



UDC MEMO Planning Division

Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

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TO: Urban Design Commission

FROM: Janine Glaeser, UDC Secretary

DATE: May 23, 2018

SUBJECT: ID 51507(UDC) – 555 West Washington Avenue. – Deconstruction of the Existing Two-Story Office Structure and Construction of a new 5-story, Multi-Family Apartment Building in the UMX district. 4nd Ald. Dist.

Approval Standards

The subject site is zoned UMX (Urban Mixed Use District). All new buildings and additions greater than 20,000 square feet or that have more than four stories in UMX zoning shall obtain conditional use approval from the Plan Commission following review by the Urban Design Commission for conformity to the design standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and report its findings to the Plan Commission.

Important Zoning/Planning Considerations:

Zoning Code Standards

The base height limit on the zoning map allows for four stories. Up to two “bonus” stories can be approved with conditional use approval. In this block of West Washington, the code requires stories above the fourth floor to have a 30 foot stepback.

To obtain a height bonus, the zoning code requires the following finding be made by the Plan Commission:

When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed by Section 28.071(2)(a) Downtown Height Map for a development located within the Additional Height Areas identified in 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:

- 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.

Downtown Plan

The conditional use standards, including those for the above-mentioned height bonus, state that the Plan Commission shall consider the recommendations in adopted plans. The Downtown Plan has several design-related recommendations for the 400 and 500 blocks of West Washington Avenue. This site and the adjacent parcels to the west are specifically identified as potential redevelopment sites due to building obsolescence or site underutilization. The Plan notes that these blocks have large terraces and consistent front yard setbacks that provide a “sort of civic open space.” In regards to height, plans recommend buildings up to four stories with the ability to obtain an additional two bonus stories. The plan specifically recommends:

“Where additional stories are available, it is not intended that they be earned merely by complying with standards and criteria that would be required and expected in any case, such as underlying zoning regulations, good design, or sensitivity to an adjacent historic landmark. The intent is not simply to allow a taller building and additional stories should not be considered “by right” heights. Rather additional stories are to be used as a tool to encourage and reward buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to the specific context of their location and accomplish specific objectives defined for the area.

Staff Design Considerations

- Five-stories, stepped back (so can get up to six stories)
- Discussion whether it’s an “exceptional design case” to justify height
- Make cohesive, simplify
- Have a grand entrance
- Step backs (Bedford ones necessary?)
- Use high quality materials
- If do five-story, do very well