

**PLANNING DIVISION REPORT
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
February 11, 2008**

RE: I.D. #09072, Demolition Permit – 1314 W. Johnson Street

1. Requested Action: Approval of a demolition permit for the Randall Tower building to create a construction staging area for the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery / Morgridge Institute for Research (WID/MIR) and for future construction of a new/expanded student union (Union South).
2. Applicable Regulations: Section 28.04 (22) provides the guidelines and regulations for the approval of demolition permits.
3. Report Drafted By: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Planner

GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. Applicant and Contact: George E. Austin; Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation; 614 Walnut Street Room 1265 C; Madison, WI; 53726

Owner: WARF Properties, LLC; 614 Walnut Street, 13th Floor, Madison, WI 53726
2. Development Schedule: The applicant wishes to proceed as soon as all permits have been issued and anticipates completion by March 2008.
3. Parcel Location: An area of approximately 4,700 square feet south of the recently approved WID/MIR project site. This triangular shaped block is bounded by West Johnson Street on the south, North Randall Avenue on the west, and Campus Drive and the Wisconsin Southern Railroad on the North and East. Aldermanic District 8; Madison Metropolitan School District.
4. Existing Conditions: The site includes the now vacant Randall Tower apartment/commercial building. The structure is a five-story concrete and masonry building.
5. Proposed Use: In the short term, the area would be used as a construction staging area for the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery / Morgridge Institute for Research (WID/MIR) building. In the longer term, the site would be the location of a new Union South building.
6. Surrounding Land Use and Zoning:
N&E: UW Campus- future WID/MIR project site, in which a rezoning to PUD-GDP (Planned Unit Development- General Development Plan) has been approved. Staff anticipates final recording of this rezoning in the very near future.
South: UW Campus-Existing Union South, zoned R6

West: UW Campus-1410 Engineering Building, zoned PUDSIP, R5

7. Adopted Land Use Plan: The Comprehensive Plan recommends “Campus Uses” for this property.
8. Environmental Corridor Status: This property is not located within a mapped environmental corridor.
9. Public Utilities and Services: This property is served by a full range of urban services.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

This application is subject to the demolition standards of Section 28.04 (22).

ANALYSIS, EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION:

The applicant requests approval to demolish the apartment/commercial building that formerly housed the Randall Tower Apartments. The building currently has no residential occupants and is used solely as a temporary office for the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery / Morgridge Institute for Research (WID/MIR). In the short-term, the site is proposed to be a construction staging area for the future WID/MIR building. In the longer-term, the site would be the location of a new/expanded student union building (Union South). This request is subject to the demolition standards of Section 28.04 (22).

The subject site is surrounded by University uses. The existing five-story building covers nearly the entire 4,721 square foot site and has an estimated total area of 19,000 square feet. City records indicate the building was constructed in 1964 and had 45 dwelling units with ground floor commercial space. Exterior building materials include concrete and masonry. The Planning Division has not inspected the inside of the building to be demolished but believes it to be in poor to average condition based on photos of the interior and exterior provided by the applicant. The photos show evidence of structural disrepair, damaged ceilings, fire damage, water damage, and worn interior surfaces. Approval of a reuse and recycling plan by the Recycling Coordinator is required by ordinance prior to the issuance of the wrecking permit. The site is not designated as a City of Madison landmark and the City Preservation Planner notes the building does not have architectural or historical significance.

Upon demolition, the property would become a construction staging area for the new WID/MIR building. That site is directly north of the subject property, opposite the Wisconsin Southern Rail Line and Campus Drive. Construction is anticipated to begin later this spring with completion scheduled for October 2010. The applicant did not include information in this submittal on how the proposed construction staging area would function or how it would impact pedestrian, bicycle, or vehicular circulation in and around the subject site. However, discussions between the applicant and City agencies have been ongoing as construction plans for WID/MIR move forward. Additionally, City Traffic Engineering has recommended a condition that there be no or limited disturbance of Randall Avenue and Campus Drive and that construction-related issues be worked out prior to issuance of the demolition permit.

The subject property is also the proposed long-term location of a new and expanded Union South building. This proposed use is consistent with the University's Campus Master Plan and the applicant indicates the design process for the new building is underway. The Union South development concept presented in the Campus Master Plan shows the vacation of the western-most block of West Johnson Street with the new Union South building covering both the existing union site and the subject property. City agencies have noted that details of the street vacation proposal will be reviewed upon a formal submittal being made. This project will come back before the Plan Commission to consider rezoning of the property, a potential conditional use, and the street vacation proposals, at which time the design and other details of the project will be considered.

The applicant notes that construction of the proposed Union South could begin after January 2009. Based on this construction schedule, staff anticipate that applications could be filed later this year. If there were a gap in time between the end of WID/MIR construction staging and the start of Union South construction, the subject site would be graded, leveled, and seeded with grass.

The Comprehensive Plan recommends "Campus Uses" for the subject site, and staff believe the proposed short and long term-uses to be consistent with that recommendation. The preparation of the Regent Street-South Campus Neighborhood Plan is ongoing and this proposal is not inconsistent with recommendations in the current draft. Further, staff believe that the demolition and the interim use support the normal and orderly development of the area and can meet the other demolition standards. In considering the proposed Union South development, staff note that the Plan Commission is typically provided information about both the proposed use and design of the project along with the demolition request. As the design of the new Union South is currently being developed, no specific plans are available for review. The Union South project, however, will need additional Plan Commission approvals, and at which time questions related to design and form of the new Union South building will be addressed. Given the need to move forward with the demolition now to facilitate the development of WID/MIR and the plans to redevelop the site, staff support the demolition and believe the standards can be met.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Division recommends that the Plan Commission find that the demolition standards are met and **approve** a demolition permit for the existing five-story building to create a construction staging area for the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery / Morgridge Institute for Research (WID/MIR). This recommendation is subject to input at the public hearing and comments from reviewing agencies.