project has inspired some good discussion. I too had to cleanse my memory of the precedent, I also felt a disconnect there. What trips me up about this building, how many floors is this building?
  - Twelve stories.
- It's difficult to tell that to some degree, and maybe that's okay, but it does give me an unsettling feeling that I can't tell how tall this building is. I like the restraint in the amount of fenestration, you've taken some strong design moves and applied materials in a way that is interesting without over glazing it, the amount of glazing is appropriate for a student housing building. The use of horizontal elements, then the grid breaking them up, it might be simpler or cleaner if the vertical elements were allowed to continue. I like the lighter tone base, the restraint on the glazing, but the horizontal elements do some disservice.
- I think there is a strong start here of a very attractive project. I like the restraint just mentioned, though it is lacking playfulness and forms. How you might get there, specifically looking at the voids, you turn the corner and lose the grid. It would be interesting to wrap that pattern and some of those lines into those voids to feel more three dimensional. The color palette here is interesting and a little different relative to the neighbors in this area that I think could be successful. Don't be too discouraged by some of our comments because it has elicited a great conversation tonight and I look forward to seeing the next iteration.
- When I look at this it doesn't look residential to me. That base looks like any big city office building where there was frequently a ground level lobby and office space above. Clearly the base is supposed to be two stories, but that base looks like it is three stories tall. I know there has been discussion about the floor to ceiling level that accounts for that visual discrepancy. Not necessarily a problem in and of itself, it just doesn't look to me like the apartments that it is. I'm just like everybody else, I looked at the precedents and I'm having trouble connecting the dots. They seem to be primarily about transparency and light, being able to see through areas that would otherwise be solid and I don't see any of that here. I'm not disparaging the overall design, I find it handsome, but I'm not seeing transparency, open spaces, voids versus volumes. Let's be honest and frank, it's an investment and you're going to put in the maximum amount of units you can in the space the City allots you to put it in. If you're going to say you're nodding to design elements that incorporate transparency and light, this just isn't it. That's what you're selling us, follow through. I'm excited to not see hanging balconies, the transition of cutting diagonally across a block is tricky, it looks like you're making a solid effort at pulling that off. Thumbs up to whatever open and green space you can do on it, I echo the comments that this race to have a pool on every rooftop of student housing is getting ridiculous and not necessary.
- Having some voids centered on most sides is really interesting. I'd encourage looking at the north side separated by ten-feet, those units are not going to get direct light. If they are only ten-feet from the Lux balconies facing that way, that tightness is something to look at. Also to piggyback that the safety of going into those townhouses at night by yourself, past other peoples' doors, with limited space can be very unwelcoming with snow, ice, and darkness. Think about those and their location, please take a look at that.

- The grid is a statement, a real organizing element. If that's the statement then the project should really embrace that, and right now as pointed out it's more applied than an organizing element; but it's a great place to start. The Dayton Street building form is really nice, I don't know you're going to be successful repeating the same articulation you have on Johnson Street. The Domain is the same situation, the way they handled the Dayton Street street façade was pretty successful. I would reiterate the townhouse entrances where that Lexington building may get developed, those long narrow dark walkways going into those units could be improved, if they get wider toward the street or somehow are more secure, that's a real consideration. I commend you on trying to do something different and bold, don't be afraid of color and pops of white, we have plenty of beige and brown buildings in downtown Madison. We appreciate you bringing it to us at this early stage.

**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)