



Agenda Item #: 8

Project Title: 2007 Roth Street Lot 2 - Alder Referral, Multi-Family Residential Building. 12th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: [73565](#)

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Shane Bernau, Juliana Bennett and Amanda Arnold

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of November 30, 2022, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION to the Plan Commission to approve** the multi-family residential building located at 2007 Roth Street. Registered and speaking in support were Michael Siniscalchi, representing JSD Professional Services; Marc Ott, and Kevin McDonnell, both representing Lincoln Avenue Capital; and Jamie Cali, representing JLA Architects. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Melissa Huggins, Kyle Brassler and Matt Haase, representing Lincoln Avenue Capital. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak were Rebecca Leidner, Kay Hagerty and Kristin Chambers. Registered in opposition and available to answer questions was Joan Bell-Kaul.

Huggins stated it needs to be taken into consideration that the ability to do affordable housing on this site is tied to this proposal and will never happen here if this project is not approved; she asked the Commission to sit with that, and to understand the zoning and the building's response to the zoning, which was selected by City staff. The setbacks, stepbacks and what goes on at the street is based on the existing zoning. This development will provide much needed affordable housing, utilizes transit-designed development principles and encourages aesthetically pleasing streetscape design. Walk-out units are suburban, not urban, but have been included where possible. An urban building has one entrance where everybody goes in. This also preserves open space through hard work with the neighbors and Alder. It is frustrating to go after a project that is so significant and have that significance understood. Please take the bigger picture into consideration.

The updated landscape plan shows connection to the public sidewalk and the addition of sidewalks to the larger three and four bedroom units. Coolidge Street shows a mirror of the senior living building with native plantings along the sidewalk, ornamental trees for pedestrian scale, the addition of a plaza area with benches overlooking the conservancy, as well as the addition of sidewalks and ornamental trees to the larger units on the south side.

Ott remarked that the team tried to keep the presentation short. The previous senior living project had 250 affordable units and will not be built if this proposal does not get approved. This configuration achieves 102 family units that will not be built otherwise. It is a very unique building shape for programmatic purposes; a seashell shaped building only gets half the number of units. The neighborhood was highly involved in the design of this building to put less frontage along the street. Updates to the project include a new custom blue color of siding for more playfulness and a water play area in one of the courtyards. The parking deck is taller to achieve as much open space as possible at grade with trees. An art installation mural is proposed on this parking garage wall.

The Commission discussed the following:

- We (Council) approved this zoning?

- The zoning is in place as TR-U2.
- To the developer, you mentioned you had several neighborhood meetings, for how long have you been having these meetings?
 - At least six months.
 - Well more than that.
 - I appreciate all the comments about serving the many masters and sensitivity to where we're at in the project. We had a much longer presentation prepared but we were told to truncate it. We started this process at the end of 2021. Once we were able to preserve HUD that kicks off a timeline where we have two years to execute on this, time is running short, I'm surprised because we received favorable comments with a few exceptions that we tried hard to address. Losing the qualified census tract would eliminate any affordable housing like this getting done. There are no other developments in the entire state with the quality and amenities that this development is providing. We were told the street patterns were set in stone. We started to meet with the neighborhood, the neighbors did not like the street pattern, we worked for months and months and months to rework the street pattern and gave us a lot less flexibility on our design. If we had a diminimus change from the unit count our preservation of the qualified census tract would be eliminated. I hope everyone here is hearing the full story, we provided very thoughtful changes. I'd like clear direction on what we're looking for, I still don't know given the restraints, I'm not hearing any changes that we can feasibly make. We're very open to constructive criticism.
 - The point is we've been working on this for a very long time with the neighborhood, with staff, the Alder. We have been responding to the neighbors and what they'd like to see, as a team we've done our job. You can see the street activation that was put in place based on this Commission's feedback. The pattern of materials, we were not successful in that on the senior building to your liking. If you could give us some very specific suggestions to how this would look better from a materiality standpoint that would be helpful.
- This is the 9% competitive tax credit?
 - No this is 4%.
- To quantify the amount of money that is put into this and how much it would cost to go back to the drawing board, how much money have you put into creating this 100% affordable housing development?
 - A lot of money. Way more time and money on this development than 20 other developments I worked on in the past.
- It's a few hundred thousand dollars, right?
 - Yes.
- Tax credits aside, all that money ends up getting offset to residents if you were to go back to the drawing board?
 - There's not even a feasible design. Right now we are in the most challenging development situation I've ever seen, we've got rising inflation, interest rates and construction costs.
- We are a little outside of our UDC purview as far as how much money you put into the design. To get this back on track, I want to be clear. I think that Planning and Zoning, this is the result of the density we're looking for, the height and the number of parking stalls. There's nothing we can do about that. I see parking at the roof level, is there a way to instead have something less of a heat island, it's going to be seen, there's not much of any screening to hide the cars from the street level. Are you going to see cars and headlights, overhead lighting at the top of that too? I'm not seeing a lot of definition of what someone from the street will see.
 - You might see light poles, there's a parapet which would block the headlights. You won't see the cars from the street, it's intentionally located on the back non-street side.
- My preference would be some sort of cap, you have an opportunity for a green roof, to minimize the spillage of light and seeing cars up there. I see a lot of hardscape in the areas between the buildings. It's not going to be populated for much of the year, you'd do the tenants a greater service to have more greenspace for children to play than hardscape or formal areas. That's more family friendly.
- Same comments about tightening up some of the building materials. I do appreciate the color.

- Together with both the last project and this one, I perceive that institutional feel. You have this very predictable rhythm of 6-stories, same widths and voids just repeating itself, and it's very clearly all developed as one thing with no up and down. It has some character, this one excites me more, there's life happening visible along the street, funkiness with the color, it seems like a place that is going to be successful and active. That was not true on the previous project but I like what I'm seeing here on this one more. An identity and character and uniqueness that the previous one didn't have.
- I would concur, I also perceived this building as different than the other.
- I like this building and appreciate the bold use of blue. I'm not averse to having more color, not necessarily another color, maybe subtle accents of that same color nearby.
- What is the nature of the proposed pool?
 - It's a traditional 10 x 20, four-foot deep designed for families.
 - We studied the pool areas, unfortunately there is way too much shading on the other side where we originally considered it.
- Unlike the pools downtown I'm generally in favor of a pool in this type of development. Kids like the splash pads more than the pool, something to think about. It's a problem to keep them adequately staffed with lifeguards.
- The activation is definitely happening more on this site. I also wondered about the parking ramp open air roof, I see that as somewhat problematic. The lights you have to have on them is not a great look, it is what it is. This building is successful, I did not find the other one unsuccessful but this one works a little better. I appreciate your comments on what goes into it, those concerns are not lost on us. We all take those financial considerations into account but we're trying to stay in our lane.
- I think I mentioned this in the last review, have any garden areas been accommodated?
 - We do have garden plots on the senior site.
- Is there a way to accommodate that on the family site? St. John's had some raised beds between the front walk and building, I see some potential for raised beds on the west side, in front of each tower. If you can fit it in it would be a nice accommodation.
 - I would prefer not to put those in the front of the building, more tucked back in the other more relaxing courtyard, more usable and private area.
- Accessibility will be important, and be sure they are appropriately sunlit.
- I will contradict and say we have a lot of other places in the city for kids to learn how to swim, that whole area is a little bit wasted. It's an expensive place to maintain, there are other amenities that could be more family friendly.
 - Affordable areas to learn how to swim are not easy to come by or get to.
- This is a postage stamp size though.
 - You can fit a lot more than you think.
- I also just realized, you're going to have people getting up on that parking roof, there is no choice but to put a much taller wall at least on the side adjacent to the building roof. That's going to need care to not look like a seven-story building.
- The staff report describes the view comprising of end walls, courtyard spaces and the voids. Staff requests recommendation on the overall orientation and street activation on street facing facades, human scale design elements, and a finding with regard to the height in excess of what's allowed to the underlying zoning related to an elevator lobby considered a floor.

A motion was made by Bennett to recommend approval.

The motion should make some findings based on the design considerations noted in the staff report and going forward to the Plan Commission.

The motion was seconded by Harper.

- The project meets the design goals of street activation, UDC is acceptable of the building massing and the height involving the elevator towers, and request consideration of areas for community gardening.
- Adequacy of residential detailing, breaking down the mass of singular materials. Basically if it's not stated, staff assumes these findings are made?
- Yes. Multiple comments were made with regard to open space programming, application of exterior building materials, rhythm, looking at articulation and massing with regard to the south courtyard.
- Some of the things that distinguish the design of this one from the other one.
- I don't see much variance between the two buildings. That one should have been approved and this one should be approved. I understand where the developers are coming from. It's very problematic how we prioritize things. We have in front of us a 100% affordable development, to turn that down and say start over is problematic; people who live here won't care where the color is on the building, they'll be happy to have a place to live. I hope this body will consider that for us to turn it down after months of meeting everyone else's concerns is kind of sad.
- We are a body that has a relatively narrow focus. We're here to basically look at urban design elements, and we bring our recommendations after they're voted on to the Plan Commission and Common Council for them to consider. You as an Alder will be one of the people to make that final decision on these projects. We have to give it our best shot as a Commission and let the higher bodies ultimately make a decision based on our opinions and recommendations.
- I can see where Ald. Bennett is frustrated, we try to do our best for the City at large, as well as the neighborhood. We need to acknowledge respectfully the time they put into that.
- Friendly amendment that the developer minimizes the appearance and effect of the rooftop parking to the greatest extent possible. Cut off lights with cut off shades, minimize any protrusions vertically, minimize any unsightly infrastructure needed for the parking deck.

Action

On a motion by Bennett, seconded by Harper, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory **RECOMMENDATION to the Plan Commission to approve** the multi-family development, including the following:

- The UDC finds that the project meets the design goals of street activation and the general building mass is acceptable, and overall building height related to the elevator towers.
- The UDC requests consideration of including community garden planting beds in areas that are accessible and well lit.
- The developer minimizes the appearance and effect of the rooftop parking to the greatest extent possible, including utilizing cutoff lights with shades, minimize protrusions and unsightly infrastructure for the parking deck.

The motion passed on a unanimous vote of (5-0) with Goodhart non-voting.