



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 929 E Washington Avenue  
**Application Type:** Major Alteration to a Previously Approved Project in Urban Design District (UDD) 8  
**UDC is an Approving Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [80425](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Doug Hursh, Potter Lawson | Curt Brink, Archipelago Village, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the construction of a 15-story dual brand hotel comprised of 265 rooms and 160 parking stalls that was previously approved as a mixed-use office/commercial building with 105 residential units.

### Project Background:

- At their November 8, 2023, meeting, the UDC received an Informational Presentation.
- At their April 13, 2022, meeting, the UDC granted Final Approval for a mixed-use building containing office/commercial and residential uses (Legistar ID [69485](#)). As part of this approval, the UDC granted approval of two bonus stories citing the extreme attention to detail and materiality, the success of the front façade, including the parking garage screening, the purple/green roofs, and energy efficiencies/sustainability measures.
- In 2020, UDC granted approval of a minor alteration to a previously approved planned multi-use site (Legistar ID [62297](#)).
- In 2019, UDC granted Final Approval for the development of a mixed-use commercial/office building (Legistar ID [54198](#)). Originally, the development proposal included an 11-story mixed-use building (156 feet in height) with modern architectural design comprised of 257,000 square feet of commercial/office space and wrapped structured parking. As part of the original approval UDC granted approval of bonus stories due to the fact that the height of the proposed building was in excess of what would be allowed by a 12-story building (147 feet).

**Approval Standards:** The Urban Design Commission (“UDC”) is an **approving body** on this request. The development site is within Urban Design District 8 (“UDD 8”) - Block 13a, which requires that the UDC review the proposed project pursuant to the requirements and guidelines of [Section 33.24\(15\)](#). The code states that the UDC shall apply the UDD 8 district requirements and guidelines as may be appropriate in order to implement the Core Development Principles of the [East Washington Avenue Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan](#).

As noted in UDD 8, the maximum number of stories currently permitted on the subject site (Block 13a) is 12 stories, with the potential for up to three bonus stories for a total of 15 stories. As outlined in MGO 33.24(15)(e)(12), *Upper Level Development Standards*, development’s seeking bonus stories shall incorporate a combination of design elements as enumerated therein, providing sufficient public benefit to warrant the additional height. As part of the UDC’s review purview and ultimately approval authority, staff requests the Commission evaluate the proposed development for consistency with MGO 33.24(15)(e)(12) and ultimately make findings as to whether the requested height is warranted.

**Summary of Design Related Plan Recommendations:** The East Washington Avenue Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan (the “Plan”) provides a framework for addressing significant land use and design issues for the area centered along East Washington Avenue, from East Mifflin to East Main Streets, one of the City’s most prominent corridors. As noted in the Plan, the project site is recommended for commercial and residential land uses.

The Plan generally provides development principles and design guidelines that speak to maintaining capitol views by establishing maximum and minimum heights, setbacks and stepbacks, encouraging building design, materials, and colors that are complementary to and consistent with surrounding development, providing a mix of land uses, and creating a vibrant streetscape along East Washington Avenue.

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Traditional Employment (TE). Within the TE zoning district, the maximum permitted height is five stories/68 feet, however additional height may be allowed if approved as part of a Conditional Use. The TE zoning district also includes site development standards that speak to parking placement, loading areas, and entrance orientation. Please refer to [MGO Section 28.084](#) for additional information.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the UDC review and make findings on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Height and Bonus Stories.** As noted above, the maximum building height in Block 13a is 12 stories/147 feet. A total of three bonus stories may be allowed if it is determined that the provision of at least one element from (i) or a combination of elements from (ii) provides sufficient public benefit to warrant the additional height. Generally, elements include but are not limited to LEED Gold or Silver certification or equivalency, structured parking, publicly accessible plazas/pocket parks visible from the street, mid-block and through-block connections and/or vehicular connections, the incorporation, preservation, or rehabilitation of such structures in the development, provision of community rooms, and vegetative roof cover. Please refer to MGO Section 33.24(15)(e)(12)(c) for additional information. The resulting maximum permitted height within Block 13a, including the three bonus stories (15 stories total) would be 183 feet (assuming maximum floor-to-floor heights 15-foot first floor, 12-foot upper floors). The development proposal includes a request for three bonus stories for an overall height of 15 stories/155’-10”.

Staff requests the Commission’s findings related to the proposed bonus stories, including elements outlined by the applicant in their letter of intent for achieving the bonus stories. The listed elements include the provision of structured parking, providing a mid- and through-block pedestrian connection, and the completed rehabilitation of the Kleuter Building and the restoration of the Wisconsin Telephone Garage and Warehouse, at a future date, as well as vegetative roof cover on both the fifth and 15<sup>th</sup> floor roofs.

While several elements were noted in the application materials as being implemented to warrant the additional height, staff believes that the elements that are most applicable to this project, as well as the overall planned multi-use site include the structured parking (including stalls available for public use), the mid- and through-block pedestrian connection, and rehabilitation of the Kleuter Building as proposed and existing improvements. With regard to the mid- through-block pedestrian connection, staff refers the UDC to their Informational Presentation comments which noted that consideration should be given to the design of the amenity space, especially in terms of providing a safe, separate protected pedestrian pathway within an auto-oriented environment.

- **Building Stepback and Setback.** Within UDD 8, there are also street level façade height, stepback, and setback requirements for each block. Street level façade heights within Block 13a are required to be 3-5 stories, and there is a 15-foot building stepback required along the E Washington Avenue frontage. The proposed building appears to be consistent with the stepback and street level façade height requirements with a five-story mass at the street, and a 15-foot stepback above the fifth floor along E Washington Avenue.

In addition, as noted in the UDD 8 Height, Location and Stepback table, a minimum/maximum setback of 15 feet is required. As shown on the site plan, the building setback appears to be 14.35 feet. The applicant is advised that revisions will be necessary to meet UDD 8 setback requirements. Staff recommends the Commission that compliance with this requirement is noted as part of their formal action.

Staff requests UDC feedback and findings related to the street level façade height, building stepback and setback requirements.

- **Overall Building Design.** Staff requests UDC feedback and make findings on the overall building design as it relates to building massing and articulation. Consideration should be given to the UDD Building Massing and Articulation guidelines and requirements, including those that generally speak to utilizing for-sided architecture, minimizing blank walls, including those on the east and west elevations, incorporating a higher level of design and detailing along the ground floor, creating visual distinction between building components (top, middle, base), providing a positive visual termination at the top of the building, and integrating mechanical equipment screening into the overall building design, etc.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the making refinements to the overall building design to incorporate additional masonry and steel/metal detailing to incorporate more vertical/horizontal articulation, modifying the building 'top' to be more proportional and integrated into the overall design, refining the window openings and proportions to be more consistent and reduce the appearance of 'fake shutters' (metal material flanking windows).

In addition, while not indicated on the elevations, consideration should be given to potential HVAC louvers, including wall parks units, which are commonly associated with lodging uses. It has been the current practice to not locate such units on street-facing façades though they have been approved in some situations when found to be well integrated into the façade's design. Staff recommends that the Commission address the for potential HVAC louvers/wall pack units in their action.

- **Building Materials.** As noted in the application materials, the building material palette is primarily comprised of brick and metal panel accents. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the proposed material palette giving consideration to the UDD 8 Materials and Colors guidelines and requirements, including those that generally speak to utilizing high-quality durable materials, color choices being complementary to design and context. In addition consideration should be given to the treatment of floors 2-4, which include structured parking. As noted in the design guidelines of UDD 8, all visible sides of the building shall be designed with details that complement the front façade.
- **Landscape.** Staff requests the UDC review and make findings related to the proposed landscape plan giving consideration to the UDD 8 Landscape guidelines and requirements, which generally speak to incorporating canopy trees wherever feasible, establishing continuity between buildings and within blocks, providing well-designed landscape outdoor spaces, utilizing landscaping that is complementary to the character of the building, incorporate rain gardens, where practical, etc.

- **Lighting.** Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and making findings related to the proposed lighting plan and fixtures. Consideration should be given to the UDD Site Lighting and Furnishing requirements and guidelines, which state that full cut-off fixtures shall be used to illuminate the site, that pedestrian areas shall be adequately, but not excessively lit, and that fixture should be designed to complement the character of the building. Consideration should be given to the light levels shown at the sixth floor patio, which shows hotspots in excess of 12 footcandles and average light levels in excess of 7 footcandles.

In addition, staff notes that several fixtures proposed, including Fixtures E4A and B, E5, E7, E8A, E8B, and E8C, E9, E10 do not appear to meet full cutoff requirements and light level ratings are not provided for Fixture E16. Additional information is needed for all of these fixture to ensure code compliance, including compliance with cutoff requirements, mounting details, or to show how the fixtures will be modified as noted in the Exterior Luminaire Schedule (*“Manufacturer to custom modify the lumen output to 450 lumens”*) to not trigger cutoff requirements.

With regard to the proposed site lighting, there appears to be inconsistencies with MGO 29.36 with regard to the maximum average light levels for medium activity areas in pedestrian (2.5 maximum average) and vehicle use areas (1.5 maximum average). The applicant is advised that revisions will be required.

Staff recommends that the UDC address lighting in their formal action.

## Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and comments from the November 8, 2023, Informational Presentation comments are provided below.

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

- Was there any consideration of trying to maintain some of the initial or original aesthetic of the previous project even with the program change? It's still a big brick building.
  - I think the L-shaped building came about because of the program of the hotel and this idea of a more public outdoor terrace that is related to the restaurant bar spilling out onto it, and the need for a more private green roof in the back for the extended stay guests, along with future apartments and condos. And to take advantage of this terrace as a destination, being able to overlook Breese Stevens Field for concerts will be a draw to be up here. It's breaking up the building along E Washington a bit more than we had before, and with the future potential apartment building to the east, I think would provide a nice rhythm along the street so it's not just a solid wall.
- And the third through fifth floors are parking?
  - Correct.
- Is there a reason you abandoned the clear differentiation between the parking and the inhabited floors? The previous one had an X bracing and was clearly a different use and set itself off as a strong well designed base with a nice tower on top. As I recall it got really high marks from the Commission, any reason you're being more homogenous?
  - I don't know that I have a good answer for that. It is a bit more homogenous. We're interested to hear what your comments are. We are looking at reducing the glass a bit more on those parking floors, I think we had more glass than we're showing here and we're thinking the windows are probably not as large as they should be, there could be more solid elements.
- The staff report talks about the bonus stories. I'm interested in the mid and thru block pedestrian connection. I need to understand and make sure I'm clear how this would work.
  - We're referencing the internal drive. The whole block is being developed by one developer and owner, except for the Madison Credit Union. That through block drive and parking has been shared amenities for the whole block, shared by the different dedications on the site as well as the sidewalks to get pedestrians through the site. Thinking legally, they will have condominium parcels, so they're broken up that way, but still the ownership is similar.
- I guess I'm still struggling with an existing condition that you're claiming to apply to this building. Maybe it works but I'm thinking about it.
  - We have always looked at it as a whole block. It's all open and light and you can walk through it. We're able to do here where the other sites, we want everything to have the internal drive so you can walk around the interior without walking through a parking garage. It's a whole block where everything interacts.
- You're talking about the justification for the bonus stories?
- Right, I am sure the structured parking is enough, but it's kind of like cheating, it already exists, it's not something you're providing.
  - We are adding a sidewalk on the side of the hotel.
- But it is kind of a holistic master plan being carried through. To their point we're benefiting by not seeing big garage doors and vehicular entrances at each and every building.
  - The loading areas are back on the internal streets.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Was this the angled glass building?
- Tom was all tied up because of the glare and reflection.
- We always want new and exciting building, we had this glass building that would have been a great addition to the urban skyline. Now we have a brick building and there's a lack of detail. But you presented this brick building that was one of my favorite brick buildings, you had the cross bracings and the detailing, all this industrial and the wood and it fit in the context of the whole block. It was seamless and exciting, everything about it was kind of cool. Then we get this, it's not a bad building but I can't understand how some of those design moves that we were really excited about didn't transfer into this project, specifically the parking with the cross braces. We talked for a very long time about how it would be lit at night, with that translucent material and the cars behind it, the blue lights. There were so many fine details to that project that I see nods off here but it could go a lot further. We talked about railroad bridge and the aesthetics of the I-beams and I see them here but not as integrated to where the windows really screamed industrial. I think this is a decent design but it could be stronger. Going to cream city is a huge miss, keeping it consistent with the surrounding context makes it a stronger project. The cross bracings were a very unique design element that we don't see and made this project stand out, I would love to see that come back if possible. The top doesn't really work for me, something about that lip or lid that sticks out a couple of feet, I don't know that it works with the overall massing of the building. It's like an oversized coping that doesn't fit. It has some really good elements, I like the integration of the steel but it needs more detail to stand out. Right now it's just a very basic building without a lot of ins and outs, which it doesn't necessarily need if you have those other details that add a stronger design.
- I echo everything you said. Those horizontal bands every third floor look like the world's largest brick ledges. The other design was so much more elegant and sensitively detailed. But this is Informational. This is the beginning and we have a lot of confidence in the team.
- A big difference on this overall is the windows changed proportion. They went from narrow and taller to shallower and wider for a very different feel all around on this. One of the previous strengths was the parking looked like parking, and this looks like you're trying to hide the parking. Something was lost in there, it was ok to have a parking garage look like it and the hotel look like a hotel. The windows on the portion that is setback versus the part closer to the street, you have wider metal panels to the side and I understand we're getting into a subjective area but it's starting to look like fake shutters a little bit, it appears like it lost a bit of its urban appeal and verticality of the language you had. Not saying that's wrong but maybe worth revisit.
- I appreciate the team's look at some of the historical references while trying to be somewhat modern. Would like them to take a greater look at the exterior lighting. The daytime version has the top metal band lit and it looks like its creating hot spots on the eyebrow piece. I am anxious to see what that approach will be. A little concerned about the parking levels and how they're actually going to read in real life versus a rendering. I understand the proportions are the same as the hotel area, but if you're putting a translucent glass in there, whether it's daytime or nighttime it will always look different than the vision glass. I wonder if that's the right approach or if it should be something completely different. I don't mind the cream city brick but I'll be curious to see what you come back with.
- Speaking to what Rafeeq was saying, I had a similar reaction about the history of this site. I'm struggling with, but we also don't want to penalize this team either for some of the great things they have brought before us. All of my comments are hopefully taken with well intentions and encouragement. Stronger reaction about the bonus stories to try to guide how I'd like to approach this. I reread the ordinances related to mid-block pedestrian access and took those as more encouraging of pedestrian use of that mid-block connection. I'm not seeing something here in this master plan, as a pedestrian I can go

through there, but its pretty car oriented without a lot of greenspace or human scale experience through that block. I appreciated the comment about the American Family Spark building with artwork and things that suggest that this is a place where people can be, a little more inviting. For my support on the bonus stories I'd want to see more there for pedestrians. I'm struggling with the notion, while I commend about rehabilitating some of the buildings, I'm struggle with granting bonus stories with an intention or promise to do that. It could strengthen the application to understand what that rehabilitation plan is at a minimum, and learn more details about how those existing buildings are being rehabilitated to line up with the master plan and this development.

- I wanted to express appreciation for activation of the corridor and streetscape, some of those pedestrian amenities go a long way for its impact on the urban design of this space. The street level porch is a nice and necessary feature for elevating that first floor, the amenities and plantings that go along that edge as well. There's some generous roof terrace space on this at a nice scale where it really activates the street level where you can still perceive it and see some of the activity going on up above. Those are exciting features for the E Washington corridor to have more projects with that type of amenity. As with the last proposal, the wild card for me is the parking structure layer, the glazing, the materiality, headlights, shadows, all that conversation is coming back to me now from the last proposal. There's some architectural things I agree with, some maybe I don't agree with, I don't mind the top cap as much, that's just me, I don't mind the cream city brick either but I also think there are some detailing things, like the louver on the windows that are interesting comments. In that parking ramp layer, those three floors, I think it might be interesting to explore it having its separate identity related to the rest, but by no means do we want to see this as a traditional parking structure that you identify as an open parking structure. It has to definitely be more than that, and I'm sure you'll explore materiality to disguise and integrate that into the building, but don't misread our comments that it should look like the old parking lots we're used to seeing.
- Strong foundation, there are some really good positive things to say about this project, we're just spoiled from the nice things we've seen in the past and have our expectations up.
- I'd like to give a shout out to the owner and architect. That entire block and buildings that have been going up are sharp, it's looking good and a great addition to the city. Thank you for your work throughout this huge area.