



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 222-232 E. Olin Avenue
Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building in UDD No. 1 – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [64920](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, Acting UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Lance McGrath, McGrath Property Group; Joseph Lee, JLA Architects + Planners

Project Description: The applicant is seeking initial/final approval for a mixed-use building containing approximately 291 residential units and 12,450 square feet of commercial/retail space.

Project Schedule:

- The Landmarks Commission provided advisory comments to the Plan Commission regarding the demolitions (*see comments below.*)
- The UDC received an informational presentation on April 28, 2021.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on July 26, 2021.
- The Common Council is scheduled review the rezoning component of this request on August 3, 2021.

Approval Standards:

The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 1 (“UDD 1”), 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\(8\)](#).

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

Planning Division staff recommends that the UDC review the project, provide findings, and base their decision on the aforementioned standards for UDD 1.

Background Information and Related Actions

Staff notes that while the property is within the boundaries of the ongoing South Madison Area Plan, only plans adopted at the time of application should be considered in evaluating a proposal. In regards to height, the existing zoning allows height above five stories to be approved with Conditional Use approval.

Only the design of the proposed building is before the UDC, as considerations related to demolitions are not under the purview of this Commission. As a reference, staff note that the Landmarks Commission provided advisory comments to the Plan Commission regarding the demolitions. Related to the building at 232 E Olin Avenue, the Landmarks Commission recommended to the Plan Commission that the building at 232 East Olin Avenue “had no known historic value” however the building at 222 E Olin Avenue “has historic value based on historic significance due to its Prohibition-Era history and as an intact or rare example of a certain architectural style or method of construction as a Prohibition-Era roadhouse.”

Design Considerations

In making their decision, Staff requests that the UDC address the following comments and make findings related to these points and relevant code references. Excerpts of related code sections are noted in the attachment with the full standards linked above.

- **Building Prominence and Long Views.** The proposed development is located at a highly visible location along an entryway into Downtown and it will be a prominent structure due to its height. Considering the site's multiple long views, including those from John Nolen Drive and Olin Avenue, staff request that the UDC provides feedback and findings on how this development and its composition responds to its prominent location.
- **Building Materials.** The facades include metal panels and the "Building Design" requirements of UDD 1 (MGO 33.24(8)(c)(6)a.v) states, "Metal shall not be used as an exterior material for building, except as an integral part of a design of exceptional merit." To approve metal, the UDC must make a specific finding.
- **Articulation of John Nolen Drive Façade.** The applicant has revised this elevation and staff requests that the UDC provides feedback and findings related to the updated building elevations facing John Nolen Drive and the façade treatment of the parking garage podium and consider how upper level design elements relate to the lower levels. Staff would also encourage findings related to the relationship between these elements and landscaping.
- **Articulation, Activation, and Loading along Olin Avenue.** Staff requests that the UDC provides findings on the building elevation facing Olin Avenue regarding the visibility and character of the residential and commercial entries, as well as loading zone area locations. As stated in the UDD Ordinance and referenced in the attachment, there are guidelines and related to screening of loading zones. The screening is primarily achieved through a wall architecturally integrated into the façade. Staff request specific findings on this element.
- **Rooftop Mechanical Screening.** While the concept has been revised since the informational presentation, the current concept utilizes lighting and a design that appears to emphasize the rooftop screening as a design element. Staff have previously raised comments and continue to have concerns that such not feature become a dominating element of the building and skyline and believes that the screening element should not visually compete with long views of the Capitol. Staff request that the UDC provide comments and findings on this feature.

Summary of Previously Provided UDC Commissioner Comments

As a reference, staff refers the Commission to their comments from the April 28th informational presentation:

- Nice presentation, like seeing all the views. The building will be a nice beacon at night.
- Questions include: opportunity for some green roof area, particularly above the retail space and overhang above the entrance; access from the commercial space to the trash and recycling; the amenity space on the roof has almost no sunlight.
- Could go with more vertical landscaping along John Nolen Drive, at those vertical brick walls, they are a little plain.
- The building is very attractive, it'll be an asset.

- Roofs – second the opportunities for green roofs. It's looking like a lighter colored roof, I would advise to consider that carefully, that could cause a glare condition on the lower levels. Readiness for solar power? Encourage design team to consider that. Didn't see louvers articulated in any of the elevations for the unit ventilations.
- I really like the design, the exterior of the building is nice. Reminder that post-tension construction is going to be integrating vertical openings through the slabs and will be a significant coordination effort.
- Stormwater, it doesn't look to be really creating any more of a challenge related to stormwater than what's there today. Are you considering any improvements to have better water infiltration and deal with stormwater in a responsible way?
- Positive project overall, a surface parking lot being replaced with density is a good thing. Appreciate thoughtfulness of drop-off and circulation.
- Encourage you to think about bike connectivity, multiple directions and desired paths. That intersection can be a tricky spot to cross on a bike, think about how to connect to trails around you, or how the volume of people heading downtown would navigate to some of those spaces.
- As an impervious redevelopment you're in a good position to make an improvement on the stormwater management.
- The scale of the buildings demands a landscape response of a similar scale, a lot of these spaces need tree canopy to support the mass and scale of the building. Build up some planting density in the commercial plaza space, ornamental tree scale and higher to really make it a successful space. Might get your landscape points but don't otherwise make an impact, concentrate those in larger masses.
- Succeeding with a sleek design, has a nice vertical rhythm that leans towards elegant. Your night renderings are gorgeous, I think as Madison grows our nightscape will change, since this is so far away from the Capitol I don't find it competing.
- I'm hoping families will move in here, it's near the pool and across from a park. That said I wonder about children in this area. I would hope it's activated a lot because there's a lot of outdoor activity around this site. Lovely design.
- General reaction, it fits in with the surrounding context, but this feels like a big ask for the nearby neighborhood because the height is an exception. You can show aggressive accommodation with affordable housing, the sustainability features of green roofs, solar, creative stormwater management, HVAC system, the more we hear about that and the more aggressive you are that would be appreciated.
- To the historic preservation, couple of examples of buildings that are respecting old historic structures: the 849 E. Washington Avenue proposal and the Pizzeria Uno project on Mineral Point Road. Creative things can be done with historic structures incorporating them into contemporary projects.
- Potential impact on traffic volume specifically on Olin. Transportation demand management, show us how you'll connect to the Wingra bike path related to your indoor bike spaces, would tenants be offered bike passes or any incentive to not have a vehicle? Four elements would help in terms of a neighborhood welcome to this building: affordable housing, sustainability, stormwater and historic preservation.
- I overall like the project a lot but I really dislike the beacon. I like seeing the activity and life in the nightscape, seeing the glow of individual units in our city, but the beacon to me is more of a signage piece, which would be the exact opposite, something you see from a distance that does not denote life and activity. I don't think it contributes to the project, the lighting images would be more beautiful without it. A strong vote of opposition to that feature.
- My reaction is there being a functional need for that mass for mechanicals and you're trying to do something aesthetically pleasing. Opportunity for something else? I'm 50/50 right now.
- On the north elevation (train track) I would definitely encourage careful study to be sure lighting from those panels is very close to the lighting of the lantern. If they're much different it might be pretty distracting.

- How are you balancing the amount of glass and your design approach to keeping this building operating with a reasonable footprint?
- Kudos to the team for a centralized approach on this building, there's a significant benefit for doing that, particularly in ventilation.
- I don't like the idea of the lantern at all, it's a glaring "here we are." Could be convinced it might be an asset to what the building looks like at night, but a large glowing white blank space doesn't even come close to what would be aesthetically wowing. Thumbs down in its current form.
- Very balcony-heavy building. Like the fact that despite the size there was effort in making them look more interesting and tying into the overall design of the building.
- Concur with having some columnar narrow evergreens up against the masonry on the John Nolen Drive side. Not averse to the low foundation plantings but they won't have an impact. You have a row of deciduous trees along there but on the plan you're limited by the railroad right-of-way.
- I'll be anxious to see the final landscape design. Also concur with comments about patio space, you should really invest some plant material into that spot, wrapping around the front to the Olin Avenue side too. This building deserves something above and beyond some of the run-of-the-mill plantings. The terrace sun exposure challenge, invest some significant effort into having somebody spec plants that are going to do well, as well as having multi-seasonal interest.
- Great presentation, great design. The canopy in the framed balconies are nice visual interest. The sun on the amenity space, I like the canopy but maybe it turns into an arbor or trellis structure.
- The lantern itself, it's a creative thing to do but when you put in the surrounding spaces, this isn't a dense skyline we're trying to add more interest to. I think with a nod to the pretty close park and residential areas, I don't see more light pollution as appropriate and I would just take it away.
- Have you thought about darker glass or glass with any color? Opportunity with the amount of glass, it could add some interest.
- Staff report asked us to comment with regard to public and commercial entrances. Agree with all the positive comments, but bothered by the lower canopy where cars are driving in and out, it feels like a hotel. Losing that canopy would make the entrance much more visible, particularly at street level.
- I would second that there's a lot of interest in that façade under there. I did wonder if that canopy is hiding things more than it is expressing "this is an apartment entrance."
- The part specifically where the drive turn-around is at the garage entrance.
- It does kind of feel like an institutional or hospital entrance, maybe it's looking for something softer or more inviting.
- I think you make a good point, but the functions they've described are necessary. I've seen this handled very nicely in other projects where the key is not designing for vehicles, it shares uses with people and other functions.
- Not arguing against the layout, just the roof over it. More urban without his huge drive-under like you'd see at a hotel, exposing more of the building entrance?
- Agree, wondering if shifting the canopy to just the commercial space would help simplify that and give you better queuing to where that entrance is? Needs a bit more finessing.
- Beacon – agree the lighting from the fenestration of all the units are enough for the illumination quality that would be desirable from this building at night. The lighting at the penthouse is not required or desirable.

ATTACHMENT
Excerpts from Urban Design District 1 (UDD 1)

UDD 1 was established to make John Nolen Drive, the South Beltline Highway and adjacent properties a “most visually attractive approach to the City of Madison.” Code excerpts, are included below. The complete standards are available at the aforementioned link. Note, unlike the more contemporary Urban Design Districts, such as 7 and 8, the standards for this district are generally less prescriptive in many respects.

Site Planning - Building Relationships 33.24(8)(c)(2).

- **Requirements.** The structures shall be related to the site to enhance or maintain current contours. New development shall consider activities on adjacent properties with relation to access from abutting streets, parking areas, service areas, building setbacks, height of structures, and color and materials of adjacent or nearby buildings.
- **Guidelines.** In the development of the site, the existing quality vegetation should ordinarily be maintained. Areas which are highly visible to living units should be landscaped in a manner complementary to the building forms. Buildings should be sited to avoid having living units with direct views of parking areas. The relationship of any buildings to the public right-of-way should be completed in a manner that presents an attractive, properly located structure. In the siting of new structures, consideration shall be given to:
 - Relating attractively to abutting roadways, the Nob Hill Interchange, the interchange with Interstate Highway 90, and the lakes.
 - Recognizing the views of the city skyline, Lake Monona, and the Exposition Center.
 - Providing landscaping treatment for open areas which are highly visible from John Nolen Drive and which complement the building forms.

Parking and Service Areas and Screening - 33.24(8)(c)5

- **Requirements.**
 - ii. Parking and service areas shall be screened from views from John Nolen Drive, the South Beltline Highway, frontage roads, and abutting properties. Screening shall be accomplished in a manner consistent with the requirements of Section 28.142 of the Madison General Ordinances.
 - iii. Parking areas shall be illuminated using attractive low-profile standards and fixtures. Drawings of these standards and fixtures shall be a part of plans submitted to the Urban Design Commission for review and approval.
 - iv. All open off-street parking areas containing more than three (3) spaces, and all open off-street loading, shall have effective screening on each side adjoining or fronting on any residential property or any public or private street. If the screening is to be accomplished by using plant material, it shall be planted at a minimum height of thirty (30) inches and grown to a height at maturity of at least fifty-four (54) inches. If any other material is used to screen these types of areas, it shall be a minimum height of fifty-four (54) inches.
 - vi. Screening of Rubbish and Trash Storage. Such areas shall be screened to block the view of rubbish and trash containers from any point outside the property on which the storage area is located.

Building Design – 33.24(8)(c)(6)

- **Requirements.**

- i. Materials and colors shall be durable, low maintenance, and harmonious with each other and with other buildings in the neighborhood.
 - ii. Mechanical elements mounted on the roof or ground shall be screened from the view of adjacent properties and roadways.
 - iii. Contemporary architecture shall be the goal of the district. Buildings shall be designed to complement and enrich this character. Building component massing, materials, textures, and colors shall be consistent with this character.
 - iv. The overall design of the building shall be of high quality, considering the importance of the district as a principal gateway to the City.
 - v. Metal shall not be used as an exterior material for building, except as an integral part of a design of exceptional merit.
 - vi. An addition shall relate to the existing building in terms of scale, materials, and color.
- **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. Buildings should avoid blank facades. When visible from roadways or adjoining properties, roof surfaces should be considered as part of the overall design.
 - iv. Any building of exceptional height or prominence shall be integrated with the surrounding development and topography.