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Madison Urban Design
Commission

Box 2985
Madison WI 53701

Re: Keller Project
w Wash + Bassett

Attention: Heather Stouder

Since I live in the vicinity I thought I'd jot down a few comments on this project, some more strictly design-oriented than others. Not included are questions about affordable housing. I'm not sure where this project fits into that discussion.

Yours truly,

Lisa Luedtke

PS: I'd be grateful if someone could send me a copy of the neighborhood plan (ideally USPS, while MPL is shuttered)

- (1) Mixed use: In principle promoting mixed use development can be worthwhile. In close proximity, of course, some uses might be more compatible neighbors than others. How is this policy working out? Is the commercial space included in other residential properties filling up? I assume it was never intended that the residents themselves would be the primary source of revenue for the commercial occupants in their building. Is it the hope that there will be some kind of synergism among projects, even though the latter are disbursed, such that clientele for some retail services will make for fertile ground to attract others? If the city is unable to somehow kickstart this process, what happens while the retail spaces remain unoccupied?
- (2) Density: higher densities appear to be inevitable (and appropriate) in this area, at least within the blocks closer to the Square. I'm not sure I would opt for the full 6 stories in this case, even with the setbacks. The original character of this boulevard still has some appeal, even if not all the existing structures are deemed worthy of

Preservation. Unfortunately the balance could easily tip in favor of larger structures, especially as land values continue to appreciate. Assuming the city doesn't necessarily welcome that eventuality, what measures are being considered to avert it? Or at least temper it?

(3) Setbacks: I'm not sure these work as well as intended. (In another apartment building on W. Mifflin, eg. the recessed top floor substitutes a grey wood exterior for brick. It is neither especially in conspicuous nor very attractive.) Similarly the larger recessed area on the street-side elevation of this project, which is even more disproportionate to the whole, could turn out to be regrettable. The darker tones (in the rendition) will certainly get overheated. So, if this is the solution to having a higher density, I believe it needs to be seriously re-evaluated.

(4) Architectural Style: This project and a number of others in the vicinity and elsewhere have the same boxy appearance, with their elevations dominated by variations on unadorned rectangular forms.

Luedtke / Keller
p 3 of 3

Quarter Row comes to mind, along with the new building under construction directly behind it. Also the apartment building on the Kelley site, and even the Hilton on Regent. Older and certainly more expensive buildings (lofts, eg) may have a similar tendency, even though their flat-front facades incorporate more interesting details. I do understand that the more tailored designs afford maximum utilization of the space and save the developers some money. Such styles I'm told are proliferating in outlying areas but frankly I dread the continuation of such monotony in this important corridor, where it would quickly become dated. Imaginations will suffer!!