Facilities Planning & Management
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Location:	Virtual	Project:	Design Review Board – October 2026
Date/Time:	10/20/26 – 9:00 am	Re:	DRB Meeting Notes
Notes By:	Janine Glaeser, UW-Madison FP&M, CPLA	File:	P:\SHARE\Design Review Board\2026 MEETINGS\10-20-26 MTG\

Agenda (virtual):

1. **919 West Dayton St., 115 North Mills St., UW Madison Student Housing Development RFP 285-031**
   CI-District Master Plan Amendment – Informational Presentation

2. **919 West Dayton St., 115 North Mills St., UW Madison Student Housing Development RFP 285-031**
   Building Massing– Informational Presentation

Committee Attendees:
Present:

Heidi Natura
Mary Czynszak-Lyne
Rafeeq Asad
Al Oberlander
Kevin Firchow
Ex Officio: Scott Utter
Ex Officio: Peter Schlecht

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Chair Schlecht called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Roll call confirmed quorum.

APPROVAL OF MEETING NOTES

September 15st DRB Meeting Notes were approved

- Czynszak-Lyne motioned to approve; Oberlander seconded motion

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

- None

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- Utter read the Land Acknowledgement

Agenda Item #1: CI-District Master Plan Amendment – Informational Presentation

Project Name:
919 West Dayton St., 115 North Mills St., UW Madison Student Housing Development RFP 285-031

Attendees:

- Nate Gundrum, Mortenson
- Paul Wuennenberg, The Lawrence Group
- Baris Saner, The Lawrence Group
- Javier Esteban, The Lawrence Group
- Jeffrey Gruhn, Mortenson
- David Thorson, Mortenson
- London Donohoe, Mortenson
- Jason Rittel, DOA PM
- Bridget Ninmann, UW Housing & Dining
- Jeff Novak, UW AVC Housing & Dining
- Gabe Mendez, UW FP&M Transportation
- Aaron Williams, UW FP&M CPLA
- Jonathan Bronk, UW FP&M CPLA
- Lynn Dahlgren, UW FP&M CPLA
- Sadie Derouin, UW FP&M CPLA – Sustainability
- Van VanWyk, UW PM
- Kelly Petty, UW FP&M
- Molly Lenz, UW FP&M
- Brenda Gonzalez, UW Community Relations
- Sabine Martin, Wisconsin State Journal
- Katie Layden

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to complete the planning, programming, design, and pre-development site investigations necessary to support the future construction of a new student housing development on two University-owned sites on Mills Street and Dayton Street. DOA, on behalf of the Universities of Wisconsin and UW-Madison, engaged in a Request for Proposals for a public-private partnership to develop a build-to-suit residence hall to house 1,500-2,000 beds. The planning and design effort will evaluate the proposed development of two residence hall facilities and a dining component intended to address demonstrated student housing demand, improve the student residential experience, and support UW-Madison's long-term housing goals.

Entitlements Schedule:

DRB #1 Master Plan Amend. & Building Design	Intro	10/20/26
JCAC Master Plan Amend. & Building Design	Intro	10/22/26
DRB #2 Schematic Design Review		11/17/26
CoM Common Council Intro		11/24/26
Landmarks Commission		12/7/26
JCAC Master Plan Amendment Rec & Design Update		12/10/26
CoM Planning Commission		12/14/26
DRB #3 Master Plan Amend Approval & Building Design Update		12/15/26
Com Common Council Approval		1/12/27
JCAC Design Recommendation		1/28/27 (TBD)
DRB Design Final Approval		2/23/27 (TBD)

DRB comments:

Czynszak-Lyne

- Asked whether environmental assessments have been completed for Lot 45 given its historic use as a fleet maintenance facility and the potential for soil contamination.
    - Project team response: Confirmed that environmental due diligence is underway, including Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments, anticipated soil remediation, coordination with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and completion of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) review process.
- Questioned the availability and usability of open space at the rear of the project site and encouraged activation of the public-facing portions of the development.
    - Project team response: Clarified that an existing cross-access easement limits development opportunities in portions of the rear yard, despite its appearance as open space.
- Expressed concerns regarding site safety and pedestrian interactions.
- Questioned whether the proposed location adequately serves the broader campus community due to its distance from existing dining facilities.
    - Project team response (Jeff Novak): Explained that dining locations are planned primarily to serve nearby residents. Gordon Dining Hall is currently operating beyond intended capacity, and additional housing residents in this district require a closer dining option. Student dining patterns indicate that approximately 80 percent of students eat at the facility closest to their residence.
- Suggested evaluating whether portions of the building could be set back further from the street to improve safety and pedestrian comfort.

Oberlander

- Expressed support for the proposed land use and noted that the site is exceptionally well suited for student housing due to its proximity to campus destinations, bicycle infrastructure, and existing residential facilities.
- Acknowledged the demonstrated demand for additional student housing and supported the overall location strategy.
- Observed that the project contains a significant amount of building area relative to open space but found the proposed massing generally appropriate.
- Supported the proposed Mills Street setbacks and upper-level step-backs, noting they effectively reduce the building's perceived scale.
- Expressed no concerns regarding the proposed building height.
- Praised the proposed path extension connecting the site to surrounding intersections and identified it as a strong site-planning feature.
- Emphasized the importance of controlled residential access and noted that the proposed circulation patterns appear functional and intuitive for future residents.
- Expressed concern regarding the lack of setback along portions of Dayton Street.
- Observed that buildings with no setback along Dayton Street often create a less desirable pedestrian experience and recommended additional open space at key corners and gathering areas.
- Suggested reducing the first-floor footprint or providing additional breathing room at the Dayton and Park Street corner to better accommodate visitors and improve the streetscape.
- Reiterated support for the overall height and massing strategy while encouraging further refinement of the pedestrian environment.

University Housing Response, Jeff Novak

- Emphasized the critical need for additional student housing capacity.
- Noted that University Housing has operated at approximately 115 percent occupancy in recent years and currently houses roughly 1,000 students in temporary arrangements, including converted triple-occupancy rooms.
- Reported continued growth in student demand, including record application levels approaching 75,000 applicants.
- Referenced a 2025 housing study completed with the City of Madison that found approximately 98 percent occupancy within the local housing market.
- Explained that limited campus and community housing availability is forcing students to make housing decisions earlier each year.
- Noted that while UW–Madison does not require students to live on campus, approximately 93 percent of first-year students choose to do so.
- Concluded that additional housing capacity is needed to accommodate growing enrollment and projected strong demand for the proposed residence hall.

Agenda Item #2: Building Massing– Informational Presentation

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residence hall facilities and a dining component intended to address demonstrated student housing demand, improve the student residential experience, and support UW-Madison's long-term housing goals.

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DRB comments:

Oberlander

- Praised the overall massing strategy along Mills Street, noting that dividing the building into three wings connected by a central circulation hub successfully reduces the perceived scale of a large residence hall.
- Commented that the massing approach creates a more engaging composition than a continuous building form and enhances the resident experience.
- Asked about the small structures shown on the site plan.
    - **Project team response:** Confirmed these elements are bicycle parking facilities proposed within the setback area.
- Supported the proposed Mills Street building frontage and overall massing composition.
- Expressed support for the Merit Hall massing, height, and step-back strategy, noting that the taller form at the entrance and increased glazing create a strong focal point.
- Identified concerns with a small residual space created along the south side of the building and encouraged further refinement to improve usability and character.
    - Project team response: Confirmed that the design team is reassessing those areas and exploring ways to improve courtyard-like spaces while maintaining south-facing residential units.

Firchow

- Referenced concerns raised during City review regarding the limited amount of active frontage at the three ends of the Y-shaped building along Mills Street.
- Noted that some building ends may appear blank or visually harsh, particularly where they terminate views adjacent to parking or service areas.
- Encouraged the design team to explore additional windows, transparency, or architectural articulation to improve these terminating views and strengthen the pedestrian experience.

Natura

- Shared concerns regarding the limited setbacks along Dayton Street and Park Street, noting that the building may feel overly compressed from a pedestrian perspective.
- Observed that the proposed density may create an uncomfortable condition for pedestrians adjacent to heavily traveled streets.
- Questioned opportunities to reconsider portions of the Mills Street path network to create additional open space and reduce impervious surface.
- Noted concern that residents will have limited access to meaningful green space immediately

adjacent to the residence hall.

- Asked whether green roofs are being considered for portions of the project.
- Questioned the quality and usability of the interior courtyards and suggested exploring alternatives such as a winter garden or more activated communal space.

Utter

- Expressed concern regarding the concentration of activities within the Mills Street arrival plaza.
- Noted that residential entry, vehicle drop-off, service access, trash collection, and pedestrian circulation are all competing for limited space.
- Recommended additional study of the arrival sequence, drop-off operations, and circulation patterns to improve functionality and safety.

Asad

- Agreed that the Mills Street entry plaza warrants additional refinement and noted that the space will likely improve as the design progresses.
- Commented that the overall massing feels somewhat understated and could benefit from additional architectural expression.
- Supported reconsideration of the proposed path along the site edge and questioned whether the extent of paving is necessary.
- Expressed no concerns regarding the proposed building density or setbacks along Dayton Street and Park Street, noting that sufficient space remains within the public realm.
- Characterized the proposal as a strong project at the conceptual planning stage.
- Asked whether the interior courtyard associated with the Merit Hall component would be accessible and landscaped.
    - Project team response: Explained that the courtyard is intended to function primarily as a landscaped green roof above the dining facility and is not anticipated to be occupiable space.

Czynszak-Lyne

- Asked whether solar energy systems are being considered as part of the project design.
    - Project team response: Confirmed that solar installations are anticipated to be incorporated into the project.

Public Comments

Van VanWyk

- The occupant daylight on Mills will be far better than the Merritt Hall site.

Jonathan Bronk

- The path north of the Mills Street Building will link two different commuter paths together.

DISCUSSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:11 am.

November 17, 2026, is the next regularly scheduled DRB meeting.

These notes are what the writer understands of the proceedings. Please contact or email any changes to the writer within 5 working days if not in concurrence. End of meeting notes.