



Agenda Item #: 6

Project Title: 139 W Wilson Street - New Multi-Family Residential Building in UMX Zoning. (District 4)

Legistar File ID #: 88479

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Davy Mayer, Nicholas Hellrood, Anina Mbilinyi, David McLean

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of October 22, 2025, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** a new multi-family residential building located at 139 W Wilson Street. Registered and speaking in support were Doug Pahl, and Randy Alexander. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Kevin Yeska, and Phil Hees. Registered and speaking in opposition was Jonathan Cooper.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The commission inquired about the anticipated deliveries. The applicant noted that that is a moving target, which is tied to budget and consumer needs. The applicant noted that with this being an affordable development, they expect residents to have less disposable income for deliveries. Staggered leases and move-ins/outs will cut down on vehicles.

The Commission noted the design is progressing, with a clear base, middle and top in terms of material transitions. Is there a way the top can change planes, even slightly, to become a more dynamic composition? The applicant replied that because the textured panels are 3-4 inches deeper than the smooth panels there will be a slight difference in the plane of the top material. The Commission talked about making that plane deeper; the applicant noted they would have to talk to their structural engineer about shifting the column line. The already small units would become smaller, it would be a hardship on the project.

The Commission asked about the wood tone material, which stops before the base; the residents will experience this area so the wood material should go all the way down.

The Commission commented that the pavement mural feels pasted on, though they appreciate the inclusion of a mural. It feels like a missed opportunity to connect that with the landscape materials. The applicant replied they would be open to looking at alternatives. This is just one concept they felt differentiated from the building's design, and indicated that something more than vehicular drop-off is going on here. The Secretary noted that the design is up to property owner, the Commission should look at the materials for consistency with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

The Commission inquired about where the Capitol View Preservation Limit is relative to the elevator overrun and parapet. The applicant clarified that the penthouse is approximately 7-feet beyond the limit.

The Commission inquired about parking permits in this area. The Secretary noted that new developments are not eligible for parking permits. The Commission asked the developer to make it abundantly clear to residents that parking permits are not available here.

The Commission talked about more articulation or depth of plane on the backside of the building, pushing upper volumes back for more definition, and the possibility of bringing more depth to the bottom.

The Commission discussed the three-story entry element versus the four-story, with opinions varying on which one felt more appropriate in terms of scale and proportions.

Commissioner Asad noted this has been a challenging project from the onset. The use of materials were initially a concern, that's been somewhat figured out or revised to make more sense. The parking concerns are difficult, understanding downtown living and density. This site is not figured out the best way it can be. The void entry should be three stories, the exact datum of the adjacent building; it's more comfortable at the human scale, the proportions as it relates to the width of the building work a lot better. The change in plan should be whatever maximum inset that could be achieved, understanding the structural implications.

Commissioner Mayer commented on the entry feature being bold, but will likely be a maintenance headache. While 320 units with no parking is a bold, risky move, it is interesting, but there remain concerns about delivery vehicles. Door Dash drivers will park wherever it is easiest, you have to make something that is natural. Don't know this has enough space to accommodate all of those. Otherwise this is a great attempt to see if you can accommodate carless people in our city.

Commissioner Mbilinyi commented the project is stunning, a piece of art to Madison. The changes are great, with a stunning entry, sustainability aspects, promoting carless residences.

The Commission talked about the challenge of sympathizing with the neighbors who live in this space, thinking about parking and drop-offs and demand. But even if the density were reduced by removing 2-3 floors, it's still about 250+ units. It's still a lot of demand, changing the design isn't going to conquer that issue. You have done a great job at responding to the Commission's previous comments, making a strong case for the entry driveway, though we don't know how that overlays with code compliance. The woonerf type space can be successful, beautiful, colorful and fun. Like how you pulled the imagery from the tree canopy around into the corridor, how you responded to our comments about channeling the site view through the pedestrian corridor rather than covering it up with plantings. The landscape plan at the front entry is called out as primarily 'annuals by owner,' that is not the best approach or well-defined for us to see. The rest of the plan is good, but we would prefer to see a more intentional planting design at the front entry.

The Commission talked about the northwest side of the building and lack of datum lines. The courthouse has strong architectural elements. There could be some articulation to differentiate between the texture and non-texture materials.

The Commission inquired about the elevator penthouse and the Capitol View Preservation Limit and noted that the design of the overrun needs to meet the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines and be better integrated with the building design.

Consideration should be given to integrating artwork at the top of the building in the same line as the base.

Action

On a motion by Mayer, seconded by Mbilinyi, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE**, with the following findings and conditions:

- The entry portal be revised to be four-stories to maintain proportions and datums with the adjacent development.

- The faux wood material shall be incorporated into the design of the ground floor entry on the back (east) side of the building, similar to the front elevation.
- The elevator penthouse design shall be refined to be more integrated into the design of the building, including with the building wall below.
- If feasible, a larger change in plane shall be incorporated into the building design at the upper two floors to provide more articulation at the top of the building.
- The landscape plan shall be refined to reflect a wider variety of native perennial plantings and not an exclusive use of annuals along the front elevation.
- Recommend that the Plan Commission take a close look at the parking and site circulation.
- Further review and approval can be completed administratively.

The motion was passed on a vote of (4-1-1-1) with Mayer, Mbilinyi, McLean, and Hellrood voting yes; Asad voting no, Klehr excused, and Bernau non-voting.