



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 UDC referred this item at their May 27, 2020 meeting to the July 1, 2020 meeting
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on July 13, 2020

### Approval Standards:

The UDC is an **approving body** on this request for a site 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 regarding approval of “bonus stories” and 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

On May 27, 2020, the Urban Design Commission voted to refer this item. As part of the referral, the UDC requested that the applicant provide the following:

- Refinement of the design to qualify for the bonus stories.
- Appropriate to show both an 8 and 10 story building.
- Update the shadow study for the current design.
- The design comments will also give more time for the neighbors to come together and hopefully give unified comments for next time, which would be helpful and appreciated.

In review of the updated materials, 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 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 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. **Staff recommends that the UDC provide clear feedback to the Plan Commission regarding Conditional Use Standard 14 a, b, and d, listed below. (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. (this item does not apply here)*
- 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 and permitted zoning height of 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 recommends that the Commission refer to their comments from the May 27<sup>th</sup> presentation:**

- 28 people registered in opposition – I think the team should address some of those repetitive comments: placement of the pool, shadow studies, traffic, building elements. Do they have an 8 story option?
- I don't think step downs work when you have a house next to a building. My understanding of the future development plan for this area is that this development will grow in density and size, and these ghosted out images are what the future is pretty much calling for.
- Based on what we see as the plan, this block is taking advantage of the full density, it appears to conform with that.
- As for overall design I'm personally not a big fan, I don't see it as objectionable. Diversity in something that doesn't follow everything else actually makes for stronger urban design.
- I do have concerns that we didn't get a uniform response from the neighborhood. We didn't hear a lot of comments about the design itself, it has to do more with massing.
- I think it's at least two stories too tall, there's too much going on, I appreciate the stepback at the neighbors. I'm not a fan of the gables. There could be more uniformity that won't make this building look too tall, which right now I think it does.
- Things I like and would not want to lose:
  - the setback from East Washington and the two side streets, it's generous and important.
  - The brick material all the way up is very nice, and the stone base.
  - I recognize the language is something more classic than the industrial modern we have further down East Washington. I much prefer that language than this language, but several blocks from the Capitol seems appropriate.
- Considerations:
  - Lose the gables, they don't work.
  - The uneven rhythm of the balconies – pick one, get a consistent rhythm.
  - The curves on the corners – I don't find them classical in and of themselves, but if to lighten the building they were all of a curtain wall glazing with glass components, to lighten the masonry mass and break that up, all could enhance those three elements.
- We should determine: are we supportive of the 10 stories vs. 8?
- Provide images of what an 8 story building would look like.
- We hashed out some of the more major design points of the building and I'm not sure we should be going back and revisiting all of those. The gist seems to be the size and height of the building.
- Provide an updated shadow study.
- As far as the design as it stands now, qualifying for the 10 stories, that's what I have issue with. The bonus stories are a refinement and I don't think this is here yet. I think it needs some refinement, consistency, less busyness and then it could get there for the bonus stories.
- I've always had an issue with the gables.