



<b>Agenda Item #:</b>	5
<b>Project Title:</b>	139 W. Wilson Street - New Residential Building in UMX Zoning. 4th Ald. Dist.
<b>Legistar File ID #:</b>	70108
<b>Members Present:</b>	Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Wendy von Below, Marsha Rummel, and Shane Bernau
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of January 24, 2024, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission to **DENY** a new residential building located at 139 W Wilson Street. Registered and speaking in support was John Seamon. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Phil Hees, and Kevin Yeska. Registered and speaking in opposition was Terrence Wall. Registered and speaking neither in support nor opposition were Randy Christianson, and Bruce Bosben.

The applicant team gave an overview of updates to the project based on the Commission's previous comments. The applicant noted that they were asking for Initial/Final Approval. Regarding discussions about the guidelines related to building design, base-middle-top, they have created a base with larger blocks, and a stronger termination line at the top of the building with a similar approach as the base. We extended the wood panel all the way down to the base. Regarding the application of the material palette, new vertical bands of the faux wood metal panel have been applied to all facades. We removed the green façade on the mural from the lake façade and created a stronger vertical pattern on the street side of the building, including modification to the windows, framing, etc. Regarding scale, maintaining datums, etc., looking at adjacent building, datums lines were maintained, including windows. The scale of the entry portal is proportional to the scale of the entry recess are what makes the building dynamic and memorable. The entry portal now pops, it's a bigger element of the entry visual. Looking at the mural, we added a sky-blue color and wrapped the same vertical windows, which were wrapped around the corner. Design Guideline 3, related to visual interest, the Wilson Street entry stepback and height relative to the overall massing defines an interesting public space spatially that addresses the street. It is created by the open corner. We looked at multiple colors and patterns of the panel and facets and articulation without those panels – other color schemes seemed to be applied and were never as dynamic as the proposed acid white. The north façade benefits the most with the forest as the stage. Other sizes were never as dynamic, and the patterning was confusing without rhythm. Regrading a dedicated path from the sidewalk along the bike stalls and further details of the window framing – details related to those items are in the submittal.

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

- I agree with some of the comments that were made earlier. I do not mind the material. I do not think that all building need to have the same material. I do have some concerns and I want you to help me understand the glazing. Are there no operable windows on this building?
  - Currently the windows are not operable windows; it is not that there couldn't be, but currently they are not.
- I am trying to not see a prison, but you have to help me out here. Even with the material, we have seen the full-scale panel, we have seen the panel and I don't mind it but I do agree that; I live downtown and know most of the people that live downtown, it's a different type of living and the size of the glazing matters in that urban

area, that dense area. It doesn't necessarily have to be floor-to-ceiling windows, but some of those elements that you see in the surrounding context can be applied here and still maintain the material. Is that a possibility that some of those punches, especially on those long facades can be increased to be more residential in scale and get some of that light and fresh air in. Is that something that can happen?

- We feel like we have increased the size of a lot of the window units; many are 7 feet tall as an example. My question would be how big are we looking? If you look at the submittal package, you can see the floor plans. In fact we have added some marketing plans to give more visual life. And then also in the submittal is a kind of a close up of an area of the front façade, north façade, to give some more specifics about the sizes of these. I'm not sure how big would be big enough, but I hear what you are saying. I am just answering by saying that we have beefed up a lot of the window sizes; not sure how big they would have to be to meet your expectation.
- We will get back to that, but it is the pattern is what causes that problem. In some living rooms you have smaller, thinner window where it should larger. You are trying to do a pattern that does not afford you the possibility of increasing glazing.
- We talked about the lobby and that pedestrian experience, I see where you added some of the narrow, taller windows to the side. Did you explore just making that storefront all the way around versus a fully glazed lobby to help activate that pedestrian experience and not necessarily just smaller thinner windows? I know it gets rid of some of the forest motif, but has that been explored?
  - Yes, originally the idea of storefront at the lowest level in that waiting area, it's not a lobby, it's a waiting area; it's not a big space. But that said, it kind of cut off that forest and that custom internally lit wall, it really took away from it and we felt we got just as much from these tall, slender windows than we would with maximizing it with storefront.
- Could you address the wall packs.
  - In the plan set submittal, pages 37-43 address that. In the submittal, if we could look at that it would be great.
- We can come back to that as it gets pulled up. The reason that I went to the submittal is because I am confused about the egress, which exits into a drive aisle. Is that allowed, but also concerns about the number of ADA stalls and onsite parking. I do not know how we get around that but if you can help me talk throughs some of those issues.
  - Sure. In the submittal, slide 20, which is one of the site plans. There is an egress empties out in to an open space outside the building. We're planning on it being painted as a clear walk area, and we think that is compliant. Looking for wall packs so page 37...so if you look at slide 37 of the plan set.
- Looking at the first floor plan/site plan. I do not know that this stripe, maybe I am wrong, but I don't know if the striping prevents anything if that is all level.
  - It is all level and it would be signed so there's no parking on it whether it is a delivery van or trash and recycle trucks.
- I would suggest that gets revisited and looked at again. With the amount of parking, those four cars marked as handicapped, but then how that exits in and out with whatever is happening in this area, I don't know that it works. I think you should revisit that.
- (Secretary) I can go back to the wall packs.
  - This slide shows an area which is a typical representation of the integrated louver and frame in the window. We also have details on the subsequent sheets associated with that showing specifically how that aluminum window and integrated louver work together and how they sit within the wall panel. They are basically constructed as one, which is shown on a subsequent sheet.
- It is kind of the integrated window frame louver system.
  - Yeah, that is it.
- Help me understand the parking and how that works. Clearly, it's not a requirement. This is multi-family, so how do you do that?
- (Secretary) There is no parking requirement here, there is no minimum they have to provide on this site. This is in the Downtown Core, the Zoning Code specifically says that there is no minimum parking requirement.

Thinking about sustainability measures, walkability, proximity to multi modal transit that is available in this area, it is something that follows that suit. I have not seen formal review comments from Traffic Engineering. I don't know what, if any, comments they have related to circulation on the site.

The Commission discussed the following:

- In the staff report, we're asked to review this with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, it talks about site circulation to minimize visual presence of vehicular circulation and parking. We know that without any parking and very limited site area, this little site here is going to be chock full of Uber drivers and delivery vans and others since residents won't be driving back and forth to the building. You've also got pedestrians and cyclists that are going to be using the area, as well as trash pick-up. There's landscaping and lighting considerations within those guidelines. A discussion that lower levels provide a higher level of interest and overall design composition with secondary and tertiary design compositions, keep that in mind. Also, our recommendation to the Plan Commission, we have to comment on conditional use standard #9, where the "...sustained aesthetic desirability" and "...compatibility with the intended character of the area." Some of the things to think about when we're deliberating and making a motion.
- I give the applicants credit for making some positive changes. I think this has turned into a better-looking building than it was. But my main problems are still the same as they were at the very beginning. No requirement for parking in this part of the downtown notwithstanding, I brought this up before and it still remains, the idea that there are 320 units in this building, the idea, I mean just for sake of argument, say just 20% of them own a car, and where are they going to go? I know the applicant has talked about acquiring space in a nearby City ramps, but seeing as these are geared toward folks who can't afford the cost of a lot of the housing downtown, are these folks that have money to spend on a monthly spot in a parking ramp would cost? That doesn't really seem feasible. All those vehicles have to go somewhere, I see the need for this kind of building, and looking at the floor plans for these units – these are small studios and one-bedrooms, but so what? That's all some people need. In a well-designed building, even one with this many units in it, there should be places like that in the City, but I'm not convinced that shoe horning it into this space is the place for it. I'm looking at the first floor plan and trying to see the rideshare cars maneuvering in and out of those spaces with even a minimal amount of deliveries, pedestrians traffic, bike traffic coming out onto what is a busy street already and with all these new apartment buildings that are opening up, it is just going to be a much busier building. It's hard to wrap my head around it being anything other than just a chaotic venue on that ground floor and I just wish there was some way this building could have been designed a little differently from the get-go to accommodate at least a little bit of parking. I have issues with two elevators servicing a building this tall with this many units and what that means in terms of move ins and move outs. Ugh, it's just hard to picture it working in any kind of manor that would be an asset to both the tenants and the neighborhood. I just have issues with those main things without even getting into some of the finer points of the aesthetics of the building.
- The staff memo has asked us to make a motion either to approve or deny to the Plan Commission, and a lengthy list, many of the items are restated from our past conversations. I do agree that there have been improvements made, especially to north and south façades incorporating wood, but many of our comments from an urban design perspective, I agree with the comments about the elevators, but really taking a look at the exterior. A five-story entry that provides very little human scale or entry into a home there. I would really like to see that artwork studied. The datum lines are somewhat false, they are landing in awkward positions where you would typically take a datum line to a floor or to a sill, they're landing in the middle of glass and its problematic for me. I'm not understanding the relationship of the base to the top of the building. The site circulation remains problematic to me. Not sure that auto turn would show that these very small cars would make the corners safely in and out past the van that is permanently parked there, past a potential pedestrian exit from the stair, and navigating the plethora of Uber and delivery drivers there. I'm still really struggling with this design, especially with the east and west facades and do not know how to move this one forward to be blunt.
- [Looking at the street perspectives that shows it in contact with the neighboring buildings] As I was looking at this in context and with the previous submittal, I really think the design has changed very little, I don't think it

has evolved. Let's talk about datums. In reality, unlike the neighboring buildings, the entry feature on this building isn't limited to the public parts of the building, like its neighbors. It pushes up into the residential floors and therefore you are looking into these little slit windows into the urban forest. Datums aren't to me just limited to lines that line up with neighboring floors; these neighboring buildings have these datums which distinguish public main floors from residential units on both the right and left, some taller, some shorter. This one completely turns it almost 90 degrees and cuts into the building and into these apartments where I don't think the public entry really deserves to be. I have to also question the effectiveness of that forest mural. What its real brightness is going to be, is there even distribution of light, I am worried about the potential of glare with the light fixtures behind, looking at some of the details, as well as its relevance. I just don't see how this forest mural is really relevant to the street or to Madison or this building design at all. Like the two speakers before, I'm concerned about the site circulation, the sustained aesthetic desirability because I don't see compatibility with the character of the surrounding area.

- Its funny, we completely disagreed on Item #1, but we are in line here. I did not see a lot of changes. I don't see that the wall packs are well integrated. They're integrated because they're the same color as the mullion system, but I do not know that means that they are integrated; they still look like louvers at the bottom of the window, which is a problem on the lake and street sides. The only reason the other two sides aren't prominent is because they're smack between two other buildings. I agree with the datums, what are those lines going to? They're not lining up with any sills or headers or anything like that. There has been some changes, but I don't know that those have been significant changes and haven't addressed our comments. I knew that recessed forest thing would be in line with the part that says "tenant" on the neighboring building. It would be dropped significantly and feel like a little cutout that is more appropriate. I don't mind the art, that's subjective, materials are subjective. All of those things can fit within the design, but it's how it's applied. Even if you have studios or affordable housing or anything that's not "luxury" or "market rate," you don't sacrifice design to get those things and daylight is sacrificed here, because of this rhythm. The project to the right, they have a regular set of glazing, that tells me there is living space behind there. When I look at this project I don't know what's behind there until I look at the plans, and even in the plan some of the bedrooms have the smaller punches. There can be design and rhythm applied but still have consistency that relates to the program. Anybody who lives in a smaller unit wants as much glazing and day light as they can get. That will help a lot of the concerns with the material. I just don't know about the circulation and that bothers me. The storefront could carry itself all the way around from the street to the side. I don't know that you need those liner punches at the waiting area. There are some design details that could be improved without tearing up the overall design intent. It's a thin building and you can work with it, but there's some care of details to enhance it and make it fit more within the context. The sit, I don't know how you can fix the site though, that's a holding point for me, I just don't know that it works in terms of circulation and design.
- This is the third time I've said this now, and it's perfectly seen in this view; your view out to the lake through that narrow corridor is one of the greatest assets you have and you're still screening it. Why in the world would you not celebrate that more? It doesn't mean that there can't be plants there and other stuff but to me the view out to the lake is a huge asset to drawing people into that space and making it feel public and pedestrian, and it looks the same as it did at least two iterations ago. Regarding site circulation in that space, I'm trying to be constructive here, I'm definitely not against merging pedestrian and vehicular circulations. There are wonderful examples of that being very successful. Is this like a woonerf where you can get away with that safely? It needs development still, there are a handful of things that we discussed last time that haven't changed. You have the pedestrian path through a different specialty stamped paving, however, the difference between the space where pedestrians and vehicles are encouraged to come together is where it's typically designed as a pedestrian space, and because so it means vehicles are going in cautiously and slowly because they feel like they are entering a pedestrian space. In this iteration you've done the opposite, it's still for that first half of the corridor it's a vehicular space with a pedestrian walkway that basically dead ends into your driveway apron. I don't know for sure but I'm guessing from an ADA standpoint and egress, that still doesn't fly. Maybe the good news is just look at tweaking things around. Maybe the egress space was against the building instead of being outboard of your building, and pedestrians had a safe zone along the building protected by bollards, might as well use them

to protect the building and a pedestrian zone as well. That way it can feel like a lovely pedestrian space and pedestrian still has some protection from the Amazon trucks backing into it. Most of my architectural comments have been spoken already by others. I'm not against the mural, I think the scale is wrong. I like the color and the vibrancy of color, the blue thing at the top is the wrong choice, it's like you're carving out this void. It shouldn't be complicated with another color; it should all be the green forest.

- Clarification on the motion in the staff report, is this a recommendation of approval or denial, not an option for referral?
- (Secretary) I don't know if we want to ask the applicant team what their preference is, but my understanding is that the applicant team wanted to move forward through the process, and in that case it would be looking at a motion for an approval or denial, with or without conditions.
- A referral would not move them to Plan Commission?
- (Secretary) Correct.
- With regard to the mural, my biggest concerns are in the details, this is behind glass and that every mullion has side lights on it going up and down. I have never seen one like this before and would need to see a mockup or something to convince me it's going to look like a forest and not a bunch of lit pictures framed and lit on the side besides these mullions. These are the smallest clerestory windows hitting you in the face when you come up to the building.
- Am I missing some stuff, where did you see details of the mullions? I've seen an application like this work before. It works as backlit.
- It's in the full plan set. At the end, and it was in the report about them not being fully screened.
- (Secretary) The vertical lights; there's a bar that extends to create a "T" for shielding and it looks like that bar, in order to meet cutoff requirements would need to be extended.
- Its like a vinyl like or some imagine on dense glass with glazing in front of it, and it's lit from the mullion on the side and that's where my concerns about glare and unevenness of light and those kinds of things breaking it up and not appearing as a unified mural.
- It would need to be backlit, especially if you have windows intersecting. I would continue that around so it's a cut out of a whole, not the blue sky, that gets tacky. Keep the framing the same the sides, I would frame that top and not have the wrap of concrete. That same frame should wrap the whole thing – so it's like a three-plane cutout of the whole thing. I just assumed it was backlit.
- I just have a lot of concerns having not ever seeing something like this. This being so prominent, to take a chance on this when you've got these really cool buildings on either side of it.
- This could be a cool building too, if that cut out came down two stories and it aligned with the base of the neighboring building, it would be a lot more successful.

A motion was made by von Below, seconded by Asad, for Referral.

Discussion on the motion:

- (Secretary) To clarify, there are two technical items here. We can recommend a motion for Referral to the Plan Commission, that is one way to get them in front of the Plan Commission, in which case we recommend they refer it back to the UDC before they take action. The Plan Commission could also say, "no, we don't agree with your motion for referral, so we're going to keep it here and make a decision." Or is it a motion by the UDC to refer consideration of this item?
- Referring consideration and it stays with us, was what I intended.
- I don't know the proper procedure, I don't think it's a bad project but there are a lot of details and things that need to be worked out. The massing, the shape working but there are some site issues, details along the elevations that could make it a much better project. I know some people think the materials are awful, the jail look, but I think those can be solved without killing the project. We're not trying to kill the project, we just want to fix it.

- My intent was that all the commentary we've been giving, it's just a long enough list that they need to listen to that commentary and come back because it could work as a project.
- I might support this motion, but honestly even though I think the building could look better, I still think it has fundamental failings with the circulation that no amount of tweaking or whatever you could advise could change. When you have to back out into the street it seems like the building has failed its function of circulation. Maybe referral would help solve that but certainly I don't think it can meet Conditional Use Standard #9 and are we just delaying the inevitable with a referral. I remain skeptical.
- (Secretary) Since this would be the second Referral on this item, I think we need to be very pointed in our comments and concerns and be specific in our action items.
- I will voice that I tend to agree with Alder Rummel on this one. I don't know if there's enough tweaking that brings it back to a proposal that really satisfies the context, the neighborhood and the things we're charged with. It's a difficult one but I think I would tend to agree.
- Ditto, I second what Alder Rummel and Shane said. I hate doing that to a project like this that has a lot of things the City needs. There's only been a very small number of projects that have come before us that seem like not the right fit for the space, but this would be one of them and believe me I've tried to look at it in many different ways and convince myself that it could work and be a good project, but if I'm just being honest with how I'm seeing it, I'm not feeling that at all.
- I would make a motion to send a recommendation to the Plan Commission to Deny.
- We have a motion on the table we have to vote on.
- I was laying over a second one if it is the will of the body, if not I can just wait.
- We have to take a vote on the first motion, which was seconded.
- (Secretary) On the outside chance that the motion is successful, we do need to be really specific about what we want them to address.
- It is basically the summary of design considerations in staff memo, and we added comment today about the site circulation concerns being corrected or improved.

The motion failed on a roll call vote of (2-3-1) with von Below, and Asad voting yes; Bernau, Harper, and Rummel voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.

A motion was made by Rummel, seconded by Bernau, move that the Urban Design Commission recommend to the Plan Commission to deny referencing Conditional Use Standard No. 9, and the concerns about circulation on the site referencing Conditional Use Standard 6.

Discussion on the motion:

- There are also design guideline concerns regarding the higher level of visual interest, the lighting of the mural, and the site circulation guideline for minimizing the visual presence for vehicular circulation.
- That is very friendly to me chair.

## Action

On a motion by Rummel, seconded by Bernau, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission to **DENY** the project, with the following findings:

- The Commission finds that Conditional Use Standard #9 is not met.
- The Commission has concerns about the site circulation related to Conditional Use Standard #6.
- The Commission finds that some of the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines are not met, including, but not limited to those that generally speak to lighting, a higher level of visual interest, and site circulation guideline for minimizing visual presence of vehicular circulation.

The motion was passed on a vote of (4-1-1) with Rummel, Bernau, Harper, and von Below voting yes; Asad voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.