



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 131 W Wilson Street

Application Type: Modifications to a Previously Approved Mixed-Use Building in the UMX District to Add Architectural Accent Lighting
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [79549](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Kirk Keller, Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP | The Moment Residences, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing to add architectural accent lighting to the east and west facades of the building, as well as at the top, under the soffit of the roof cornice feature.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC granted Final Approval of the subject project on April 26, 2023. This approval did not include architectural lighting as noted in the Commission’s action. In addition, staff noted that the addition of architectural lighting would be considered a major alteration to the previous approval and would therefore also require Plan Commission review and approval (Legistar file [73562](#)).
- The Plan Commission conditionally approved the proposed building at their January 9, 2023, meeting. Architectural lighting was not included as part of this approval (Legistar file [74542](#)).

Approval Standards: Pursuant to MGO, Section [28.076\(4\)\(b\)](#): *“All new buildings and additions that are less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet and are not approved pursuant to (a) above, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.”*

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area. As such development on the project site is subject to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. Generally, the intent of guidelines is to create interest and a safe welcoming environment and recognize that the right amount of lighting and appropriate fixtures can reinforce architectural features, structural elements or windows, however excessive lighting or inappropriate fixtures can also detract from the desired ambience and create glare.

More specifically, with regard to lighting, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines state:

- Full cut-off fixtures should be used. Lighting should not spill into the sky, encroach on neighboring properties, nor cause excessive glare.
- The lighting on the top of a building should not compete with the view of the Capitol dome in views of the skyline.
- Exterior Lighting to accentuate building architecture and landscaping should not be excessive in either amount of intensity.
- Building-mounted fixtures should be compatible with the building facades.

Summary of Design Considerations

As noted in the application materials, the applicant is proposed two architectural accent light fixtures; one to be mounted to the underside of the soffit of the 15th floor (Fixture L-3), and one running the vertical length of the building on both the lake and Wilson Street facades (Fixture L-4).

For the Commission's consideration, staff has identified the following design considerations with regard to each fixture in addition to those noted above in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines:

- **Rooftop Accent Lighting - Fixture L-3.** Staff notes that aforementioned lighting guidelines specifically note that "lighting on the top of a building should not compete with the view of the Capitol dome in views of the skyline." Those guidelines also recommend that "full cut-off fixtures should be used. Lighting should not spill into the sky, encroach on neighboring properties, nor cause excessive glare." In addition to requesting that UDC give careful consideration to these guidelines, staff notes that as designed, Fixture L-3 **is not** code compliant because it is not a full cut-off fixture. Staff believes that it could be made to comply with code by using a different mounting hook; a U-shaped hook versus the proposed J-shaped hook would result in cutoff compliance. The intent of utilizing a U-shaped hook would be to cut off the direct visibility to the light strip itself; only the light from the fixture would be visible, not the fixture or band across the top of the building. Staff requests UDC provide feedback on the following considerations:
 - Light levels at the top of the building, including trespass as it relates to adjacent buildings and units. Consideration should also be given to the collection of fixtures at the roof, including individual unit fixtures on private decks/patios,
 - Limiting glare, brightness and reflectivity given the amount of glazing, not only as it relates to the adjacent properties, but also on the waterfront,
 - Consideration of visual competition with the Capitol,
 - General visibility of the fixture and appearance of a strip, ring, or band across the top of the building, and
 - Impacts to the adjacent residential units.
- **Vertical Accent Lighting – Fixture L-4.** In consultation with Building Inspection staff, Fixture L-4 is not believed to be code compliant as it **does not** meet applicable cut-off requirements. This fixture, while it diffuses the light with a frosted cover, it does not fully cut-off or shield that light source, which is directed outwards versus directed back towards the building. Staff **does not** believe that this fixture can be made to be code compliant.

As noted in the aforementioned lighting guidelines "*exterior lighting to accentuate building architecture and landscaping should not be excessive in either amount of intensity*" and that "*building-mounted fixtures should be compatible with the building facades.*" Staff has concerns regarding the architectural integration of and general impacts (glare, brightness, etc.) resulting from this fixture. As designed, this fixture is a cabinet that spans the vertical length of the building and that has a frosted, white cover. Staff's concerns are that the design of the fixture result in an element that is visually dominant, both as a non-illuminated and illuminated fixture, along the building's prominent lake frontage. Overall, staff believes an approach that more subtly highlights the existing architecture versus creating new illuminated features would be more consistent with the intent of the guidelines, especially those that speak to architectural integration and accentuating architectural features.

Staff requests that the UDC review the architectural accent lighting for consistency with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, as well as the design considerations noted above. If the Commission can find that the proposed

accent lighting is consistent with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines staff recommends that the Commission include specific findings as to how the proposed accent lighting meets the guidelines.