



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 702 - 734 E Washington Avenue
Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 8
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [79239](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Joseph Lee, JLA Architects + Planners | Chris Houden, Willow Partners, LLC | DCH Properties, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a new 15-story, podium-style, mixed-use, multi-family/commercial development at the corner of E Washington Avenue and North Blount Street. The project will be comprised of approximately 233 residential units and roughly 13,000 square-feet of ground-floor commercial space. The development proposal includes structured parking, community meeting room, and various resident amenities.

Project Background:

- At their August 16, 2023, meeting, the UDC received an Informational Presentation.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 8 ("UDD 8"), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section [33.24\(15\)](#).

As noted in UDD 8, the maximum number of stories currently permitted on the subject site (Block 2b) is eight stories, with the potential for up to six bonus stories for a total of 14 stories. As outlined in MGO 33.24(15)(e)(12), *Upper Level Development Standards*, developments 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.

Staff believes that the building appears as 14 stories when viewed from East Washington Avenue. However, due to the number of structured parking levels, the structure is considered 15-stories from a Zoning standpoint. Staff notes that UDD 8 and the Zoning Code already have different standards related to height. However, to provide clarity in the interpreting of the UDD ordinance, a [UDD 8 text amendment](#) is concurrently being reviewed that clarifies how story-height of a building is determined based on the external design or "read" of a building. Common Council adoption of the text amendment is required. UDC should make specific findings related to height.

Adopted Plans: The project is located in the [East Washington BUILD Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan \(2008\)](#) planning area. The Corridor Plan notes that the key implementation mechanism for the recommendations incorporated therein was the formation of UDD 8. Key design considerations outlined in the Corridor Plan include protecting capital views, creating a grand gateway and sense of place, increasing density and employment base within the corridor, ensure compatibility between corridor and surrounding neighborhood, protect and enhance pedestrian environment, safety, and access, etc.

The project site is also located in the [Tenney-Lapham-Old Market Neighborhood Plan \(2008\)](#) planning area. Considering the geographic overlap, prior to plan adoption, height maps in the document were approved to make the development recommendations in this document consistent with the more detailed formed based standards in the aforementioned East Washington BUILD Capital Gateway Corridor Plan.

Finally, staff notes that [Comprehensive Plan \(2018\)](#) recommends Regional Mixed-Use development for the subject site, which is the most intensive mixed-use district outside of Downtown. It includes buildings ranging in height from two to 12 stories and with densities governed by building height.

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.** The proposed building is 159 feet in height, and 14 or 15 stories, depending on how stories are counted. UDD 8 currently has a maximum of height of 171 feet/14 stories is permitted (assuming average floor-to-floor heights 15-foot first floor, 12-foot upper floors). As discussed above, a separate text amendment is concurrently being considered to amend Ch. 33.24(15)(e)(12) that clarifies how story-height of a building is determined based on the external design or “read” of a building.

Bonus stories may be allowed in Block 2b, 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, and the provision of community rooms, affordable housing, and vegetative roof cover. Please refer to MGO Section 33.24(15)(e)(12)(c) for additional information.

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, minimum 50% vegetative roof cover, LEED Silver equivalent, and the provision of affordable housing.

- **Building Height, Stepback, and Setback.** Within UDD 8, there are also street level façade height, stepback, and setback requirements for each block. As noted in the UDD 8 Height, Location, and Stepback table, the street level façade height within Block 2b is 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 three-story mass at the street, and a 15-foot stepback above the third 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 more than 15 feet, ranging between 16 and 17 feet in some places. UDC has the ability to approve a greater setback “to allow for the articulation of long building facades or for the development of additional usable public open spaces, such as pedestrian plazas, as long as design elements are included to maintain a uniform character in the District.” Otherwise, 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 setback and setback requirements.

- **Blount Street - Street Level Activation.** One of staff's longstanding concerns is the activation of Blount Street. Staff notes that refinements have been made to the corner volume at the E Washington Avenue/Blount Street corner, which is now a taller more transparent volume that wraps around to the Blount Street frontage, as well as the activation and design of the Blount Street elevation, especially the area devoted to screening parking. As part of the refinements that have been made, an art installation is proposed for much of the street level façade along Blount Street.

Staff requests the commission's feedback and findings on the street level activation along Blount Street, giving consideration to the integration of the proposed art installation into the overall building design, as well as the resulting material design and details in the event the art installation does not come to fruition.

Staff notes that UDD 8 guidelines and requirements generally speak to providing an enhanced pedestrian character at the ground floor, clearly defining common building entryways, minimizing blank and/sheer walls, utilizing four-sided architecture both in design and detail, as well as articulation on visible elevations, etc.

- **Building Articulation and Composition.** Consideration should also be given to the UDD 8, *Building Massing and Articulation* requirements and guidelines, which generally speak to creating four-sided architecture, providing consistent details on all elevations, creating visual distinction between building components (top, middle, and base), incorporating distinctive architectural features at corners, framing intersections, etc.

As proposed, the building is a podium-style building with three floors of parking. While commercial and non-residential uses screen the structured parking on the East Washington-facing elevation, the same does not appear to be true for the side (east) and rear (alley/north) elevations. Consideration should be given to the design and articulation of the building base and minimizing blank walls, as well as providing effective screening and architectural detailing to help disguise and screen parking and utility uses on those elevations.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and findings related to the overall building articulation and composition, especially as it relates to the composition and architectural details on the base of the building on the east, west (Blount Street) and south (alley) elevations.

- **Building Materials.** As noted in the UDD 8 Building Materials requirements and guidelines, exterior materials shall be durable and high-quality, complementary to the style and surrounding context; brick, stone and terra cotta are preferred. As proposed, the material palette is primarily comprised of masonry, metal panels, and glass. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and findings on the proposed material palette.
- **Lighting.** UDD 8 includes guidelines and requirements related to Site Lighting and Furnishing, 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. As shown on the lighting plan, light levels at the fourth floor patio show hotspots in excess of 22 footcandles and average light levels in excess of 7 footcandles. In addition, of particular concern in this area is the proposed string lighting (Tivoli fixture), which does not appear to meet cutoff requirements. Staff notes in addition to providing the run lengths of the fixture to confirm light levels, a shield and a frosted bulb will need to be incorporated into the fixture to meet code requirements. In addition, additional

information is need with regard to the mounting details of Fixture OG1 (WAC fixture), which is a landscape accent lighting intended to be pointed upwards.

Regarding 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 vehicle use areas (1.5 maximum average) and uniformity ratios in excess of 5:1. The applicant is advised that revisions will be required.

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

- **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. In addition consideration should be given to incorporating appropriate landscape treatments to effectively provide screening and softening blank walls, including those along the base of the building on the east, west (Blount Street) and south (alley) elevations.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and comments from the August 16, 2023, Informational Presentation comments are provided below.

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

- Anytime staff wants to jump in with regard to the bonus stories, a little more explanation would be nice.
- (Secretary) Right now it's 8 plus 2 in UDD 8. To go up to 14 we would need to amend the code. We have been working with the application team, the Alder and City Attorney's Office to work on that language. Knowing we are talking about bonus stories, the framework is the existing language there outlined in the code, which provides a nice checklist as a jumping off point for those discussions. I don't know we have seen a complete formal list on the applicant's plan for meeting bonus story requirements.

(Audio recording issues)

- Can you talk about the elements for the bonus stories?
 - There are two sets of guidelines, a one and done, and a combination of, we are going above and beyond. With that we are committing to LEED silver equivalent, structured parking that includes public usage during the day, the 10% of three-bedrooms or more, and the biggest one is a commitment in perpetuity to a public community room. We're looking for a collaboration with the neighborhood and City officials, a working space for residents of the district to use by reservation.
- Before we go any further we need to invite the other registered speakers. Next up is Robert Klebba, wishing to speak in opposition. He's not here? Okay.
- Nice renderings at the informational stage, gives us a lot to react to, thank you for that. I'll start by asking about materials and what you're thinking. I'm curious about the tower and what some of the opaque material elements are.
 - It used to be Kayser Ford in the late 50s, we tried to tie in that masonry look and I'm proud of it.
 - The plinth is more traditional materials, a granite base, a brownish brick that played off the limestone color, above the storefront are horizontal lines corrugated metal, then masonry picks up, and a cornice in a contemporary way to pay homage to the past use. The tower has glass corners, inset balconies as part of the architecture, and silvery metallic metal. We're accentuating the top by recessing the balconies, you can see a lid an overhang at the very top of the building, in a composite metal panel. Very simple material palette and simple hues.
- The base is so nice with the brick, I think the public experience has a warmness to it. The tower strikes me as odd for a residential building in terms of how much glazing you are proposing. It seems very cold to me. We saw a very similar building with a lot of glass but that was right next to Lake Monona and the views probably drove that design. This building is looking at the Blount Street plant. I don't see the reason for that much glass and strikes me as quite odd, more of a reaction than a question.
- Do the people in you market studies want floor to ceiling glass in their bedrooms?
 - Yes, it is dynamic marketability. The point is that we want to do something that is the best building in the City. The elements that I believe have been incorporated are marketable and timeless. I want my kids to look at it and be really proud of it. In multiple decades it's still going to look nice.
- I just wonder when it's 20 below with nothing but glass there, and you need a place to put your dresser.
 - Most of that floor to ceiling space would be living space. Natural light is very marketable.
- Could you elaborate on strategies you're thinking of for LEED silver? And could you speak to the affordability factor, the time frame, where are those units, etc.

- LEED silver would include EV charging stations, low flow fixtures, LED lighting, that all falls into that point system. As we move forward and implement that we'll show how that meets certification.
- As far as affordability, we're in the conceptual design stage now. As we move forward into design, considerable resources will be spent and we will understand where we are on that. While we can't commit to affordable housing right now, we do believe that the public space we're offering in perpetuity is a dramatic element to this property. With that said, we still have a goal right now of getting five units in there. I can't commit to anything at this moment.
- Are you actually applying for LEED silver or just using a checklist?
 - It's an equivalency. Under the UDD guidelines there's a point system. While we might not maintain LEED certification, it will be the equivalency.
- I just wanted to know if you're going to be accredited but you're saying no, equivalency. We'll need more details on that glass and where that will be located. The inside corners of the courtyard, how are those being designed so there is still privacy in those units? And window coverings, will they all be uniform? I'm shocked you'd get LEED silver with all that glass.
 - We're still in the design phase, but we're looking at a green barrier, the same sense as a unit entry door.
- I'm talking more about the inside 90 degree in the courtyard. I would want to understand more about how you're planning for that. And also window coverings, they play a huge factor in the appearance of buildings and how a façade can look. I'm shocked you're going to get LEED silver with all that glass, that's a huge lift for your mechanical system.
 - The strategy on these inside units is to wrap the unit around that inside corner so you don't have direct views from one until to the other.
- I would like to see that inside corner in renderings.
 - Is there a specific window covering you would like to see? In most bedrooms we like to use a fairly strong curtain. If there's any suggestions tonight, we fully anticipate implementing.
- One of the newer buildings has white roller shades that are in all manner of positioning. If you have a blackout shade you are not seeing anything. Curious what you are thinking.
 - In the bedrooms we look for a blackout option, but a perforated option in the living area.
- I've noticed with the other residential buildings along here, they typically have another row of trees along here. It would be nice to continue that pattern of development along E Washington Avenue.
 - In lieu of planters, add more trees?
- Yes, the same pattern as other blocks.
- I'm curious about what the Commission feels about the bonus stories, and the neighborhood contribution to this discussion about what they would like to see. I'm struggling because the ordinance allows 8 plus two bonus stories. What could you all imagine getting from the taller amount when the reason for the 8 plus two I would argue is adjacency to residential on Mifflin and Dayton? There's a lot of shadow at just 8 plus two. I've been asking the development team, affordable housing is on that list, I've been urging them to do affordable housing. What I am asking is what elements of the UDD 8 bonus stories should we urge them to consider, and looking at some of the other elements as being more flexible. What would that more look like to people? And maybe the applicant can speak to that as well, what they see as various trade-offs of where they're at. The chart is really clear that affordability is a really key thing, not only this neighborhood but the entire city.
 - The gray area is the by right shadow, the teal outline is what we're requesting. Obviously 9:00 a.m. is the most dramatic effect. You can see the change going north.
 - Secondly, the responses were indicative of a greater narrative. In lieu of the public community space, we absolutely would be able to commit to some form of affordable housing. There's a delta in being able to rent out that additional commercial space, with that we can integrate more declaration in the financial feasibility. It will take time to underwrite, but if that's something we want to explore and UDC would deem fit to achieve that criteria, that is something I can quantify.

- That would come back as a separate consideration to alter the height map on E Washington Avenue.
- (Secretary) We would be writing the double-double bonus, a different list of things you would need to meet for that double-double bonus. Marsha's question is valid, thinking about what is in that list, other things the Commission would prioritize and want to see, or not? It looks like the neighborhood has prioritized some things too.
- The entire City would applaud more affordable housing, not just this neighborhood. I applaud the inclusion of three-bedroom units for families, a lot of units have gone up with a maximum of two-bedrooms. I hope you can take it further with the affordability. It would probably make the conversation about higher floors easier. The building next door has more floors. The building next door is that the same height and the same number of stories.
- (Secretary) It has less stories, but it is at the same height as the proposed. It's just playing with your floor plates.
- The exterior elevations of the towers, the white horizontal lines along the corners, with floor to ceiling glazing is particularly handsome and eye catching. Then it turns the corner and goes a little flat, it seems like there's a lot going on in the courtyard, but there's something elegant about those white framed corners, maybe something to continue forward particularly where voids and solids come through in the balconies, but you still see the white band come through; that's very successful.
- How is a 12-story building the same height as a 14-story building? If the 8 plus two is in place, presumably the Constellation and Galaxie got bonus stories too?
- (Secretary) Yes, they all had different parameters added to their development proposals to get to the bonus stories.
- How do we jump from 12 to 14 and what is the point of having height limits if we just blow past them? Not saying that there is anything wrong with that, but these buildings have generally worked and been an asset to this part of Madison but it begs the question.
- There have been map amendments before, I think it's a consideration of the overall height of the building and understanding how the floors really stack, the floor to floor heights. It's intended to be taller buildings toward the Capitol and gradually going down further east.