



**Agenda Item #:** 6

**Project Title:** 131 W Wilson Street - New Mixed-Use Building in UMX Zoning. 4th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 73562

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Russell Knudson, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper and Amanda Arnold

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

## Summary

At its meeting of December 14, 2022, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION to the Plan Commission to approve** a new mixed-use building located at 131 W Wilson Street. Registered and speaking in support were Jake Bunz, Garret Q. Perry and Kirk Keller, all representing T. Wall Enterprises. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Johnathan Lilley, representing Vierbicher.

The intent is to not create a wall along John Nolen Drive with purposeful stepping and activation at the base with landscaping. It is a largely glass and metal structure to create something that is not datable. There is seven feet of grade change at the first floor level. Development is proposed in the public right-of-way; there is opportunity with the proposed cycle track proposed on W Wilson Street to bring the street alive with furniture and plantings. There is a desire to bring the two-story lobby space as a key part of the street view, to peel back materials and see the architectural metal panels. The coffee shop is accessible from the inside lobby and as well as from the outside. There is a nod to activation in the façade by the operable windows and vertical fin elements. Because of the bird strike requirements the railings will be a wire to avoid multiple layers of bird dots. The amenities park is meant as four-season activation on the corner of John Nolen Drive. The landscape plan views this as a double-sided building. City Engineering is starting to put plans in place for the cycle track; they wish to landscape the entire terrace with exception of the loading zone. They have added larger plantings at grade with grasses, native flowering plants, and creating verticality with columnar trees. They are showing decorative paving in the loading zone area with natural seating elements of stone. Planters are proposed along W Wilson Street as well as at the parking entry. Rather than line this area with trees, they treated it with vertical wall elements, vegetation and a series of vertical evergreens and flowering plants to create a sculpted effect. More landscaping has been added on the roof terrace to define gathering spaces and the pool deck. The green roof will have year-round character and not be accessible to the tenants, and solar panels are proposed. The developer is requesting the roof stair to come up to the height of the elevator overruns at about seven feet in the center of the building.

The Commission discussed the following:

- What is the material of the underside of the protruding balconies?
  - The top two levels keep the wood look, at the street level the wood is kept and it's concrete in between.
- I'm wondering if that's going to be noticeable, if it makes sense.
- Early in your presentation you mentioned a timelessness, it's a nice looking, elegant glass structure, I like how you've defined the top. The one thing that throws me is where you have it stepped back as nicely framed glass, the nice vertical line, the random protruding mullions are going to look dated. Could you do the same clean line as on the corner to mirror that nice, elegant spine rather than these random mullions? It would add to the elegance of what you've already accomplished here.

- I'm questioning that vertical dark metal panel element between the coffee shop the "The Moment" going all the way through the building, what that purpose is and I would argue it looks out of place.
  - It's purposely there for breaking up the mass of the glass wall along that façade and to bring it down to the street as a continuous form.
- It's distracting, you have more organic moves going with the vertical white fins, the mullions and the glazing. That strikes me as a rather wide and overpowering vertical element not only in color but width and location, maybe that could be revisited. It also seems thick compared to the thickness of the roof overhang at the top.
- That tower closest to the lake seems really open, light and airy, but in the middle it seems darker. What is happening there?
  - It is a darker tone of glass.
- To break it up?
  - Exactly right.
- I would debate with you on that, maybe revisit. There's a lightness to the rest of the building and it appears a little out of place.
- The 'M' logo doesn't seem strong enough to include and seems pretty light.
- Are we seeing any mechanical louvers at all?
  - The bottom two floors and top two floors have internal furnaces, residential scale condensers on the roof that aren't seen. The screening for the mechanicals will be worked into the darker metal panel for the intermediate floors.
- There's no big cooling tower on the top of the building?
  - Correct.
- Each unit essentially has its own means to move energy in and out, so there's some louvering happening that I missed. This being such an important addition to a highly trafficked place in our City, we did get some public comment about neighborhood engagement. Can you speak to and clarify how that's been going?
  - The major concern we've heard is the cycle track, and could there be any component for moderate level income in the project. There was good feedback on the general massing.
  - We met with neighborhood four or five times, a lot of the comments have been on the design on Wilson Street and the future cycle track, how the building will interact with the future street design. The neighborhood is excited about the design, they are looking for a few things (energy efficiency, solar panels). We will keep them informed as the project moves forward.
- All of the glass we see, is it transparent or are there any cavity wall conditions?
  - That vertical line is a combination of spandrel and vision for the mechanicals. Aside from that it's all vision glass, it's meant to be the glass building on the lake.
- You've achieved a nice, sharp, contemporary building. I would encourage the team to consider a best of both worlds approach: some consideration of opaque glass elements to still provide that appearance but gives you some performance considerations. There's clearly an intent here being expressed, a general solar system on the roof, with the southern facing transparent vision glass performance issues could be considered. It wouldn't interrupt the nighttime experience of this building.
- Zooming into the south elevation I see what I think might be louvers in the buff metal panel. Or is it different metal panel texturing?
  - I'll have to get back to you on that. We're trying to avoid any oil canning, we've gone with a heavy gauge in set sizes. We'll develop the details and submit those.
- You had one listed as ACM but the other three were not given a gauge. We'd want to see the heaviness of that gauge to avoid oil canning.
  - 22 gauge, the panels range from 7-12 inches in thickness and a maximum length of 8-9 feet.
- I like that you've addressed some of our previous plinth comments, how you've integrated the vine supports and some of the taller narrow plant material and selection to help anchor the building. It would be nice to see what the species selection would be, but in general you're on the right track.
- I would love to see the green roof be the six-inch system instead of the four-inch system. It will have much less dependence on irrigation, you could potentially get a handful of native perennials in that system that would give

you a little more in terms of diversity, ecological benefits and pollinator benefits. I would like you to consider that.

- Along Wilson Street is looks like an attractive streetscape but a lot of dependence on what's happening in the City right-of-way, to have a lot of those elements in the right-of-way doesn't always happen. Is there a maintenance agreement?
  - The City has not signed off on that yet.
  - There has to be a full maintenance package and we have to agree to remove it if the City requests that.
- It sounds like that will get ironed out and we could see more detail soon.
  - Our hope is that this is overflow from the terrace. As you get to the west there aren't very many buildings that create pedestrian space. This creates that opportunity, with the retail space and future cycle track, we want that interior/exterior flow. This is totally driven by the design the City had for the cycle track.
- I like the covered overhangs and voids along that first floor with activation inside of them. If the streetscape stuff went away I would almost want to see something layered into that plinth, but I like how it's activated.
- There was a reference in the staff memo about the first floor not being at the minimum height required by Zoning, and a member of the public wrote about the height of the garage door into underground parking and whether it will actually accommodate trucks. Seems like those two issues are related.
  - The main entrance garage door is sized at over nine feet tall to accommodate a U-Haul for one-bedroom apartments, pull right in and not be in the roadway. There is a separate garage door for trash containers to be wheeled out to trucks while vehicles can still use the entrance. We're in the fifty foot range setback where twenty is required.
  - We're controlled by the maximum height we can make the two-story space inside, we're working with the seven-foot drop and the previous comments about the wall being in front of the coffee shop, and an ADA access point. All those pieces had to fit together pretty tightly. The minimum height I believe is met.
- We're not seeing anything so far in terms of a landscape point requirement worksheet, which I think we'll want to see eventually. On a project like this there are limited places for plants; the staff notes indicate the front sidewalk areas might not count. It looks like you're committed to using lots of containers, an abundant properly planted amount of them can be a real asset. On the pool deck area you'd be better off with bigger containers with seasonal plants. What you have indicated on there right now seems undeveloped.
- As far as the foundation plantings, I'm glad to see what you're considering along there. There needs to be some rethinking about the plant selection, the Cortaderia is not remotely hardy and won't survive here in this climate. I like the supports with flowering climbing vines, but Trumpet vine is not your best choice; other flowering vines might work better. You have listed straight species rather than selective cultivars, I sense a lack of effort on that so far and hope to see more developed better plant selections the next time we see this. Aesthetically for the main part of the building I like the changes from the first iteration. The underside of the balconies that have the fake wood look a lot better than the cast concrete, I would encourage that to be on all the balconies.
- (Secretary) The zoning issue is one of story heights; it's a misnomer in Zoning Code that is frequently missed because it's buried in the supplemental general regulations. Overall the average height above grade (above the sidewalk for the first floor) cannot be higher than eighteen inches above the sidewalk, which is causing the problem along W Wilson Street. Zoning will be publishing formal comments but overall that first floor will have to come down a little bit to meet that code requirement, which will also probably change your first floor height, which is 11 feet at the coffee shop and 12 is the minimum.
- They've got some things to work on, we can't give them any relief on the Zoning Code.
- If you do have some agreement with the City, I would suggest you flip the proportions of hardscape and planter area, it won't be an attractive place to hang out that close to the road, I'd encourage you to flip that ratio and make more greenspace.
  - That's a restricted loading zone area so we can't put any plantings in that area.
- Even outside of the loading zone on either side of the apron, grass would be better than hardscape.

- Anybody who has driven up W Johnson Street in front of Domain, after a year of people walking their dogs that grass is completely dead. Certain things won't grow with a concentration of dogs that has to be considered, certainly just regular sod isn't going to make it.
- I don't think we can give it Initial Approval because of the first floor height issue.
- In this case since this is an advisory it could be phrased that we recommend the Plan Commission approve the project, the Plan Commission will deal with the height and Capital Preservation View and zoning. You could say we recommend approval with the following items coming back to us regarding the façade, balconies, materials, etc.

## Action

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Bernau, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION to the Plan Commission to approve** the project, with the expectation that the design will come back to UDC for Final Approval with the following conditions being met:

- Material of the underside of the balcony shall be consistent throughout, with faux wood material versus concrete.
- Remove random mullions on the east and west elevations and incorporate a thin metal vertical line mid building to create the vertical articulation that extends to the end of the penthouse floor deck on both sides of the furthest in balcony.
- Revisit the metal panel inset on W Wilson, it could be reduced in size to match thickness of roof overhang.
- Revisit the use of darker tone glass on east elevation.
- The M logo seems light compared to other elements on the east façade, consideration should be given to proportions and scale of that element.
- The applicant shall provide additional details related to the louvers and how they are integrated into the overall building design and materials.
- Provide additional information related to vine selection.
- Consider using more of the 6" system rather than 4" system on the green roof, and include native perennials into the sedum mat.
- The applicant shall provide a landscape worksheet.
- The Cortaderia grass needs to be replaced with a species that is heartier in this climate zone.
- Use an alternate climbing vine species.
- Take another look at the plant selection related to cultivars and straight species.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).