



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 555 West Mifflin Street
Application Type: New Development in UMX Zoning – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [66561](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, Acting UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Bali Kura & Gursharan Singh | Jeremy Cynkar, Destree Design Architects

Project Description: The applicant is seeking initial/final approval for the development of a three-story, six-unit apartment building at the corner of West Mifflin and North Bedford Streets. This proposed redevelopment only includes the subject property which measures under 2,200 sf and does not include any lot combinations.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an informational presentation on July 28, 2021.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review the demolition request on November 8, 2021. The Plan Commission will not be reviewing the design of the building.

Approval Standards:

The Urban Design Commission is an **approving** body on this request. Section 28.076(b) includes the related design review requirements which state that new buildings that are less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet and are not otherwise approved shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071](#)(3) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#).

Related Zoning Information:

The property is zoned UMX (Urban Mixed-Use District). The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a permitted use under the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code allows a maximum height of six (6) stories. As a reference, the aforementioned Zoning Design Standards are included as an attachment to this report.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations:

The [Comprehensive Plan](#) recommends Downtown Mixed-Use for the subject property. The [Downtown Plan](#) more specifically identifies the subject site as an underutilized site/obsolete building also recommended the creation of a more detailed plan for the Mifflin Street Area. The [Mifflandia Neighborhood Plan](#) was adopted in 2019 and includes more specific recommendations for the subject property. Among the points discussed below, that plan recommends:

- Mifflin and Bedford streets have setbacks of 15 and 10 feet, respectively.
- Residential buildings have front porches/entry stoops for at least half of the ground floor street frontage.
- Balconies should be well-integrated into the façade and substantially engaged with the façade for at least half of its depth or stacked so as to be read as an architectural bay.

Finally, staff notes that the Mifflin Plan recommends the establishment of a formal urban design district to cover the Mifflandia area in order to codify the guidelines and address regulatory conflicts with the Zoning Code. However, such a district has not been created and so the recommendations remain as guidelines.

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

The Planning Division recommends that the Urban Design Commission make findings and base their decision on the aforementioned design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). Staff have highlighted the following comments for the consideration of the UDC, including a summary of previously raised issues.

Summary of Design Considerations

In regards to these standards, staff highlights the following considerations.

- **Setbacks.** During the informational review, staff commented on setback inconsistencies with those recommended in the recently adopted Mifflandia Plan, which included a 15 foot setback on West Mifflin Street and 10 foot setback along Bedford Street. Staff notes that the proposed setbacks in this proposal were discussed and no objections were raised by UDC members during the informational presentation. As noted in the previous report, the setbacks appear to comply with underlying zoning regulations and staff notes that the existing UMX zoning has a maximum front yard setback of 10 feet. Finally, the project architect has indicated to staff that greater setbacks would impact the feasibility of the project.
- **Entrance and Ground Level Orientation.** Staff requests that the UDC provide findings related to the standards for front entrance and ground orientation. The referenced design standards include a requirement stating that “Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.” Additionally, the Zoning Code requires that for ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

In regards to the more general [Downtown Design Guidelines](#), they recommend that the lower levels of street facing facades should generally “incorporate a higher level of visual interest and richer architectural detailing.”

- **Balconies and Porches.** Staff also recommends that the UDC gives consideration on the design of the balconies and porches. While the front-facing balconies are recessed into the façade, the rear balconies project directly off the back wall. The advisory Mifflandia guidelines suggest that balconies should be well-integrated into facades or are substantially engaged with the façade for at least half of its depth or stacked so as to be read as an architectural bay. That plan also recommends that residential buildings have front porches/entry stoops for at least half of the ground floor street frontage.
- **Façade Composition.** The UDC provided several comments related to the façade composition and in response, the applicant has made several modifications. This includes reconfiguring of windows, material modifications, and removal of street-facing HVAC venting.

As a reference, staff refers the UDC to their comments from the 7/28 informational presentation:

- Seems like a good use of that corner, there’s not a lot of opportunity there, and you’re doing a nice job of using it. The scale seems to be comparable to the building kitty-corner across the intersection.
- The windows seem to be kind of disjointed, I see transom, a commercial looking corner, punched windows. Is there an opportunity to increase the size of the windows based on their location? The rear

elevation shows a blank spot above the balcony, I'm not sure what's happening at the loft. The empty space above the stairwell, why we don't have windows to the bedroom in the front?

- I'm seeing horizontals, then the more vertical punched openings and the commercial corner. It seems disjointed, there should be more consistency with the proportions and styles of penetrations of the building.
- A little restraint on this small building, I question whether a building of this scale is a candidate for spandrel glass too.
- Adding symmetry lines, elements that are different making sure you have some restraint. Understanding if the Mifflin side really warrants having a different material setback or if the smart side should just go along the backside too. The color difference facing west will increase the heat gain in an area you're also sitting in. Tying everything together or die it off to be one base; some of those lines should just go away, especially on the base. I think what you're doing here as far as space, setbacks, you did a very good job utilizing the space.
- You've got some cement siding and I'm curious, there's a ribbed metal panel, is the design intent to have the same thickness, the metal panel vertical thickness and the cement siding? Align or not align?
- I think you really want some clear intention there. If those distances are quite different it could look very misaligned. I'm not advocating for them to be the same though. A rhythm between the two that was intentional could be successful.
- I wonder if a continuation of punched window openings would be simpler on a small building.
- The neighborhood may not want a beacon.
- Make sure the glazing is all consistent.
- How you transition from material to material on a building this small could really make an impact. The rear elevation from cream color to blue and what's happening at the top for the roof trim, encourage you to investigate that and what happens at the corners.
- I really like the loft. I would take that a step further, find a way for screened operable fenestration low in the space and high in the space to encourage natural ventilation and air movement.
- Verify recycling and refuse in the northeast corner, is that outside the first floor unit's bedroom window?
- The building on Bedford has a wonderful opportunity for a green wall of some sorts. Not much mass on the other side, southern exposure. Ask that you consider that.

ATTACHMENT:
28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
 - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
 - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
 - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
 - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

Table 28E-1: Building Materials in Downtown and Urban Districts.

Building Materials	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	Standards (see footnotes)
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Concrete Panels (Tilt-up or Precast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	C
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			D
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			D
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Transparent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than thirty-three percent (33%) of any building.

B - Wood and fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story except between the sidewalk and the bottom of storefront windows or as an accent material.

C - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.

D - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used on building facades facing State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

E - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal

F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.

(g) Equipment and Service Area Screening.

1. Outdoor loading areas or mechanical equipment are not permitted in the front yard. When visible from an abutting public street or walkway, they shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall, or screen of plant material.
2. No doors or openings providing access to parking or loading facilities shall about the Capitol Square, State Street or King Street.
3. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the principal structure.

(h) Screening of Rooftop Equipment.

1. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
2. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials. (Am. by ORD-15-00104, 10-15-15)