



Agenda Item #: 4

Project Title: 501 E Washington Avenue - New Residential Building Located in Urban Design District (UDD) 4. (District 6)

Legistar File ID #: 87243

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Harry Graham, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad*, Anina Mbilinyi

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

*Asad was recused on this item

Summary

At its meeting of March 5, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new residential building in Urban Design District 4 located at 501 E Washington Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Nick Orthmann, Steven Rosandich, Adam Templer, and John Barac. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Marc Ott. Registered in support and not wishing to speak was Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission encouraged the applicant to keep working on improving the design. The corner is strong, but it is not a handsome building yet.

The Commission liked the use of planters as plinths to help transition from the large building mass to the sidewalk and streetscape. On Blair Street, there are some areas where the planters get a little small. They suggested looking at how the rhythm of the planters contributes to the aesthetically pleasing streetscape. They also suggested that any foundation landscape spaces be planted with a mix of perennials, shrubs, and ornamental trees rather than lawn, especially along Franklin.

The Commission asked if there were any zoning requirements to transition as you move down Franklin Street, pointing out that there is a historic single-family residential property next door. The applicant said there was not a zoning requirement aside from the setback, which was currently 10 feet. The applicant also noted that they are looking into continuing the direct-access units on Franklin to wrap the corner, which might help with the transition.

The Commission said the narrow courtyard will be an interesting challenge. They asked if it is intended as usable open space. The applicant said that aside from the patios for first-floor units at the courtyard level, this will not be an activated space and will be used for green roof and stormwater needs. The Commission suggested they create a vegetative courtyard space if they are using it for stormwater.

The Commission asked about the choice to use lap siding. The applicant said that a key piece of feedback they received was the need to pay attention to the adjacent First Settlement historic district and to look at the material palette and colors to try to blend in as seamlessly as they can. The houses along Franklin have lap siding, which was the main driver of that material choice.

The Commission pointed out that this is a large building with some significant streetscape frontages, and it is an important gateway into our city. The corner of the building on E Washington will be in the foreground as people move

toward the Capitol, so the applicant needs to make sure that base has interest without larger blank expanses. They liked the detailing on the two end bays, but the surfaces with lap siding were looking flat in comparison and could use more interest and complexity.

The Commission asked about the glass on the first floor and whether it was the parking level or if parking was below. The applicant said the parking is below, so the E Washington side looks into active use spaces on the first floor and the Blair side has transom height windows looking into the parking.

The Commission said that the massing makes it feel like a continuous, big building and it isn't broken down as much. The rhythm is nice vertically, so they suggested doing more with the massing because it is surrounded by lower buildings.

The Commission said that it was important to see the materiality and massing break down on Franklin, which is a smaller scale, more residential street that has a different character than E Washington or Blair. The architecture, materiality, and landscape need to address the character of that streetscape and public realm. Others thought that given where the building is in the city, the massing wasn't a huge problem. There was reference to the nearby Continental building, which steps down in the back and has significant landscape treatments and setbacks; it also takes on a different materiality and form to transition into the residential neighborhood.

The Commission said they would like to better understand the void space between the building on the corner of Blair and E Washington and this building, as well as the scale of the courtyard. They asked if this should have been two buildings instead of one.

The Commission discussed the important context of the adjacent First Settlement historic district, noting that those smaller buildings are likely to remain. It will impact their judgment on how this project and its sheer scale fit into the neighborhood, even if not part of the requirements.

The Commission returned to discussion on the purpose and intention of the narrow courtyard. The applicant said it would be a space for green roof and stormwater retention, provide additional façade to line that portion of the building with units, and let light into those units. An earlier design had this opening facing E Washington, and after conversations with the City's Preservation Planner, they decided it was better to flip the opening to where it is now to provide more relief to the First Settlement Historic District. They also stepped back a portion of the upper floors toward Blair Street and placed balconies inboard within the units in order to add more space between this building and the neighboring houses.

The Commission requested that future presentations include details on all sides of the building and interstitial spaces.

Action

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**, no formal action was taken by the Commission.