



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 414 East Washington Avenue
Application Type: New Mixed-use Development in UDD #4 – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [58990](#)
Prepared By: Janine Glaeser, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Randy Bruce, Duane Johnson, Knothe & Bruce Architects/John Leja, LZ Ventures

Project Description: The applicant proposes to construct a 10 story mixed use building over lower level parking on a site in Urban Design District No. 4. The development team is requesting (2) bonus stories. The new development will include 152 apartments and 3,300 s.f. of commercial space with two levels of underground parking stalls.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received informational presentations on January 29, 2020 and March 11, 2020
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on June 8, 2020

Approval Standards:

The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 4 (“UDD 4”), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section 33.24(11). The UDC is an **advisory body** to the Plan Commission regarding the conditional use aspects of the proposed development. This includes approval of “bonus stories” and the code required design review in the UMX district that requires that new buildings greater than twenty thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four (4) stories obtain conditional use approval. UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines and report its findings to the Plan Commission.”

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

Staff recommends that the UDC review and comment based on the specific Guidelines and Standards of [UDD 4](#), UMX Zoning Requirements-[Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), [Madison’s Downtown Plan](#), and [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). In pre-application discussion, staff has raised questions regarding the rear yard transition, ground level activation, upper level gabled roof forms, and the overall building mass and bonus story considerations.

In regards to UDD 4, the code requires that a development shall meet the requirements and conform as much as possible to the guidelines. Staff believes that the project can generally be found consistent with the broad approval standards, though notes careful consideration should be given to the guidelines for Building Design.

In regards to the UDC’s advisory role for conditional uses, staff does not have specific comments related to the design guidelines, but requests that the UDC consider those and the general conditional standard that applies to all conditional uses:

When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district.

In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation.

In regards to the requested bonus stories, staff notes that the existing zoning allows for up to eight stories, with the possibility to achieve a maximum of two bonus stories. That is consistent with the Downtown Plan. Bonus stories are approved by the Plan Commission and Staff recommends that the UDC provide clear feedback to the Plan Commission regarding Conditional Use Standard 14 a,b, and d. (Standard c does not apply to this development as there are no approved landmark buildings within or adjacent to the site.) UDC should specify the factors used in reaching that decision.

Per MGO Ch28.183 – a conditional use application requesting bonus stories must meet the following criteria:

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.*

In regards to Standard (a), staff notes that the Downtown Plan includes this area within “Additional Height Area H,” which extends along the north side of East Washington Avenue, Between Blair and Webster Streets. The plan notes, in part, that while tall buildings are appropriate here, the area also functions as a transition area to some extent. In order to encourage taller buildings that provide continuity with the Capital Gateway Corridor and further enhance this important approach to Downtown, up to two bonus stories (beyond the base eight (8) stories) may be considered.” While the properties to the north are predominantly two and three-story structures today, the recommended height these surrounding blocks is up to six stories.

In regards to Standard (b), the applicant’s letter of intent states that the bonus height allows for increased stepbacks compared to what could be allowed under the existing Urban Mixed Use (UMX) Zoning. Staff understands that this comparison is not based on removing the upper two stories of the current design, but rather, maintaining the current program and expanding the building mass to the maximum allowed by the underlying zoning, without bonus stories. The proposed building includes stepbacks at the second and seventh stories as it transitions to the shorter properties to the north. The applicant further clarifies that the bonus heights allow for the use of high-quality materials and extensive amenity packages for residents. As discussed further below, members of UDC previously commented on the need for design cohesion between lower and any bonus stories, and staff believes that remains a very important consideration.

In regards to Standard (d), based on the setback and stepbacks, this building is not anticipated to block Capitol Views, though as previously urged, consideration should be given to the long-views of the building and how the composition reads at various points from East Washington Avenue.

Finally, staff refers the Commission to their comments from the informational presentation of March 11:

- The only thing I struggle with is the circular corners above the square balconies, but overall this is a much better project that I could support. The circular struggles to fit in.
- I don't think you need those dormer things on the front of the building, it looks fine without the gables. They looked insufficiently sized but would look weird if they're bigger, I don't know if they're necessary. Maybe a raised parapet up there like you have at the center.
- For the courtyard tucked into the north side, I'm curious as to how you'll make that usable space. It feels like a tough space to pleasantly occupy. Maybe give some sort of ceiling to the space.
- As far as the two triangles (gables), when I look at it, I don't find anything offensive but it seems like it was the post-modern touch that everybody slapped on the front of a building. I've seen it so many times on strip malls and all sorts of other applications. I like the fact that there's hip roofs on the top but something about those doesn't quite work.
- What is the treatment of the bonus stories, the glazing in the front? Are those super thick mullions?
- With regard to your change in brick color, my suggestion would be a gray or beige, but not a red. It's still one building. The only objection I have is the center, it says building entrance, and this says corner coffee shop restaurant.
- I have a hard time seeing this as the main entrance to a big grand apartment building. I can see that whole corner being activated with a restaurant or coffee shop type use.
- There should be a different color for the back part. And possibly changing the railing style of the E. Washington Avenue face to be more formal.