



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1-19 N Pinckney Street, 120 E Washington Ave, 22 North Webster Street

Application Type: New Development in UDD 4
Initial/Final Approval is Requested

Legistar File ID # [60545](#)

Prepared By: Janine Glaeser, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Mark Binkowski, Urban Land Interests; 10 E Doty Street; Madison, WI 53703

Project Description: The applicant requests approvals to develop a nine-story building that contains a total of approximately 22,000 sf of first level retail space, 300,000 sf of office space on upper levels, and six levels of underground parking located in Urban Design District (UDD) 4.

Project Schedule:

- Landmarks Commission approved the Variance from the Historic Preservation Ordinance to allow the demolition of a Designated Madison Landmark on May 4, 2020.
- Landmarks Commission found that the proposed development is not so large or visually intrusive as to adversely affect the historic character and integrity of the adjacent landmarks on July 13, 2020.
- The UDC provided an advisory recommendation to approve the PD on November 4, 2020.
- The Plan Commission approved the PD rezoning on November 9, 2020.
- The Common Council voted to adopt the PD rezoning on November 17, 2020.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The [Comprehensive Plan](#) recommends "Downtown Core" uses for the subject site, which is identified as the center of Downtown and should generally possess the highest intensity of development. The most specific recommendations for the subject site are contained within the [Downtown Plan](#). The recommended height in that plan, which was later codified in the Zoning Ordinance, is up to the Capitol View Height Limit. In regards to views, the plan recommends establishing a set of standards addressing building characteristics such as height, setbacks, and stepbacks that will maintain a varied and interesting skyline as Downtown grows, and protect and enhance visual connections to the lakes. The Views and Vistas Map identifies key views, vistas, and viewsheds within the planning area that were determined as the most important to preserve and protect. Finally, the plan also includes the Webster Street-fronting portion of the site is identified as an "Underutilized Site and/or Obsolete Building." Additionally, the Downtown Plan has North Pinckney Street and East Washington Avenue identified as "premier streets" on the Streetscape Design map, requiring the highest level of design and amenity for downtown streets. North Webster Street is identified as a "thoroughfare," with a moderate level of design and amenity.

Approval Standards:

The UDC is an **approving** body for a site that is located in Urban Design District 4 ("UDD 4"). This 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).

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

On November 4, 2020, the UDC provided an advisory recommendation on the related PD zoning request. In making their advisory recommendation, the UDC did not provide any recommendations or conditions related to the development's bulk, massing, or design. The Zoning for the project, which included the specific project plans previously reviewed by the UDC, was conditionally approved by the Common Council on November 17, 2020. The approval conditions included the following:

Prior to sign-off and the issuance of permits, the applicant shall obtain final approval pursuant to the requirements for Urban Design District 4. Design alterations required as part of that approval that differ from the plans approved by the Common Council shall be considered as required in Section 28.098(6)-Alterations to Planned Development Districts.

As such, the role of the UDC is to review the project based on the specific **Guidelines and Standards of UDD 4**. Comments from previous meetings are also included as a reference.

UDD 4 Requirements

The Urban Design Commission is an approving body based on the development's location within UDD 4. The development shall meet the requirements and conform as much as possible to the guidelines. Staff notes that the requirements for this district are generally broad and provide standards and guidelines for public rights-of-way, off-street parking and loading, signs, building design, lighting, and landscaping.

The building design standards in UDD 4 do not include specific standards regarding height, setbacks, or stepbacks and state the following regarding Building Design:

Building Design. MGO 33.24(11)(d)4

Requirements

- i. Exterior building materials shall be low maintenance and harmonious with those used on other buildings in the area.
- ii. Mechanical elements mounted on the roof or on ground pads shall be screened from views from adjacent properties and roadways in a manner consistent with requirements of public utilities.
- iii. Along East Washington Avenue west of First Street, metal shall be used as an exterior building material only as an integral part of a design of exceptional merit.

Guidelines

- i. Structures should be designed to be compatible with the structures that are adjacent to them.
- ii. Large unbroken exterior facades should be avoided.
- iii. All building elevations are of importance and should be carefully designed. When visible from roadways or adjoining properties, roof surfaces should be considered as part of the overall design.
- iv. The architecture of new in-fill buildings, additions to existing buildings and major exterior remodelings should be compatible with that of existing adjacent buildings.

Conclusion

Staff recommends that the UDC gives careful consideration to the approval standards. Should the UDC believe design modifications are required to meet these standards, the body should specify what standard/guideline is not met.

Staff notes that there are public comments provided in the Legislative file. In regards to building height and views, staff notes that the Downtown Plan recommends and the Zoning Ordinance allows heights up to the Capitol View, with certain mechanical projections allowed into that area with Plan Commission Conditional Use approval. The submitted plans depict mechanical screen and elevator overrun projections into the Capitol Height View Preservation Limit.

While staff understands that concerns have been raised regarding the possible obstruction of Capitol Views from the AC Hotel building, the Attorney's office has advised that there is no legal right to a view, unless otherwise protected by law or a private agreement between property owners. Staff is aware of no law or private agreement being violated by the proposed development.

During previous informational presentations, staff requested that elements such as the building's street orientation, long views, and façade details such as glazing be considered as part of the UDC's review. As noted in previous reports, Planning staff would like to emphasize the importance of the building's activation of the public street-facing areas on Webster Street, Pinckney Street and East Washington Avenue. Staff further requests that the UDC provide feedback on the development's architectural detailing, treatment of pedestrian entrances, ground floor permeability – specifically the large lobby entrance area and corner treatment, and relationship to the surrounding downtown context.

Finally, Staff refers the Commission to their individual comments from previous meetings including the November 4 PD approval and May 27, 2020 informational presentation:

DISCUSSION COMMENTS FROM NOV 4, 2020 MEETING:

- What conversations you had so far with the AC Hotel, what type of accommodation you provided.
Developer responded: The before and after design showed this originally built out to the property line on the upper floors. As part of those conversations with AC that part of the redesign now steps back 24-feet on the upper floors.
- I really like the project, I'm looking at the majority of the green roof or back of the building, the accessible areas seem northwest, is that an appropriate spot to create a nice outdoor experience from a solar perspective and natural lighting perspective? That's obviously tied to where that tower is located.
- You've done an amazing job to integrate these historic signature façades at the lower levels and this modern tower, I think it works great. I don't understand the comment that the north tower offends the northern landmarks. I'm not seeing that as a real driver.
- The comment about impacts to the program inside, on a future discussion helping us understand the challenges there with diagram perspective might offer some solutions.
- Is there any additional compromise design-wise that could happen in one month's time to make this more compatible with PD standards?
Developer responded: We don't believe that we can come up with a significantly different location of the tower and have a feasible project. We've put our best foot forward.
- I do think that the massing on Pinckney Street and E. Washington Avenue has been vastly improved with the stepback and curved element.
- I'm glad this current iteration moves back. This makes for better design. I'm struck by the fact that the developers made a big point early on in their presentation that they're only using 52 or 54% of the space available up above that block that would suggest to me that there's room to move. More compromising could happen here.
- Question – "is the Commission Rubber stamping the design" – I don't think we are, it still has to come back on December 2nd to address the design at that point.
- I'd like to understand the intent for ceilings and window shades inside the building.

Developer responded: We will mandate a consistent roller to be used throughout. We're heating and cooling this building through a chilled beam system, moving energy through pipes rather than duct work, this allows for higher ceiling heights.

DISCUSSION COMMENTS FROM THE MAY 27, 2020 MEETING

(staff organized comments as they related to street orientation or general) Pinckney St.:

- Would benefit from mid-block relief south of 21 N. Pinckney – similar to the space between the glass bank building and the Tenney Building on the south side of the block.
- Wouldn't support if it didn't preserve the AEBank. Pinckney St retail level will be huge improvement over existing.
- Question whether maintaining the rhythm of multiple small store fronts on Pinckney is worth it.
- Appreciate the various outdoor terraces on different levels. Rooftop outdoor terraces are excellent additions.
- Organization of Pinckney storefront signage will be important design element. Multiple different facades may create more interesting signage or unnecessary complexity.
- Faux storefront attempt along Pinkney needs to be toned down – try 2 or 3 distinct looks instead of 7.
- The heights of the proposal are not an issue - the streetscape and how the building meets the street is unfriendly and out of scale.
- The effort to maintain character along Pinckney is appreciated, but don't ignore Webster and E. Wash.

E Wash & Webster St.:

- Adding a substantial entrance at E. Wash & Webster nicely activates a now-dead corner.
- All auto and service entrances off of Webster is appropriate.
- Like the classical rhythm of the Webster St. façade with glazing down to eye level.
- The stone patterns created at the E. Wash entry don't enhance the appearance and actually detract from the overall geometry of that corner element. Perhaps the rough cut stone could mimic the cubic forms above?
- The aesthetic along E. Washington and Webster at pedestrian level is not human scale, which is not in keeping with the surrounding fabric.

The Webster facade is particularly lacking in scale for pedestrians. General:

- The glass boxes do not seem to relate to the base structures. The smoothness of the glazing detail is not harmonious with the timeless character of the American Exchange Bank - why add more anonymous glazing to the Capital area?
- Perhaps somehow acknowledging the forms or proportions or rhythms of the first floor elements would tie it in better
- Highly recommend using special glazing to prevent bird strikes.
- Support the development of this massively underutilized space, but really want to see something more special across from the State Capitol.
- Really like the varied volumes of the 'glass box'
- Tower seems to loom over American Exchange Bldg. It would benefit by moving upper tower portion north toward middle of block. Pinckney St. façade too disjointed. It's a new building, so make it look like one. Webster Street more unified & successful.