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**Subject:** Agenda #12-15 Wilson + Blair Alder comments to PC 06.10.24

Greetings PC members-

RE Wilson + Blair demolition/rezoning/conditional use/CSM

I especially appreciate your service on a night with a packed PC agenda. Thank you! Regarding the redevelopment of Wilson + Blair, I am in support of the application by JCAP Real Estate to fill in the S Blair St parking lot with new residential uses and to demolish the parcels on E Wilson to build a hotel as well as the rezoning.

My first meeting with the developer and their team was last July, almost a year ago. Their three-building approach was clearly the solution to the previous snags to redevelop the site which is inside/outside two historic districts. This is at least the third plan I have seen over the last 20 years, the second as alder.

I held two neighborhood meetings, in August and December of last year. The developer/team listened to input from me and First Settlement neighbors regarding concerns with traffic circulation, the living street, providing a more interesting building for the hotel and preserving the two National Register District contributing structures on E Wilson, implementing appropriate setbacks and stepbacks from the Germania condos on S Franklin and the general massing for S Blair St.

While not everyone got exactly what they wanted, my sense is overall there was satisfaction with the project as it evolved.

The first unexpected bonus that was roundly applauded was the willingness of the applicant to use the provision of Section 28.071(2)(a)2 that allows buildings with a voluntary contractual Land Use Restriction Agreement ("LURA") with the City to provide income and rent-restricted dwelling units ("affordable units") to exceed the maximum number of stories, provided the building remains at or below the maximum height in feet. The applicant will provide 39 units of the 178 total for tenants earning up to 60 percent AMI.

While staff review of Blair St and S Franklin egresses supports the proposed 2-way and 1-way solutions, some neighbors remain concerned about traffic from the project using S Franklin. I request the Plan Commission consider adding a request for TE to work with the applicant to investigate making S Franklin a 2-way exit SB to E Wilson but keep NB traffic on S Franklin 1-way.

The second unexpected bonus was the developer's willingness to "recreate" the facades of 506 and 518 E Wilson which the Landmarks Commission found to have historic value as contributing to East Wilson National Register Historic District. This was of great interest to

many in this neighborhood. While the developer apparently is unable to save all the materials in the facade and it will be mostly new construction, I understand that they have dived into historic photos of the street in order to research how the buildings were constructed during the period of significance and intend to show realistic recreations of facades (versus how they look now or some modern interpretation). During the discussion, UDC members agreed that the iteration of the hotel with the historic facades was a more interesting building than the earlier version. I agree!

I support condition #1 in the staff report “Consistent with the Landmarks Commission’s finding of historic value as contributing structures in the East Wilson Street National Register Historic District, approval of the demolition permit is hereby conditioned on the deconstruction and preservation of the facades of 506 and 518 E Wilson Street for reuse as part of the E Wilson Street façade of the proposed hotel. [The reuse of the two historic facades is shown on the plans for the proposed hotel, and implementation of this condition will continue as part of the final approval of that conditional use.]”

But I understand that not all of the original materials will be preserved and reused but the intent is to recreate the historic facades based on findings of additional architectural details. That is generally how I understand the UDC conditions. The bottom line is I am supporting demolition of the buildings based on the promise of the developer to recreate the two contributing National Register District facades and not do a “modern version”. I don’t know if the language needs to be tweaked if that is not clear.

See the photo below for more details about the changes to the historic street since 1955. I had difficulty finding close up photos of 518 E Wilson.

I encouraged the developer to consider doing the living street between the hotel and the apartment building to provide pedestrian and vehicular access, bike parking, and an outdoor eating area for the Up North Bar. The idea is to make it a place. Access to the living street will be provided from both S Blair Street and S Franklin Street. There is a lot going on here and I assume the team will be able to address TE conditions #47-48 for commercial deliveries and valet parking to make the living street safe and functional.

Thank you -  
Marsha



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