



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 555 West Mifflin Street
Application Type: Informational Presentation - New Development in UMX Zoning
Legistar File ID # [66561](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, Acting UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Bali Kura & Gursharan Singh | Jeremy Cynkar, Destree Design Architects

Project Description: The applicant is providing an informational presentation regarding the development of a three-story, six-unit apartment building at the corner of West Mifflin and North Bedford Streets. This proposed redevelopment only includes the subject property which measures under 2,200 sf and does not include any lot combinations.

Project Schedule:

- The applicant anticipates filing a formal land use application in the near future.

Approval Standards:

If formally submitted, the Urban Design Commission would be an **approving** body on this request. Section 28.076(b) includes the related design review requirements which state that new buildings that are less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet and are not otherwise approved shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#).

Related Zoning Information:

The property is zoned UMX (Urban Mixed-Use District). The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a permitted use under the Zoning Code. The Zoning Code a maximum height of six (6) stories. As a reference, the aforementioned Zoning Design Standards are included as an attachment to this report.

Adopted Plan Recommendations:

The [Comprehensive Plan](#) recommends Downtown Mixed-Use for the subject property. The [Downtown Plan](#) more specifically identifies the subject site as an underutilized site/obsolete building also recommended the creation of a more detailed plan for the Mifflin Street Area. The [Mifflandia Neighborhood Plan](#) was adopted in 2019 and includes more specific recommendations for the subject property. Among the points discussed below, that plan recommends:

- Mifflin and Bedford streets have setbacks of 15 and 10 feet, respectively.
- Residential buildings have front porches/entry stoops for at least half of the ground floor street frontage.
- Balconies should be well-integrated into the façade and substantially engaged with the façade for at least half of its depth or stacked so as to be read as an architectural bay.

Finally, staff notes that the Mifflin Plan recommends the establishment of a formal urban design district to cover the Mifflandia area in order to codify the guidelines and address regulatory conflicts with the Zoning Code. However, such a district has not been created and so the recommendations remain as guidelines.

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

As an informational presentation, staff requests that the Urban Design Commission provide comments related to the aforementioned standards.

Design Considerations

- **Front Setbacks.** Staff requests that the UDC includes comments regarding the Mifflin and Bedford Street setbacks. The development is proposed with a five-foot setback along Mifflin Street and an estimated four-foot setback on Bedford Street. Pending confirmation from the Zoning Administrator, these appear to comply with Zoning requirements. Staff notes that while a five-foot setback is proposed, up to a 10-foot setback could be allowed on Mifflin Street, provided that it is considered the front yard. There is no maximum side-yard setback.

In regards to the more general Downtown Design Guidelines, the Site Design and Building Placement section state that “The street level of the building should be designed with active uses and architecture that engages the street/sidewalk in a contextually appropriate manner... and that buildings at the intersection of streets should have a strong corner presence.”

Staff acknowledge that there was a considerable amount of discussion regarding the creation of detailed setback recommendations in the Mifflandia Plan. However staff also notes that the Zoning Code currently allows and (in the case of front yards) requires less setback than recommended in the advisory Mifflandia Plan at this specific UMX-zoned location. (Other nearby properties are zoned differently and thus have different standards.) While some greater setbacks could be consistent with the underlying zoning at this site, the UDC does not have the ability to waive zoning standards as part of this review. Finally, the project architect has indicated to staff that greater setbacks would impact the feasibility of the project.

- **Balconies and Porches.** Staff also recommends that the UDC comments on the design of the balconies and porches. There are general standards in the adopted guidelines and staff notes that the Mifflandia Plan encourages larger porches at the ground level and balconies to be well-integrated into the façade.
- **Façade Composition.** Staff recommends that the UDC comments on a variety of façade composition elements. Generally, staff notes that the code-referenced design guidelines note that the lower levels of street facing facades should generally incorporate a higher level of visual interest and richer architectural detailing. More specifically, staff also notes the following:
 - In regards to HVAC louvers, the past practice of the UDC is to encourage these on non-street facing walls or if that is not possible, having them well-integrated into the design of the façade.
 - Staff notes that the Zoning Code requires a maximum ground floor height of 18 feet, with upper levels having a maximum height of 14 feet. It appears that there may be compliance issues that may need to be addressed with Zoning staff prior to formal submittal.
 - In regards to materials, staff notes that the building is primarily clad with a brick base with fiber cement panels above. That appears to be generally consistent with the detailed zoning material standards. However, there are code limitations stating that this material is not allowed on the ground story except in limited instances. In addition to feedback from UDC, compliance issues should be addressed with Zoning staff prior to a formal submittal.

**ATTACHMENT:
28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
 - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
 - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
 - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
 - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

Table 28E-1: Building Materials in Downtown and Urban Districts.

Building Materials	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	Standards (see footnotes)
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Concrete Panels (Tilt-up or Precast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	C
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			D
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			D
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Transparent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than thirty-three percent (33%) of any building.

B - Wood and fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story except between the sidewalk and the bottom of storefront windows or as an accent material.

C - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.

D - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used on building facades facing State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

E - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal

F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.

(g) Equipment and Service Area Screening.

1. Outdoor loading areas or mechanical equipment are not permitted in the front yard. When visible from an abutting public street or walkway, they shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall, or screen of plant material.
2. No doors or openings providing access to parking or loading facilities shall about the Capitol Square, State Street or King Street.
3. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the principal structure.

(h) Screening of Rooftop Equipment.

1. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
2. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials. (Am. by ORD-15-00104, 10-15-15)