

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

July 17, 2024



Agenda Item #: 3

Project Title: 3535 & 3553 University Avenue - New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 6. (District 5)

Legistar File ID #: 83067

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Shane Bernau, Marsha Rummel, Christian Harper, Wendy von Below, and Rafeeq Asad*

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

*Asad was recused on this item

Summary

At its meeting of July 17, 2024, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a mixed-use building located at 3535-3553 University Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Randy Christianson, Bruce Bosben, Patrick Terry, and Peter Harmatuck. Registered neither in support nor opposition and wishing to speak was Susan Berg. Registered neither in support nor opposition and available to answer questions was Andrew Geffert.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission noted that there appears to be missing information related to the landscape plants noted on the plant schedule, specifically the low grow sumac compared to what is shown on the landscape plan – there seems to be missing information.

The Commission inquired about the details of the dog run area, including fencing, retaining wall, etc. The applicant added clarification with regard to fencing, retaining walls, etc. noting that the dog run area will be grass.

The Commission expressed disappointment in the removal of two street trees. The Secretary explained they had met on-site with the development team and City Forestry; two are being removed due to current conditions and their proximity to the new building. Those conditions are reflected in Forestry staff's report and will be conditions of approval and which are not part of the UDC's purview. He expressed dismay that the project is causing the removal of two street trees, and yet the UDC does not have any say over them as part of urban design.

Overall, the Commission commented that the updated design is a big improvement, the window to wall ratios are greatly improved, the removal of stoops on University Avenue is much better from a livability standpoint, the composition without the balconies extending out is also a big improvement; this looks more like a place somebody would want to live in. It was noted that the linear, dynamic and new building base might be better served with a cut and dress stone versus rustic and old fashioned; something that might be more smooth and polished may be better suited for the urban environment.

The applicant noted that the rustic, stone was chosen to be heavier in appearance given the similarity in color to the masonry. The size and shape help to solidify the base of the building.

The Commission generally felt that the exterior elevations are better, vastly improved.

With regard to landscape, the Commission noted that the landscape on the south side of the building needs better design – it needs to frame elements and the building, including ornamental trees, shrubs, other things that anchor the end of the corridor, define the space and provide shade. It needs to be more than a seed mix. There would be benefit in providing taller plant material. Plantings should be within undyed hardwood bark mulch. Foundation plantings shall be refined to reflect a more (sedge and aster) substantial and vertical, multi-season interest.

The fence along Bruce Court was discussed. It was suggested that it be set back to the north, with plantings in the foreground along the cul-de-sac versus having all the landscaping behind the fence. The Secretary noted there is a drop in grade from Bruce Court, upwards of 4-5 feet. More plantings could be added on the neighbor's side. It was noted that this is at the back of the building, not visible from University Avenue or the cul-de-sac; it is important but not prominent from the public realm.

With regard to building design and composition, the main building entry is more prominent, the design details along the ground floor have been improved upon and there is more separation from the street through the building modulation, the balconies, the windows size and proportions, minimizing the garage entry and simplifying materials and design.

The Commission noted that the pergola at the top of the building seems out of place.

Action

On a motion by von Below, seconded by Rummel, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion passed with the following conditions and finding:

- The landscape plan, including the fencing and retaining wall shall continue to be reviewed and approved administratively. The landscape plan shall be updated to address the Commission's comments, including those that spoke to accurately showing the proposed plantings, reflecting the use of hardwood bark mulch, as well as adding plantings that are more substantial and vertical and that provide multi-seasonal interest, especially along the south side of the building. Consideration could be given to shifting the fence to the north to provide plantings on the neighborhood side of the fence.
- The stone base course material shall be changed to be less rustic, more smooth stone material, which can be reviewed administratively.
- The UDC finds that the building is generally consistent with the UDD 6 guidelines and requirements, including those that speak to compatibility with surroundings and the basic materials being harmonious with surroundings, with the exception of the rustic stone.

The motion was passed on a vote of (4-1-1) with von Below, Harper, Bernau, and Rummel voting yes; Asad recused; and Goodhart non-voting.