



Agenda Item #: 8

Project Title: 134, 140, 148, 150 S Blair Street/506, 508, 510, 514, 516, 518, 522 E Wilson Street - New Residential Building and Hotel. 6th Alder Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 79707

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Wendy Von Below, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, and Rafeeq Asad

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of September 20, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** on a new residential building and hotel. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, and Trina Sandschafer. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Joel Koeppen. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Evelyn Freimann. Registered and speaking in opposition was Jay Sullivan.

The Downtown Plan identifies this for six stories stepping down on the interior. The Blair Street parcels are in the First Settlement District, the Hotel Ruby Marie is in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District and E Wilson is in a national district. Three building solution: 8 story building using bonus floors incorporating affordable housing; Hotel Ruby Marie would remain and be preserved; the balance of E Wilson Street buildings would be removed and replaced with a 6-story hotel. Was reviewed at the Landmarks Commission on September 18th. Living street going through the three building solution. To avoid having a lot of traffic go through the neighborhood on Franklin Street, the living street will allow one-way traffic to come in and exit off of Blair Street. The density of the residential portion is pushed toward Blair Street. Occupiable green roofs. The townhomes are setback from the street, above that is a five foot setback and a ten foot setback at the top level. Living streets are permeable, native natural landscape, no curbs. Dedicated outdoor space for the hotel and restaurant to have outdoor seating and dining.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- The hotel needs a cap, you have a strong base, middle and top. You did that with the residential part. It would strengthen the design a bit.
- A previous design did not have parking. You are proposing parking and I think that helps, but I'm confused as to what those two things are above the parking.
 - (Slide 11) One level is buried in the ground. So there are two levels of parking. The two end caps are residential units coming out in that area, to break up the expression and get some articulation there. We do have some space in the back with a 10-foot setback and landscaping, and the garage would be closed with façade treatments. So it is not an open garage façade back there. We would try to keep the façade adjacent to the Germania as detailed as possible.
 - The landscaping will include trees for buffering, and an increased area of green roof on the lower roof area to provide room for screening.
- Currently the hotel is pretty activated along the living street?
 - There are activated hotel spaces on both sides of the hotel. Conference rooms, food and drink, dog walking area, there are activated uses all around those spaces.
- Otherwise it's just an alley.
 - There are multiple uses on both sides of the hotel, as well as the residential building.

- Is this also where the fire trucks will be providing aerial apparatus access?
 - Yes.
- Talk about how both the residential building and the hotel would be served in terms of garbage, deliveries, etc.
 - All that would be interior to the buildings and wheeled out, the idea would be to push those as far plan north away from the neighborhood. We have to look at that in closer detail, but the goal is to push that away from the neighbor. The corner parcel is not part of this project; we agree that the facades are highly visible. We agree with staff's comments on those.
- The hotel façade design, is that blank wall on the end?
 - Yes, we have a situation where there is an end wall where there will be infill in the future. On the Hotel Ruby Marie side, that wall will be highly visible. This would be a permanent condition, further design will include further articulation, detail and interest. WE agree with staff's comments on that are looking at that.
- You have green indicated on the roofs, is that intended to be green roofs and what is the white area on the hotel?
 - It is a combination of approaches. Permeability with some stormwater management functions, those are place holders to indicate we want to try to do that. On the residential we want to do that on the shorter roofs for visibility for neighbors and people above. On the hotel are looking at the perimeter with mechanicals in the center. We haven't gotten all the details on the mechanicals yet and that space, but anticipate that green roofs are necessary for stormwater.
- I agree with the comment about making sure you have some kind of a top on that hotel building.
- Is this the current streetscape?
 - Yes, that is the current rebuilt streetscape. We're hoping for streatory opportunities there. That is all right-of-way there.
- I think with the Monona waterfront development, this is a good location for a lot to happen. You could have some cool pedestrian things. To the building ends - Are you talking about public art on the ends? It's going to be a very activated space, whether it has articulation or not, it's still a blank wall. Once you start incorporating murals or public art, it could be historic, industrial stamps or something; a cool opportunity.
- The Railroad Street viewshed, across from that could be an intersection, if the building could accommodate another entrance. It could then exit out on to Railroad Street. The concerns are that crazy intersection, neighbors are worried about traffic on Franklin. Could this be a way to alleviate that? It's going to create issues during high traffic times of day.
 - We are looking at that as well as the other comments that you provided for Landmarks Commission. We do anticipate a TDMP will be needed here, we'll be working with Traffic Engineering to find a working solution. The Franklin Street entrance, we're proposing that as a one-way inbound, we didn't want folks to circulate all the way down Franklin and around. As far as the Railroad Street entrance that is something we'll look at. There are significant structural concerns with regard to the buildings on E Wilson, nonetheless we are looking at the feedback from Landmarks and looking to see what can be done. The architectural expression of the hotel will continue to evolve.
- Can you talk about what you heard from Landmarks on the Blair Street façade setbacks and articulation?
 - We were at Landmarks and have talked with Heather Bailey. We did hear comment about this being more of an H style building, pulling away from Blair for more vertical articulation. Staff also brought up a larger stepback above the townhomes, is there an opportunity to do some of that. We'll be looking at what can be done in the design context to address those.
- I've heard from neighbors about the railroad and industrial connections there from the 1870s. This is an area eligible for national register. Maybe some interesting history to spark creativity. Can you preserve, say for example, the Come Back In, or more?
 - That is something we're looking at, especially with the Come Back In, it has more of the architectural integrity left. The Essen Haus has very little integrity left, the 518 lower level has been modified multiple times. The biggest opportunity for integration and preservation is the façade of the Come Back In. That

is some feedback that we received from Landmarks staff and Commission. So we will take that back and see what we can do to incorporate some nods to history.

- Take a look at the circulation issues, how that alley works for back of house stuff will be very important. The E Wilson facade, and then how does it work to get in and out of that space.
- This is a new building on a gateway site, and I would hate to see some thin strip of old buildings glued onto this. It's transformational and wouldn't do justice to the façade of Come Back In having that stuck on a new hotel building. Hotel Ruby Marie is intact and by all means that should be integrated as part of this development.
 - It is controlled by the developer, inside of it very little will change.
- It's not like you need a fire wall that cannot have penetrations, right?
 - Because of the COA for lot combinations these will have to remain distinct lots. We cannot attach a lot in a local historic district with a lot that is not. The lot lines for the Hotel Ruby Marie have to stay. There will be lot lines under the living street that need to stay, with easements.
- I am getting at the blank walls. There are no-build easements that can be done, to get some windows and openings above the hotel especially if you know you are not going to have someone that wants to build there. I understand on the other side you probably want some infill at some point in the future. It would be a better integration of the two buildings if it wasn't a blank wall.
- With regard to comments on the design of the hotel, right now I see a 3-story base and 3-story top. If you're going to have a datum maybe it's a full one-story kind of a datum with a four story base and a three story top, there would be less stratification and would help it be a standalone building.
- Going back to the condos, the 10-foot setback between the condos and apartment building, did they have their own fence or wall?
 - There's a concrete wall along the entire run of the Germania, then the driveway and garages behind them. Our setback is behind the wall.
- Their driveway is on their side of the wall?
 - Correct.
- That will be an interesting green lush alleyway and understanding the grade differences there.
- Please bring plenty of details and pictures in that space.
 - We understand that is an important space to design correctly and appropriately.
- Even a bit more stepback on the townhouses would be very effective in giving them the presence of a real townhouse without just a big huge building with bay windows on the first floor. The more you can do to make it look like a real townhouse, and then something stepped back above, it would really help the pedestrian experience.

Action

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** no formal action was taken by the Commission.