



## T. Wall Enterprises

January 28, 2020

CITY OF MADISON

RE: Design Suggestions

JAN 31 2020

Madison Urban Design Commission  
215 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53703

Planning & Community  
& Economic Development

Dear Urban Design Commission:

Now that we have approval on Peloton on Park Street, I wanted to share with you a few thoughts in the hopes of providing some perspective that you may not have - the perspective of a building owner and from someone that has had to go through UDC for 35 years for approvals.

My thoughts reflect the UDC's actions in general over those years, *not* just the most recent experience with the UDC, although our recent experience is also included. I hope you will not take this personally, and I hope you will sincerely consider these thoughts when considering future developments for design review.

1. Peloton - We wanted a building made of mostly brick and a traditional design that would blend in with the old brick manufacturing plants of the area, and including a curved brick apex corner like seen in many older areas of large cities. Brick is also the most sustainable material because it lasts, and the cost is very low compared to other materials like high tech metal panels and glass curtain wall. We wanted to keep the cost of the design reasonable to provide reasonable rents, given the lower incomes in this neighborhood.

Instead, we were pushed into building a very expensive all-glass curtain wall at the apex of the building. This was purely an architectural opinion; that of the owner vs the UDC. The challenge comes in when the UDC, which does not have to bear the consequences or costs of its decisions, is free to impose higher costs on new projects at a time when AFFORDABILITY should be the driving factor. Time and time again the UDC has imposed significantly higher costs on our projects.

Specifically, the extra costs for that glass curtain wall included the steel and concrete construction needed to support the weight. Note that we switched back to wood frame after the glass curtain wall in order to keep costs down. The UDC added over \$1 million in cost to this project. With only 12 units in the glass area of the building, that cost comes to over \$728 per month in ADDITIONAL monthly rent needed to cover the cost.

Obviously, since we cannot jack up the rent on 12 units by \$728, we had to spread that cost over the entire project, which added \$51 to the monthly rent of ALL units. For renters who are typically on fixed incomes without extra disposal income, that \$51 a month (or over \$600 per year) is a lot of money.

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I just need you to understand that your decisions have real world consequences to a lot of people, namely lower income renters in this case. Frankly, they don't care about whether the corner is glass or brick. They're concerned about being able to afford the rent.

Between the requirements of the UDC in the original approval and the demands thrown on the project by the original council (like a green roof), the project was millions of dollars over budget and was not feasible at the beginning. That is the reason we had to stop, go back, do some serious value engineering, re-cost the project, and then return for a complete re-approval. That process took well over a year, which added significant carrying cost as well.

2. In general, I have observed over the decades that the UDC as a whole tends to like to involve itself in the details of the better looking buildings that are well designed, while at the same time the UDC doesn't like taking the time to improve bad looking proposals, because those appear to be lost causes. The clear message to developers (as we *all* have learned) is that good design is punished with changes and delays, while bad designs are rewarded with fast approval.

Examples - the Red Hotel with its exposed painted concrete columns and now the new disgusting looking exposed concrete columns of the new parking garage at Judge Doyle Square. I thought we left brutalism design back in the 1970's.

3. We also have noticed that the UDC is now trying "to get in the last word", by insisting that the last UDC meeting occur *after* council approval. The UDC approval is a recommendation; whereas the city council is the body that has final authority. Any council approval by the UDC *before* a UDC meeting is final. It's also an affront to democracy when a non-elected body tries to usurp power from the elected body by having the 'last word'. The ordinances are clear on the process and UDC does not have legal authority to hold a hearing after the council approval.

4. I also noticed that certain architect designs are approved quickly and without changes - resulting in the sameness that we are now seeing throughout the city in multi-family in particular. Whereas architects that are not frequently before your body are highly scrutinized and changes are imposed, making the projects more similar to what individual UDC members like and more like all the other buildings, creating more sameness.

5. Remember, the job of the UDC is to review design for compliance to objective minimum criteria; not impose the individual tastes of individual members on applicants. Who is the UDC to say that UDC preference is superior to that of the architect or even the developer? In our case, we pay close attention to what is sought by our customers, the market, is sustainable and most importantly, *cannot* be identified as being with a particular decade (i.e. "trendy"). It is pretty obvious in Madison as to what decade the UDC approved any particular project, which is not true in other cities in Wisconsin.

The developer knows what the market wants and too often the UDC forces changes on our buildings designs that customers don't want, that cost more, and that restricts easy customer





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flow. (Think of Judge Doyle Square and the glass curtain wall that faces another future building...which came in way over budget forcing the developer to pull out.)

6. Lastly, I have seen the UDC members go way outside the legal jurisdiction authorized of the UDC as to what the prevue of the UDC is. One UDC member many years ago demanded that I go buy more land because he did not like the layout of the site. Another demanded that we use one-car garages and get rid of the two car garages. The UDC needs to go back and review its jurisdictional rules and stay within them.

In conclusion, I would ask that you consider these thoughts, even though they are hard to hear, but also that you not punish me for sharing these thoughts with you. You are all professionals, trying to do what you think is best, but as a whole, sometimes public bodies (even though made up of individuals) tend to go outside the guideposts and need to be brought back inside the guideposts over time.

We provide better designs than most applicants and we should be rewarded for that, not punished as we are now every time we go before the UDC.

Thank you very sincerely for taking the time to listen.

Sincerely,

T. Wall Enterprises Mgt, LLC

By: 

Terrence R. Wall, President

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