



VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES INC.

Monday, October 6, 2025

Meagan Tuttle
Department of Planning & Development
City of Madison
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53710-2985

Attached please find the formal rezoning/conditional use submittal for the 425 North Frances/450 Gilman Street Redevelopment, a 16-story 118-unit mixed-use student housing project. This project is proposed by Villas Student Housing as a vibrant addition to the neighborhood that transitions in scale from the adjoining Grimm Book Bindery to the Hub while maintaining well-articulated architecture and massing.

Project Name: West Gilman Street Apartments

Properties: 425 North Frances Street
450 West Gilman Street

Applicant: Villas Student Housing, LLC.
506 West 22nd Street
Austin, Texas 78705

Design Team:
Architecture: Rhode Partners
515 Congress Avenue
Suite 1600
Austin, Texas 76701

Engineering/Landscape: Vierbicher
999 Fournier Drive
Madison, WI 53717

Entitlements: Vandewalle & Associates
120 East Lakeside Street
Madison, WI 53715

Request:

Rezoning from Urban Mixed Use (UMX) to Downtown Core (DC)
Conditional Use (building greater than 6 stories, outdoor recreation)
Certified Survey Map
Affordable Housing Land Use Restriction Agreement

Project Summary

Project Description:

Villas Student Housing is proposing a 16-story 118-unit redevelopment of the site featuring a range of unit types (1-5 bedrooms), student affordability, tenant amenities and street activated frontages through a lobby fronting Frances Street and a retail suite facing Gilman Street. The overall building design reflects input from the Landmarks Commission and Urban Design Commission as it seeks to implement the adopted plans while responding to the surrounding context and adjoining Grimm Book Bindery Building.

Proposed Use:

Multi-Family Housing	118 units
1 bedroom	14
2 bedroom	14
3 bedroom	6
4 bedroom	39
5 bedroom	45
 Affordable Units	 12 (10.2%)
 Retail	 691 square feet
Vehicular Parking	68
Bike Parking	240

Downtown Height Ordinance/Affordability

The project utilizes the downtown height ordinance to incorporate additional floors with the delivery of affordable student housing. The design of the project meets the overall total height (172') allowed in the downtown height map while avoiding encroachment into the Capital View Preservation Limit. Additional floors above the 12-story designation (4 additional floors) are incorporated into the project through the delivery of affordable student housing.

Affordable housing within the project is proposed with 10.2% of the units within the building designated for a 40 % discount versus market rate value. These units will be distributed throughout the building

Existing Conditions

Existing Property Owners

450 West Gilman Street	Ridgeway Investment of Madison LLP.
	1202 Regent Street
	Madison, WI 53715

425 North Frances Street Bella Giardina, LLC.
 425 N Frances Street
 Madison, WI 53703

Address	PIN	Existing Zoning	Square Footage	Units
425 North Frances Street	0709-232-0217-4	UMX	13,477	4
450 West Gilman Street	0709-232-0216-6	UMX	6,451	6

Total Site Acreage: .46 acres (19,928 sq. ft.)
 Existing Units: 10 units

Adopted Plan & Review Standards

Downtown Plan

This site is located within the State Street District of the Downtown Plan which calls for a vibrant mix of uses with ground floor retail/activation and incorporation of residential uses in support of the State Street corridor. Student focused recommendations within the plan call for “higher density housing suitable for a diversity of student populations in a variety of building types close to the UW Campus” (Recommendation 115) with this location noted as among the highest density of students per acre.

The Downtown Plan Maximum Building Height Map identifies this site as 12 stories/172’ in height. The project meets this standard while utilizing the downtown height definition through the incorporation of affordable student housing. This project also meets the Capital View Preservation Limit with all elements designed to be below the required elevation.

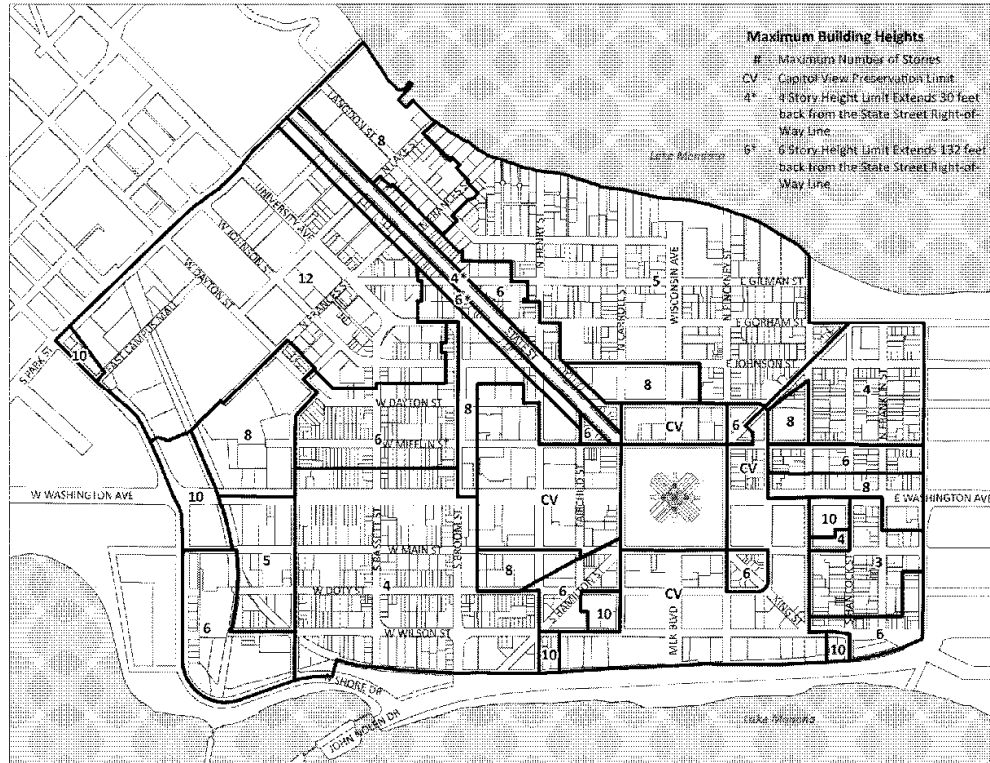
Maximum Building Height Map (Downtown Plan):



Zoning Code

The site is identified as up to 12 stories in height and is included in the No Minimum setback requirement and Downtown Stepback Map (15' step back above 4 stories)

Maximum Building Height Map (Zoning Code):



 No minimum setback required

[illegible]

Conditional Use Standards

1. *The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.*
The proposal for mixed-use/multi-family housing is consistent with the adopted plan designations and the surrounding area.
2. *The City is able to provide municipal services to the property where the conditional use is proposed, given due consideration of the cost of providing those services.*
The site is well served with readily available municipal services adjacent to the site. The development of the site is being coordinated with MG&E and other utilities to create opportunities for improvements to the existing utilities surrounding the site as part of the implementation of the project.
3. *The uses, values and enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for purposes already established will not be substantially impaired or diminished in any foreseeable manner.*
The proposed building is consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Plan. Consideration has been integrated into the design for how the project addresses the existing buildings, which are all zero lot line conditions.
4. *The establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.*
The proposal will not preclude development or improvement of the surrounding properties. Consideration has been integrated into the design for how the project addresses the existing buildings, which are all zero lot line conditions.
5. *Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, parking supply, internal circulation improvements, including but not limited to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided.*
The proposal incorporates the necessary site improvements to support the project and will enhance the abutting pedestrian frontages with activated first floor uses on both France and Gilman Street.
6. *Measures, which may include transportation demand management (TDM) and participation in a transportation management association have been or will be taken to provide adequate ingress and egress, including all off-site improvements, so designed as to minimize traffic congestion and to ensure public safety and adequate traffic flow, both on-site and on the public streets.*
The project submittal includes the City of Madison TDMP spreadsheet, illustrating that the project exceeds the required transportation components due to incorporation of mixed use, unbundled parking, proximity to the BRT metro service, and dense network of pedestrian-oriented streets.
7. *The conditional use conforms to all applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.*
The project meets the standards of the Downtown Core (DC) zoning district requested for the project.
8. *When applying the above standards to an application by a community living arrangement, the Plan Commission shall:*
Not Applicable.

9. *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. (Am. by ORD-14-00030, 2-18-14)*

The project has been presented for informational review with the Urban Design Commission on September 17, 2025 (UDC) to gather input on the design direction and will seek UDC approval as part of the review of the project. It has also been presented for information discussion with the Landmarks Commission on September 15th due to the proximity of the site to the Grimm Book Bindery. Feedback from both commissions have been incorporated into the formal submittal with updates to activating the streetscapes, materials, and building separation.

10. *When applying the above standards to an application for a reduction in off-street parking requirements, the Plan Commission shall consider and give decisive weight to all relevant facts, including but not limited to, the availability and accessibility of alternative parking; impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods; existing or potential shared parking arrangements; number of residential parking permits issued for the area; proximity to transit routes and/or bicycle paths and provision of bicycle racks; the proportion of the total parking required that is represented by the requested reduction; the proportion of the total parking required that is decreased by Sec. 28.141. The characteristics of the use, including hours of operation and peak parking demand times design and maintenance of off-street parking that will be provided; and whether the proposed use is now or a small addition to an existing use.*

The proposal meets the parking requirements for the requested Downtown Core (DC) zoning district. This site is well served with pedestrian and bicycle routes and transit service, as illustrated by the submitted TDMP spreadsheet.

11. *When applying the above standards to telecommunication facilities, the Plan Commission shall consider the review of the application by a professional engineer required by Sec. 28.143.*

Not Applicable.

12. *When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed in the district, the Plan Commission shall consider recommendations in adopted plans; the impact on surrounding properties, including height, mass, orientation, shadows and view; architectural quality and amenities; the relationship of the proposed building(s) with adjoining streets, alleys, and public rights of ways; and the public interest in exceeding the district height limits.*

Not applicable.

13. *When applying the above standards to lakefront development under Sec. 28.138, the Plan Commission shall consider the height and bulk of principal buildings on the five (5) developed lots or three hundred (300) feet on either side of the lot with the proposed development.*

Not applicable.

14. *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.*

Not applicable.

- 15. When applying the above standards to an application to redevelop a site that was occupied on January 1, 2013 by a building taller than the maximum building height allowed by [Section 28.071\(2\)\(a\) Downtown Height Map](#), as provided by [Section 28.071\(2\)\(a\)1.](#), no application for excess height shall be granted by the Plan Commission unless it finds that all the following additional conditions are also present:*

- a. The new building is entirely located on the same parcel as the building being replaced.*
- b. The new building is not taller in stories or in feet than the building being replaced.*
- c. The new building is not larger in total volume than the building being replaced.*
- d. The new building is consistent with the design standards in [Section 28.071\(3\)](#) and meets all of the dimensional standards of the zoning district other than height.*
- e. The Urban Design Commission shall review the proposed development and make a recommendation to the Plan Commission.*

Not applicable.

- 16. When applying the above standards to an application for limited production and processing use, the Plan Commission shall consider the effect of such a use on the surrounding properties, including the effects of odors, noise, vibration, glare, hours of operation, and other potential side effects of a manufacturing process. (Cr. by ORD-15-00124, 11-11-15)*

Not Applicable

Downtown Design Guidelines

Site Design + Building Placement

Orientation

The project creates activated street frontages along both adjoining streets with useable entrances, storefront window panels and pedestrian scale architecture through the placement of the lobby entrance along Frances Street and a retail suite along Gilman Street.

Access + Circulation

The primary residential lobby entrance is placed along the Frances Street frontage with a liner commercial suite located along the Gilman Street frontage resulting in activated street frontages and usable pedestrian entrances along both sides of the project.

Vehicular access is delivered from Gilman Street to avoid further complicating the already crowded Frances Street frontage. The overall number of vehicle parking spaces has been reduced to minimize the traffic generation along Gilman Street to the extent feasible.

Usable Open Space -Residential Development

The project offers residents roof top useable open space with both outdoor and indoor recreational amenities. Additional tenant amenities are integrated throughout the building to create further opportunities for community building and tenant experiences within the project.

Landscaping

The site falls within the no setback zone of downtown resulting in an urban streetscape transition to the project. Upper floor plantings and green roof sections deliver landscape elements for residential amenity spaces and stormwater management purposes.

Lighting

Building lighting is proposed to provide appropriate levels of light while maintaining a safe and enjoyable residential environment.

Architecture

Massing

The massing implements the adopted plans and recommendations of the Downtown Height Map while creating a compatible transition between the 12 story Hub while stepping down in scale to the Grimm Book Bindery.

Building Components

The massing implements the adopted plans and recommendations of the Downtown Height Map with the building designed with a strong base/middle/top expression within one unified architectural expression.

Visual Interest

The use of material with the façade creates opportunities for interest at the pedestrian level while offering a more simplified expression for the upper stories. The overall stepping and articulation of the façade creates further movement and interest as the building design adapts through the complex site configuration.

Door and Window Openings

Doors and window design is integrated along all of the outward facing facades to respond to the high level of pedestrian activity at the base while taking advantage of views from the unique pie shaped block.

Building Materials

The building uses high quality durable materials throughout the four-sided design.

Terminal Views and Highly-Visible Corners

The building creates both active streetscapes and well-articulated facades along the visible components of the site.

Awnings and Canopies

Canopies create both decorative and scale components along both streetscapes, offering visual interest to the second floor elevation.

Signage

Signage for the building will be integrated into the project through future submittals and will be consistent with the signage ordinance.

Existing Site Photos:



Frances Street (site)



Frances Street (view North)



Frances Street (view north)



Frances Street (view south)



Frances Street (view across street)



Frances Street (view across street)



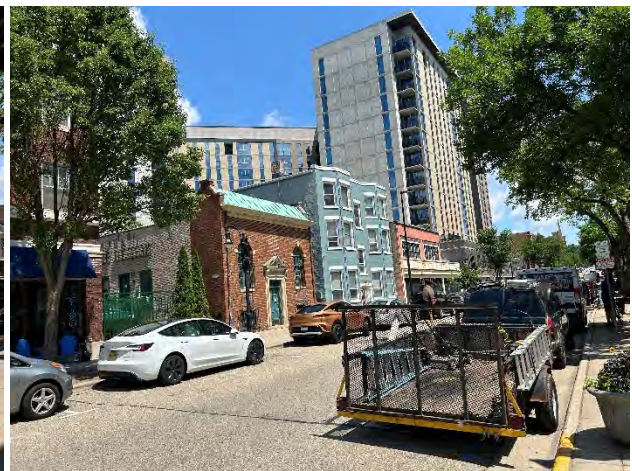
Frances Street (Grimm Book Bindery)



Frances Street (Eleanor)



Gilman Street (site)



Gilman Street (view north)



Gilman Street (view south)



Gilman Street (Grimm Book Bindery)



Gilman Street (view across street)



Gilman street (Hub)

Building Photos

425 North Frances Street
Commercial/Apartments:

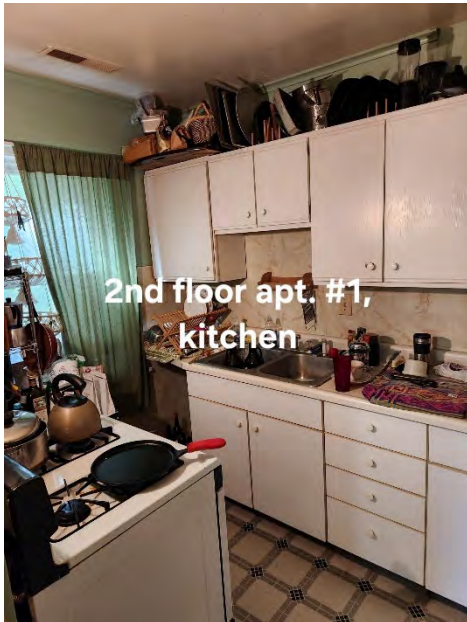
Restaurant
4 Apartments
Date of Construction: 1925



Interior Photos: Commercial

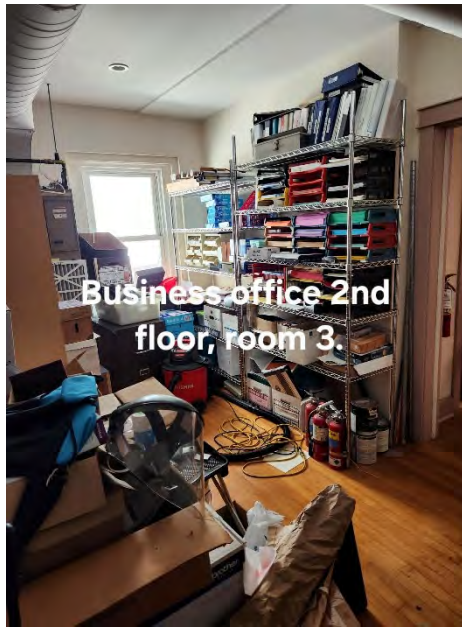


Interior Photos: Residential





Business office 2nd
floor, windows facing
Gilman St.



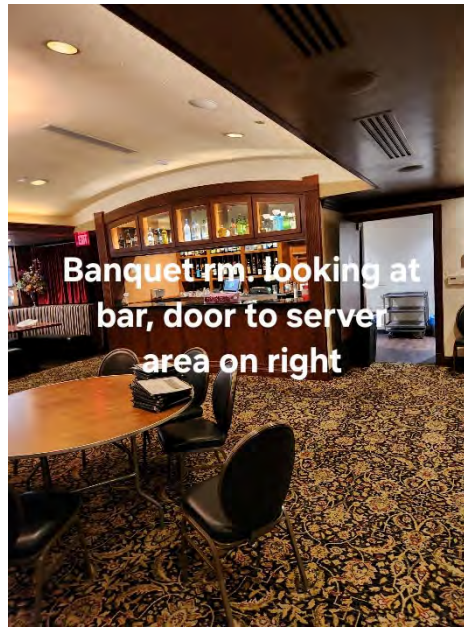
Business office 2nd
floor, room 3.



Business office 2nd
floor door to hallway



2nd floor apt #1
looking at kitchen/
dinning



Building Photos

450 West Gilman Street

Apartments:

6 units

Date of Construction:

1890



Interior Photos



Legal Description

Part of Lots 14-15, all of Lot 16, and part of Lot 19, Wells Plat of Block 9, University Addition to Madison recorded as Document Number 110, located in the NE1/4 of the NW1/4 of Section 23, T7N, R9E, City of Madison, Dane County, Wisconsin, described as follows: Beginning at the southwest corner of Lot 1, Certified Survey Map Number 13615, recorded in Volume 89 of Certified Survey Maps on Pages 151-156 as Document Number 5036719, Dane County Registry; thence S88°35'23"E, 62.81 feet along the southerly line of said Lot 1; thence N46°13'13"E, 61.52 feet along said southerly line; thence S44°04'16"E, 132.27 feet along said southerly line to the most southerly corner of said Lot 1; thence S46°18'56"W, 133.40 feet along the northwesterly right of way line of West Gilman Street to the most easterly corner of Lot 17, Wells Plat of Block 9, University Addition to Madison; thence N44°08'15"W, 132.05 feet along the northeast line of said Lot 17 to the most northerly corner of said Lot 17; thence S46°13'13"W, 16.96 feet along the northwest line of said Lot 17 to the south corner of said Lot 19 and a point on the east right of way line of North Frances Street; thence N01°19'51"E, 63.14 feet along said east right of way line to the point of beginning. Contains 19,623 square feet (0.450 acres).