



**Agenda Item #:** 7

**Project Title:** 3100 E Washington Avenue - Residential Building Complex Located in Urban Design District (UDD) 5. 12th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 77926

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Christian Harper, Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Rafeeq Asad, Amanda Arnold, Marsha Rummel, and Russell Knudson

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of May 31, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a Residential Building Complex located at 3100 E Washington Avenue in UDD 5. Registered and speaking in support was Nick Orthmann. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Adam Templer.

The proposed two building, 190-unit, one and two-bedroom development on this 2.2 acre site would front on three streets as five-stories on E Washington Avenue and four-stories on Ridgeway. Amenity space is located at the corner, and some outdoor amenity space with patios and activity space is provided. Staff has expressed concerns regarding the placement and setbacks along E Washington Avenue; they feel the building is setback far enough to make sense at this location. Elevations show brick and storefront on E Washington Avenue, cement board panels in a mix of colors, a wood look panel, and some balconies. The buildings are not identical but complementary to provide variety. Massing studies show how the buildings fit together.

Questions for staff and/or the development team:

- (Ald. Amani) Is there any opportunity to get this presentation? Has this been presented to other Alders, and has a neighborhood meeting been held? It would be great to share this information and share it with the neighborhood.
  - I am happy to forward the presentation. There have not been any there public meeting on this.
- (Secretary) Everything is in Legistar. I will plan to send you links after this meeting.
- The footprint is interesting, it's not rectilinear, it has some slight angles which provides opportunity for push and pull in material areas, it will lend itself to some good elevations. As you refine it keep that in mind, you have these natural breaks but you can also break it up with various materials, especially the larger part of B1, not to suggest you need more materials. Once you start refining your materials and locations, there is potential for this to be a very dynamic project. Start to define your base and middle and maybe there is a crown. I would recommend it gets refined, what you have here is not what it ends up being in terms of location and one material, break that up more and start following some of the natural suggestions based on the footprint of the massing.
- I want to make sure the applicant sees in the Legistar file a letter the Commission received today about the location in relation to the coming of F35s. While the UDC has no role in that decision, certainly I would urge you to consider the location in terms of noise abatement. According to the letter, you're in a flight path where you'll get really high decibel levels, you should be aware and plan for that. And the location of the BRT station at Melvin Court may impact the circulation in and out of Melvin Court. I don't really know how to solve that, that's Traffic Engineering, but take a look at how that will work and how people will get in and out of this building to

get to E Washington. I do share the staff concerns about the massing and how close it is to E Washington. Aside from the question of compatible location for housing. Putting that question aside you definitely need to work on setting it back from the street.

- There are some competing priorities here. Maybe to counter the need and suggestion about the proximity to E Washington, I'm struck by the interior experience between these two buildings as largely surface parking. I commend the amount of underground parking, however, I'm left wondering, without a solution to propose, about configuration of buildings and is there a way to get the buildings connected that frees up some green space/experience on the interior of the site.
- Another comment, the community room and the exercise room amenities are so far from Building 2, thinking about the experience of your residents to make that journey to use that amenity. I don't know that it affects urban design, maybe it's not an appropriate comment, but I do wonder if there are design changes, maybe these things are related.
- I'm struck by the building expression. At an informational level we are looking at massing and not the skin of the building, but it seems very broken up into small pieces and elements, and I don't like it. You're creating a building for what appears to be quite a bit of one-bedroom units and two bedroom units and not much else. What thoughts went into who your target residents would be? I see that area as more family oriented in many ways. Is there a relationship between looking at more opportunities for families, more bedroom units and whether that programmatic change expresses itself in less small elements, vertical lines on the building. Great to see more housing being built in Madison, looking forward to seeing how this progresses.
- That proximity to E Washington Avenue is so overwhelming, particularly because it seems like a small scale residential area. When you come around E Wash and take that exit to Highway 30, there is housing back there but there's a nice green buffer that is high speed. Those F35s are nothing compared to the drag racing on E Washington Avenue, that's what these residents are going to experience. That should be addressed in how you orient the building because it's going to be a brutalist exposure. I also agree that maybe the interior, if things could get pushed off, it becomes more of an insert facing more of the neighborhood, I feel like the amount of building site plus the parking leaves very little buffer. The architecture side is a nice articulation and color, but you're not going to overcome that mass, there's a lot going on and a lot of it. Breaking that up, not having that huge presence on E Washington would help the project.
- I commend you on utilizing a site that is largely surface parking, and echo what we've heard. As we look forward to future presentations I'll be paying particular attention to what that pedestrian environment is along E Washington Avenue. It's very much a vehicular corridor, especially in this area, how do we change that, how does your project contribute to a healthy, vibrant streetscape, and what does that mean functionally, tangibly? Does it mean there is more space for planting buffers? More landing spots for at-grade bike parking along that edge? Sensitivity to bicycles traveling up and down the street? What other things, low screen walls or fences, in addition to the plant material might help create a nice atmosphere along E Washington? Are we getting enough big trees in that space, too? That will be very important given the scale of the building. We might not be able to rely just on street trees. All things to consider. Echo the comments on the interior usable open space, although it seems like your parking ratio is reasonable overall, it's a lot you're fitting into the site. A lot of that parking demand competes with the open space, but I'd like to see how the spaces you do have identified are connected to each other, that there are opportunities for residents to get outside and not just be in a parking realm or a busy vehicular corridor on the other side. There's also the BRT and that connectivity.
- The proximity to E Washington is concerning. We see this on a lot of projects, developments that maybe comply with the letter of setbacks, whether or not that runs up against the realities of what that means. While I think this is a good place for much needed housing, I'm glad to see this going here but it is a tough location. I can appreciate the complexities of squeezing this development of this size onto this footprint, but at this place here it isn't just E Washington, it is Highway 30 too. This is the most urban interchange along E Washington, the idea of living in an apartment pushed up to this intersection as opposed to other intersections, is a really different experience. People really accelerate over this stretch, it is not a great place to be that close to the street. I'm concerned about where the greenspace is, where are the opportunities to have your dog go? There doesn't seem to be much space for landscaping or anything. Given the size and, if not requirements, the need for

parking both underground and surface, it seems to be driving the design in a weird way. The tucked in parking goes slightly under the building being held up by pillars of Building B2. I grew up in south Florida where you see that on hotels, motels and apartment buildings. It's a weird look to have the cars pull up partially under the building, and not particularly a good look. To have that drive the design of a building seems strange to me. It seems to be needed, given the property lines, but it seems like a really bad approach to take, talk about auto-centric. The building colors and patterning are favorable, but it needs some work but I don't get a bad feeling about it. A whole neighborhood exists over here that has been living with the airport and such, going forward any buildings that are built as close to the runways as this is doesn't mean that's something to be ignored. Having a slightly higher quality of windows and insulation might be prudent. One and two-bedroom apartments exclusively that this is not going to be a development that will have very many kids in it. The concerns about having children living in proximity to that noise.

- Design is subjective, but are some things are not. We are looking at urban design, we are on a major thoroughfare. There is going to be noise. I live on E Washington Avenue. In urban environments, you expect density, people, movement, lights, and noise. Being off the BRT calls for higher density, smaller parking and more density along this corridor. Keep those things in mind when we make suggestions. Urban spaces won't have all that open green space, sometimes we have to look at where we're developing and work within that, not make every space less dense and less tall. Especially E Washington Avenue, it's a different atmosphere from everything else, we have tall buildings, vehicular traffic, and density. It's not like some of the other streets in other places. I don't have a problem with the building being close to E Wash. You will have a streetscape and street trees; you're not going to have a 30-foot setback in front of your building because that is not what this area dictates. It's also a very highly travelled vehicular thoroughfare and your building responds to it, the siting of the building on this site is not bad.
- My gripe would be those poor residents on the first floor on E Washington, we've approved projects at Union Corners and Ella's Deli, and most of those had commercial on the ground floor. I don't know where you live on E Washington, but I bet you don't live right on the sidewalk on E Washington. I don't know that this is a viable commercial area, I doubt it, but I would say get as much of that common space exercise rooms, and bike storage whatever you can along that first floor on E Washington because that is where everyone is going to be looking right in apartments. You're not going to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, but you're not looking at people at the stoplight looking into your living room as well.
- I agree 100 percent.
- With regard to building materials, the big slabs of cement board siding mixed with ship lap/lap siding and other wood look cement board siding; it's tricky, you have to look really closely at how you articulate all that so it's a really clean, modern look and so it is not a cheap look with big pieces of siding held on with reveal strips. Really how all that is detailed and whether or not you can afford to bring some masonry in there to give it a look of an enduring quality.
- I was going to offer a suggestion that would help both us on the commission and maybe the application to come prepared with precedent examples and cross sections of some of these streetscape, so we can see your vision for what that interface is. That would be helpful to me. Somewhere further up E Washington or a completely different city, both might be beneficial to look at. What they use, what's in their kit of elements and tools that they use to create a pleasant interface between the building, the sidewalk, and the street.
- I wanted to offer on small counter point to the proximity to E Washington, this is affordable housing, and one of the things that is not equitable with affordable housing is the amount of greenspace, the areas that can have canopy trees. Those are not only visual buffers but they are something that as urban design it is more pleasant to drive up a street that has larger trees alongside it and not just buildings right up against it. Adding some relief with some thoughtful landscaping that is actually going to grow. In order to have equitable housing we have to not be packing people in on a dense site without any kind of buffer or access to nice landscaping that is going to live. That there are going to be some tall trees and add to the pleasantness of the landscape.

## Action

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