



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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TO: Plan Commission

FROM: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Principal Planner; Bill Fruhling, AICP, Principal Planner; and Chris Wells, Planner

DATE: October 16, 2017

SUBJECT: 222 N. Charter Street – Informational Presentation

The applicant is before the Plan Commission for an Informational Presentation. They are requesting feedback on the proposed development of a 12-story, mixed-use building with 43 dwelling units on a 0.13-acre site at 222 N. Charter Street.

At its meeting of August 16, 2017, the applicant team gave an Informational Presentation to the Urban Design Commission (UDC). Given Planning Division staff's concerns about some inconsistencies with the [Regent Street – South Campus Neighborhood Plan](#),* the UDC advised that the applicants should discuss the plan consistency issues with the Plan Commission before returning to the UDC.

The [Regent Street – South Campus Neighborhood Plan](#)* was adopted as a supplement to the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#) on July 1, 2008. The plan makes a series of recommendations for a variety of topics including land use, urban design, building heights, building setbacks, building stepbacks, streetscape enhancements, parking and traffic circulation among other topics.

The most recent proposal presented includes a twelve-story building with 43 units and 96 bedrooms (down 3 units and 4 bedrooms from the previous iteration). Considering a lot size of approximately 5,800 square feet, there is a calculated density of approximately 322 dwelling units per acre and 719 bedrooms per acre. The development team is currently pursuing a Planned Development as the existing TR-U2 (Traditional Residential – Residential 2) and other conventional districts are not allowing for the desired density.

Below is a summary of key plan recommendations that relate to their proposal:

Land Use and Housing

- The adopted Land Use and Housing goals and recommendations generally promote increasing the density of student housing north of Regent Street to take advantage of proximity to UW and to promote student housing closer to campus. No specific density limits are specified in this plan.
- Specific Land Use goals include *“Meet anticipated residential demand while being sensitive to current single-family neighborhoods in the surrounding area.”* Supporting this goal are recommendations to *“Increase density of student housing to the north of Regent Street in order to take advantage of the area’s convenient location relative to University Buildings;”* and *“Provide transition areas between the high-density, tall development north of Regent Street and predominantly single-family neighborhoods south of Regent Street.”*

* Click on the hyperlink for a copy of the neighborhood plan

- The subject site is within the identified UW Campus Boundary which is recommended to include a mix of residential, commercial and University support services in this area. Specifically, the subject property is recommended for Academic/Research uses and Planning Division staff believes that student housing is consistent with this mix. There is no requirement that such uses be owned or developed by the University.

Urban Design

- Height. The Plan recommends its tallest heights in this part of the planning area noting that the University currently occupies most of this area and that any future redevelopment or infill opportunities should be tall enough to blend with UW facilities. For the subject site, the plan recommends a maximum height of 12 stories and 172 feet* (*maximum building heights were determined based on a first floor height of 18 feet and upper floor heights of 14 feet). (The Plan includes language that both need to be met in order to be consistent.)
 - The proposed building appears to be 12 stories and 128 feet – 10 inches in height, thus conforming to the 172-foot maximum height recommendation. However, more detailed information will be needed to determine if any roof-top levels or amenities would constitute an additional floor.
- Setbacks and Stepbacks. Previously, the development team has raised questions on what setbacks and stepbacks apply. To be clear, the recommendation for Charter Street would apply for this site. Page 4-33 of the Plan states: *“The following pages contain design guidelines and cross sections of other streets within the planning area.”* It further states that they: *“...illustrate the recommendations applicable to the streets on which they are located.”* The cross sections are only shown for one location along the street to illustrate the desired character of the street frontage for its entire length, and the setbacks and stepbacks shown apply regardless of the location of the street or the maximum allowable height. This includes a 10-foot street setback with an additional 15-foot stepback above the third floor.
 - As proposed, while the ground floor is set back the recommended ten feet from N. Charter Street, the rest of the building along that frontage is setback only three feet for the majority of the building and 5 feet near the southern portion of that façade.
 - Regarding the 15-foot stepback above the third floor, the dimensioned elevation submitted to Planning Staff on October 9 shows only a 1-foot stepback.

Additionally, the subject site is adjacent to a planned expansion area for the Campus Drive Path. The plan notes that the setbacks and stepbacks for the southwest path should be followed. This includes a minimum 10-foot building setback recommended to allow room for site and landscape elements that will enhance the pedestrian and visual experience of the future path. The plan also recommends that parking facilities should be set back at least 10 feet from the path right of way. A ten-foot stepback is called for above the third floor with an additional 10-foot stepback above the eighth story.

- As proposed, while the majority of the ground level conforms to the minimum 10-foot building setback (showing a setback of 11 feet – 2 inches), the upper floors of the building overhang with only a 2-foot – 5-inch setback. Furthermore, the proposed design does not provide the 10-foot stepbacks recommended at the third and eighth stories along this façade.

- **Path Activation.** The plan also calls for locating path-activating spaces along the path frontage. For commercial mixed-use buildings it lists such uses as waiting rooms, frequently-used meeting rooms, cafeterias, break rooms, and similar spaces while for residential buildings, the list includes entries, vestibules, foyers, lobbies, frequently-used activity rooms, leasing offices, living rooms, home offices, live-work spaces and similar spaces. It specifically states that parking and service areas as well as storage spaces are not appropriate for activation and should instead be located to the rear of the site (and must be attractively screened from the path). However, the Plan does state that service and parking uses are permitted along path frontage if no other access is available.
 - As shown on the first floor plan, the proposal does not conform as the applicants are proposing to locate eight short-term bicycle stalls and 15 moped parking stalls in the 11-foot – 2-inch setback area they have created along the bike path on the ground floor.

Conclusion

The applicant is before the Plan Commission for an Informational Presentation. They are requesting feedback on the proposed development of a 12-story, mixed-use building with 43 dwelling units on a 0.13-acre site at 222 N. Charter Street.

The Planning Division believes that the proposed private student housing development is consistent with some, but not all aspects of the [Regent Street – South Campus Neighborhood Plan](#), as noted above. The key departures from the Plan include setback and stepback recommendations as well as the location of the parking on site. While the applicants have refined their concept to increase ground-level setbacks, the Planning Division still acknowledges some plan inconsistencies remain. As proposed, the Planning Division does not believe that the proposal can meet the Planned Development Standards that state, in part, *“The applicant shall demonstrate that no other base zoning district can be used to achieve a substantially similar pattern of development. Planned developments shall not be allowed simply for the purpose of increasing overall density or allowing development that otherwise could not be approved unless the development also meets one or more of the objectives of (1) above.”* One of those objectives that relates to this project states, *“Facilitation of high-quality development that is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.”*