

# Change PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

Not



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 423-427 W Mifflin Street

**Application Type:** Alder Referral for an Advisory Recommendation to the Plan Commission for a New Multi-Family Residential Building  
**UDC is an Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [85372](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Lorrie Heinemann, Madison Development Corp.

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a four-story, 40-unit multi-family residential building with below grade and surface parking.

### Project Schedule:

- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal at their November 18, 2024, meeting (Legistar File IDs [85410](#), and [85411](#).)
- The Common Council will review the proposed Certified Survey Map at their meeting of November 26, 2024, meeting (Legistar File ID [85625](#)).

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **advisory body** on this request. This application is before the UDC at the request of Alder Verveer, who is specifically requesting the UDC's feedback on the overall design, composition, and consistency with the recommendations in the Mifflandia Plan.

Section 33.24(4)(a) MGO states that the Urban Design Commission ("UDC") shall make recommendations to the City Plan Commission, Common Council and any other concerned commission on all matters referred or assigned to it under the provision of this ordinance and other City ordinances. Additionally, for a conditional use, Section 28.183 5(a)6 states that the applicant may choose to go to the UDC for an advisory recommendation if advised by the Plan Commission Secretary or District Alder.

As a reference, the Plan Commission will consider the following Conditional Use Standard (MGO 28.183(6)a.8) when evaluating this request:

*"When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that **the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district.** In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation." (Emphasis Added)*

The UDC has been requested to make an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission because of an alder referral. The Commission's action should be structured as a singular action of the body. The UDC should not refer this item back to itself and should not structure their recommendation using a two-part Initial/Final Approval framework.

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located in the [Downtown Plan](#) (2012) planning area, in the Mifflin neighborhood areas. The Downtown Plan includes various recommendations for each neighborhood area, including those that generally and in summary speak to encouraging flexible building designs to foster a mix of uses, including residential and neighborhood serving commercial uses, establishing minimum and maximum building heights, encouraging shared access to limit vehicular/pedestrian conflicts, as well as preparing a detailed concept plan and design standards to guide redevelopment. It is these recommendations that were the impetus for the Mifflandia Plan, which outlines more specific design-related recommendations for new development in this area.

The Downtown Height Map recommends building heights of six stories along Mifflin Street. The proposed development **appears to be consistent** with the height limitations.

The project site is also located in the [Mifflandia Plan](#) (2019) planning area. Like the Downtown Plan, the Mifflandia Plan recommends the project site for residential or mixed-use development with maximum height of four stories with an allowance for two additional stories provided that development meets the required stepback above the fourth floor (15 feet from W Mifflin Street). While only a four-story building, a building stepback has been incorporated into the building design at the fourth floor. The proposed development **appears to be consistent** the stepback recommendations.

The Mifflandia plan also notes that building setbacks shall closely align with the existing and historic setbacks for the neighborhood (15 feet on W Mifflin Street) with the encroachments of stoops, porches, etc. being encouraged. The proposed development **appears to be consistent** with the setback recommendations.

In addition to recommendations noted above regarding setbacks, stepbacks and height, the Mifflandia Plan also enumerates specific urban design and other recommendations, which are intended to help guide new development in the neighborhood and which were intended to serve as the foundation for the creation of a new Urban Design District. While a new design district has not been formally created, the recommendations contained in the Mifflandia Plan still apply, including those that speak to:

- Building Materials, including prohibiting EIFS, stucco,
- Building Design, including, incorporating relief where materials transition, utilizing complementary simple materials palette, locating active unit entries at the street, designing main building entries to prominent features,
- Building Mass and Scale, including using modulation and articulation to break down mass and scale, as well as
- Guidelines for the transition between public and private spaces, etc.
- Consider the establishment of an alley or “inter-block lane” in the subject block that would parallel W Washington Avenue, running generally through the rear lot lines in this block.

For additional information please refer to pages 15-20 of the Mifflandia Plan.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards and guidelines noted in the Mifflandia Plan and Conditional Use approval standards as it relates to the design considerations noted below.

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this item back to itself and should not structure their recommendation using a two-part Initial/Final Approval framework.

- **Building Materials.** As noted in the Mifflandia Plan recommendations, exterior building materials shall reflect those as allowed by the Zoning Code, though the plan recommends further restrictions on the use of EIFS and stucco. Primary building materials are recommended to be limited to three different materials. As proposed, the building material palette is primarily comprised of composite panels and masonry. Staff requests the Commission's feedback findings on the overall building material palette.
- **Wall Packs/HVAC Louvers.** While wall pack units or louvers are not indicated on the elevation drawings, they are commonly associated with residential uses. While it has been the current practice to locate wall packs so that louvers are not on street-facing or highly visible facades, they have been approved in some cases when found to be well integrated into the façade's design, including the use of perforated metal panels to screen louvers or utilizing a louver system that is consistent with the window opening size. Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings on the use of wall pack systems and potential design-related considerations.
- **Landscape and Wall/Guardrail Details.** The project site presents a unique redevelopment opportunity given its timing with other development proposals adjacent to the project site and location along the neighborhood's W Mifflin Street corridor. As such, consideration should be given to the design of the proposed landscape plan and plant list not only in terms of enhancing the pedestrian environment, but also in terms of creating a transition between public and private spaces. Special consideration should be given to locations where this development interfaces with the adjacent development on the side and rear yards, including the through block connection on the adjacent parcel, as well as the rear yard, as well as the front yard.

In addition, as noted on the plans, there is a retaining wall and guardrail that allows for garage access in the rear yard. Details related to both items were not provided in the submittal materials.

Staff requests the UDC's feedback on potential design considerations related to the proposed landscape plan and plan schedule as it relates softening hardscape areas, incorporating elements to clearly define public/private space, complement architectural features, and providing year-round color, texture and screening where needed.

- **Lighting.** Staff notes, and the applicant is advised, that the lighting plan will need to be revised to include individual unit balcony light fixtures (if proposed), as well as architectural lighting, and the proposed lighting for the rooftop amenity space (if proposed). Further review and approval of lighting will be completed as part of the Site Plan Review process.