PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

September 3, 2025

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: **1402 Wyoming Way**

Application Type: Public Building for MMSD Gompers Elementary and Black Hawk Middle Schools
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: 88480

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Scott Chehak, Madison Metropolitan School District | Susan Bowersox, OPN Architects

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a new two-story combined elementary and middle school on the unused portion of the site while the existing school remains open. Upon completion of the new construction the existing building will be demolished and replaced with surface parking and greenspace.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an approving body on this request. Pursuant to MGO Section 33.24(4)(d), "*The UDC shall approve plans for all buildings proposed to be built or expanded in the City by the State of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin, the City of Madison, Dane County, the Federal Government or any other local governmental entity which has the power to levy taxes on property located within the City.*"

Staff note that the UDC's approving authority is limited to the buildings themselves; any comments related to landscaping would only be advisory in nature.

Zoning Related Information: The project site is located in the Suburban Residential – Consistent 2 (SR-C2) zoning district. As noted in the Zoning Code, schools, public and private are allowed through the Conditional Use process. In addition, staff note that the maximum height for nonresidential uses in the SR-C2 zoning district is 35 feet.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff request the UDC provide feedback and make findings as required for public buildings. While staff do not have specific concerns with regard to the proposed building, potential design considerations for the Commission's review and comments are identified below:

- **Building Design and Materials**, including as it relates utilizing durable, high quality materials, as well as architectural design and detailing that maintain pedestrian scale, especially given the size and scale of the building, clearly define public/common building entrances and maintain a positive street orientation, minimize blank wall expanses, and maintain the same level of design and detailing across all elevations.

  In general, and in summary, the UDC's Informational Presentation comments noted that color materials should come all the way down to the ground and that consideration should be given to incorporating more dynamic materials, material colors or additional accents to help break down mass and scale.

  Staff notes that while the applicant has requested Final Approval and an Exterior Material Board was included in the plans, specific final material details, including color and manufacturer have not been noted for all materials. Specifically, staff believe additional details on the ACM panels and precast concrete panels should be provided.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments & Questions

As a reference, the Commissions comments and questions from the June 11, 2025, Informational Presentation are provided below.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission complimented the choice of materials, material break downs, and praised being socially conscious by separating the elementary from the middle school. The color should come all the way down for the middle school to reflect the size of kids and size of the buildings. It was suggested that as a school the building should be more vibrant and not so monochromatic; possibly by adding accent colors to the windows or headers. The applicant noted that the gymnasiums are precast, and the education wings are masonry brick. The renderings are showing partial texture on some panels, and there is some brick relief to not appear so monochromatic.

The Commission inquired about site access, and the two tear drops configurations. The applicant replied that the one off of Wheeler Road and the tear drop on the south are for parents, and the tear drop to the west is for buses.

The Commission noted the importance of wayfinding for people who don't speak English as a first language, and making sure all the pedestrian connections to the neighborhoods are in the right places. The Commission discussed flipping sidewalks and paths or a raised sidewalk treatment to avoid having students crossing traffic. Bicycle access should be close to entry locations and also avoid crossing traffic.

The Commission commented that this type of building has a massive roof, which comes with an opportunity to use it for anything other than just ballast. Stormwater comes into play, there could be a demonstration of sustainability as a public project. The Commission recommended not using mowed turf lawn on the larger open spaces.

The Commission commented on the neighborhood being highly residential, which makes this a beacon and a landmark. The proposal is much better than what is existing. The applicant was encouraged to have at least one dynamic feature to distinguish the building as the school of this neighborhood, and to consider the entry mass to be taller.

The Commission commented that this should be something more dynamic than intersecting rectangles; it's time to add some articulation and color to the design.