



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 121 E Wilson Street
Application Type: Alteration to a Previously Approved Mixed-Use Building in UMX Zoning
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [71621](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Dan Kennelly, Quad Capital Partners | 121 E Wilson Investors, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing exterior alterations to an approved 14-story mixed-use residential and commercial building comprised of 337 residential units, roughly 19,445 square feet of commercial space, and 345 parking stalls. The proposed exterior alterations, as noted in the Letter of Intent, include:

- The base of the building has shifted to better align with the build-to line along Wilson Street,
- Changes to windows (size and mullions) and railings (cable with glass on upper floors only),
- Changes to the arrangement and extents of the concealed fastener metal panels on the Wilson Street and John Nolen Drive elevations and the pleat/fold accent of the panel (from inward to outward),
- Alignment of punched openings within masonry portions of the building,
- Increase the masonry detailing between the window jambs,
- Eliminate architectural lighting of the building façade and other updates to photometric plan,
- Modify inset balconies to be projecting within the interior courtyard space and remove the vertical element framing the inside facing balconies on the Wilson Street elevation, and
- Removal of the curbed planters and bike parking in the right-of-way.

Project History:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on June 1, 2022.
- The UDC reviewed the proposal at their September 21, 2022 meeting. The Commission granted Final Approval with conditions.
- The Plan Commission reviewed the proposal at their October 3, 2022 meeting. As part of Plan Commission's approval, a condition of approval was included that noted that the applicant shall continue to identify ways to lower and minimize the overall area and height of the projections into the Capital View limit so they are the minimum necessary to screen rooftop mechanical equipment.
- The UDC granted Initial Approval of the alterations on March 15, 2023.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **approving body** on this request. Section [28.074\(4\)\(c\)](#) states that: *"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. The applicant or the Alderperson of the District in which the use is located may appeal the decision of the Urban Design Commission to the Plan Commission."*

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](#). As noted in the Downtown Plan, the maximum recommended height is up to the Capital View Preservation Limit.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed façade alterations and make findings based on the aforementioned standards, consistency with the design intent of the original approval, and considerations related to the items that were the subject of the Commission's Initial Approval.

As noted in the Commission's Initial Approval discussion, the primary concern was the window wall system and the application of the metal panel system, especially as it related to the 'busyness' of the overall façade composition. The Commission noted that the focus of further refinements should be concentrated on refining the window mullions and the application of the metal panel system, and that the changes to the balcony configurations and details at building corners and in the courtyard, railing types, lighting*, and landscape were generally acceptable.

- **Summary of Changes.** To address the Commission's comments, the applicant has made the following changes to address the Commission's comments:
 - The folded panel pattern has been removed and replaced with a more uniform, flat panel,
 - The application of the panels has been reconfigured to reflect a more random pattern to maintain visual interest,
 - The panel height has been increased from one-story to two stories,
 - The inset channel has been removed from the mullions, and
 - A uniform mullion width has been incorporated.
- **Treatment of Balcony Undersides.** In further reviewing this request, staff recommends that the final approval include a condition that the new projecting balconies and the newly exposed corner balconies, which are a subject of the requested alterations, have a finish treatment. This is a condition that has been frequently raised related to projecting balconies and that staff believes is also important here, especially along the plaza and at building corners where the undersides of the exposed balconies are anticipated to be more visible.

Staff requests the UDC review and make findings related to the treatment of balconies and the proposed material changes as they relate to the overall building design and composition and articulation/modulation.

***Note:** Staff notes that while the updated photometric plan reflects an overall reduction in light levels on site, staff remains to have concerns regarding light levels, especially footcandle ratings on rooftop open space areas, which in some cases are in excess of 10.0 footcandles and uniformity ratios in excess of 5:1. The applicant is advised that an updated photometric plan, consistent with MGO 29.36, will be required to be submitted for review and approval prior to the issuance of any permits.

Summary of the UDC Discussion and Initial Approval

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the March 15, 2023, Initial Approval are provided below:

- We're all design related professionals in various capacities, and design is subjective. Our job is to give direction without designing the building for you. The previous designs were much more successful and I loved this project. Now we have cluttered facades where they were so dynamic before, the canted metals and the patterns with the gradation that was clear and now it looks like a bunch of lines on glazing that's a little more cluttered than designed. I understand why, but now I feel like this is just in response to comments you got, you tried to change something that worked really well and much more

successfully than we have now. You had a much more successful project before. I do like some of the updates to the interior courtyard, adding the brick was a little bit better. I like the promenade space now. The change to these major facades, adding the operable windows with a much stronger profile, it just clutters up what was a very nice, contemporary, different design that stood out from other buildings.

- We approved the previous images and this has come back at the request of the development team, not us. I agree with you, these new canted panels are not in keeping with the original concept of the building gradation, especially those pleated bent panels moving back into a recess versus these panels that are kind of sticking out randomly; it is not as successful as it was.
- Sorry to see you back for some of these things. Question on the under-balcony lighting; will the occupant have control of that light fixture, or is that fixture always on, or controlled by the landlord?
 - The intent is that it would be a typical balcony light where the occupant has switch control; they would turn it on and off when they do not need it.
- That might be a detriment as a design element that you're communicating here, but it is better to give the occupants control over that part of their environment.
- The operable windows, are they awning style, how do they move?
 - They would be awning style.
- I still like this project but I agree, if you put the two versions side-by-side, it's a slam dunk that visually I prefer the former proposal. I have spoken quite a few times about my lack of excitement of hanging balconies, I just think that if I lived here I would want that hanging balcony, but for everyone else looking at it I think it's a protrusion on an otherwise well-designed building. The ones in the courtyard bother me quite a bit, but the ones on the corners that broke up that otherwise really nice dynamic framing that accented the random pattern that has been diminished; it's going backwards as far as I'm concerned. It's disappointing because it looked better in its early version.
- Having to take away the lighting that was shown earlier, I think we all realized that it wasn't going to pass muster with the city and dark sky ordinances, which I fully support. Strangely, the under lighting of the balconies look better at night with the soft lighting underneath. It's still a cool project, looking forward to seeing it and the public spaces. Disappointed that it didn't stay closer to its previous version.
- Instead of these projecting panels, if they find a way to just do some articulation with some flat panels and clean it up, make the façade a little bit more taut and at least less random three-dimensionally; could be random in the elevation dimension.
- As a piece of urban design it is still a nice project. All of those elements are still there as you walk through the courtyard to the lake, there is still that public promenade. The important urban design elements are left intact.
- It is definitely a good urban design project. I remember the façade comments that weren't the most favorable, why are we looking at this again? Why did you change, what made you say we're just going to abandon the previous design to go to this? This was a lot of extra work, what triggered changing the façade, adding a lot more detail and reveals and vertical pieces? Why are we here?
- They indicated more visibility for occupants, but I have to think there are also some budget issues working having all that stuff projecting and recessing back in at strange angles and custom making panels like that and having your basic structure out and pushing your window jambs all the way back to begin with must have been a detailing and budgeting nightmare. But I will let the development team confirm.
 - Yes, what you have described is certainly correct. As we've continued to look at the design and building, the budget and making it work financially of course is necessary. In terms of the panel orientation, part of it was shifting those around to better align with demising walls and vertical chases for heat pumps, things like that. With the windows sort of mullion pattern change, we needed to adjust the operable window to be more ADA compliant and more durable option. Those were certainly some of the reasons. Again, the financial feasibility of the project, the

experience of the tenant in terms of maximizing window views, were some of the factors that went into these changes.

- That makes sense. Is there a way to accomplish what you tried to accomplish but with a lot less busyness? Maybe it's just one bigger angled panel rather than three. How do you simplify some of the design moves? There's an operable window and a gap that seems random, and there is this reveal, but you cannot tell if that is a space between two vertical mullions – this little gap – so you have the operable window then you have this gap with a little peg at the bottom? What is that? Is that just a design?
 - That slit is the reveal we added in an effort to create a randomness across the entire façade because the metal panels themselves were clustered. So that was a way of trying to get some randomness across the entire facade. The little 'peg' you're seeing was us exploring additional lighting strategies to light these tiny little reveals, but we opted not to move forward with that. It's just a left over light fixture that never got removed from the rendering.
- Since you are not lighting it, maybe get rid of that reveal and make something bigger, just have one singular vertical mullion. That just adds to the confusion. It's not bad project, but it's just not as good as it was. You don't have the bent panels but you have the angled panels. Maybe simplifying so it's two instead of three, it's just too much. Take one more pass at simplifying but keeping the current design elements that work within your budgetary constraints, just tone it down a little bit.
- Before it was pleasingly random, and now it's kind of chaotic.
- Those channels, all I see is bird nests. If you just made that a wider mullion that might get rid of some of that chaotic look. I don't mind the larger panels in how they look, but they don't have the rhythm the other panels had. If you could get that back a little bit, but maybe by closing those reveals off it might be accomplished.
- As much as I agree, I think the protruding balconies work on the corners, but on the inside of the courtyard and facing other buildings, people want views to the lake, but maybe in the courtyard they lose privacy. Is it possible to lose those in the courtyard? It's a great project and I really do still like it.
- What we've lost was the big move of those panels and that gradation that was on a much larger scale. Now it's so much more fine grained, it adds to that busyness. I would love to see a larger grain movement in that building façade rather than these small little pieces. Some units might have less glazing than others but I think that's totally worth it for the building design as a whole. I did prefer the glass railing on the lakeside. We talked quite a bit about the balconies before, the exposed open corners to the balconies on the Wilson Street elevation is moving in the opposite direction of where all of our comments were previously. There was a way that still had plenty of sight lines and plenty of views without having these wide open corners.
- There are a lot of subjective things here and I'd hate to have to see it again because I think it is pretty acceptable, I would make a motion for approval, but ask that the channels that you have shown on the elevations be either filled in or removed somehow so they become a wider panel, or whatever the design team chooses. I hate to dictate how much or how little some of these panels are added or removed, it is harder unless we see it again. That would be the only condition I would make, is for the channels.

A motion was made by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Arnold, to grant Final Approval. The motion provided for the channels shown on the elevations to be either filled in or removed somehow so they become a wider panel, or whatever the design team chooses.

Discussion on the motion was as follows:

- I agree, as much as I don't want this to come back to us again, it might be one that is worth it to see how some of these things shake out.

- If we're going to revisit channels we may as well revisit the façade in general. Making the panels bigger, or taking one away, or filling in a channel, those are all the same details on the same exterior. If they are going to take another stab at it and take a look at this holistically and not just fill in the channels.
- I agree some of the comments about bigger moves that articulate a design across the building as opposed to little accent details that really resonated with me. I would also be in favor of seeing this project again.
- My motion is not that all the reveals have to be filled in, but that they are somehow removed or filled in. The architects can use what we've said about combination or contrast between the past iteration and this one to give us essentially what we're asking for by not just filling in the reveals, but either filling them in or removing them. I wasn't dictating that they all get filled in.
- I think it's more than just filling in those reveals, it's stepping back and looking at the composition of all these canted panels, and maybe coming up with something that's a little cleaner and more in keeping with the original design intent.

The motion failed on a vote of (2-4-1) with Braun-Oddo and Arnold voting yes; Harper, Asad, Knudson and Bernau voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.

UDC Initial Approval Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Bernau, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** with the condition that the applicant relook at the window wall system and metal panel system design and detail.

Discussion on the motion was as follows:

- I don't think anyone had an issue with the project, the massing, or anything, I think we just want them to take one more look at the articulation and design of the facades.
- That also accepts the masonry, the balcony treatments and the lighting and other proposed design progressions, correct?
- Yes.
- (Secretary) To clarify, it would be good to give the applicant team a list or a few things that they should certainly be looking at. There were a lot of comments about the reveals, glass railings, balconies, metal panels. It would be good to provide some direction.
- This is an exciting project. I don't want to dictate specifics like recessed balconies or cable railings, that is part of the design and I don't want to dictate that. I do want to say the façade took a step backwards, but to look at that, and come up with some other things on their own without us saying the railing has to be glass, etc.
- Focus on the façade elements: metal panel and window mullion patterning, spacing and detailing.
- How about if we had them focus on the façade elements like the metal panel and the window mullion patterning, space and detailing.
- Right, in doing that, maybe they will say those frames need to come back so they wrap the balcony.
- We can say that the masonry, the general configuration of the balconies, the balcony railing treatments could be okay.
- If commissioners feel differently, they can come up with a list.
- My suggestion would be the window wall system and the metal panel system design and detail, and not to focus so much on the balcony reconfigurations, or the railing types, or any of the landscaping or anything else changed as a result of the design progression.

The motion was passed on a vote of (5-1-1) with Asad, Bernau, Harper, Knudson and Arnold voting yes; Braun-Oddo voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.

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.