

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

August 14, 2024



Agenda Item #: 11

Project Title: 418-446 W Washington Avenue + 413-417 W Mifflin Street - Alder Referral for an Advisory Recommendation to the Plan Commission for a Multi-Family Building. (District 4)

Legistar File ID #: 84628

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Shane Bernau, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad, Russell Knudson, and Jessica Klehr

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of August 14, 2024, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new multi-family building located at 418-446 W Washington Avenue + 413-417 W Mifflin Street. Registered and speaking in support were Alison Mills, and Max Komnenich. Registered and speaking neither in support nor opposition were Peter Ostlind, and Linda Scott. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Johnathan Lilley, Angie Black, Eliot Gore, and Michael Hanley.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

Commissioner Asad discussed materiality, noting there is too much going on. While the massing and overall concept is nice, the wings and each different material are unnecessary. The art on soffits and under canopies gets very busy, very fast. It's still a big building no matter what you wrap it in, but it is going in a nice direction. The metal shingles shouldn't "wave" like they are shown, they should be a gauge of metal that does not look like oil canning. The materials need to be revisited.

The Secretary noted that the Mifflandia Plan recommends setbacks and side yards on W Washington and W Mifflin Streets, as well as side yards. The setback along W Mifflin Street and the setbacks along the side yards are not being addressed according to the Mifflandia Plan. The intent of the plan is to break down mass and scale, and have sensitivity to context. The Secretary acknowledged that while there is room for flexibility in how those are applied, that is the ultimate goal. The Alder's concerns are with conformance with the Mifflandia Plan.

The Commission discussed the driveway, noting a reduction of curb cuts from five to one on W Washington Avenue is good. The idea of moving the driveway to W Mifflin Street would not be fair to those who live on Mifflin to bear the brunt of all that traffic.

The Commission noted that the upper floors are all exactly the same – consider revising to be more integrated design-wise. In addition, the individual entryways – the entrance to any apartment looking like storefronts – they look commercial. The ground floor seems commercial looking.

The Commission commented that trying to break up lower levels to look like different buildings is the right direction, but it's undercut by having the 5th and 6th floors being exactly the same, making it look really obvious that floors 1-4 are a façade for essential sameness to what's behind it.

The Commission inquired about future development along W Washington Avenue and how this dog leg onto W Mifflin Street seems odd and might be regrettable in the future. The applicant noted the increased density of housing, and that similar scale projects are in the works nearby. When asked why this couldn't be two buildings, the applicant noted that access and service reasons. Separation means providing redundant services in both buildings which is a much larger challenge.

Appreciation was noted for taking the time to put the interest of art on the soffit.

Handsome building. Green roof area is a nice touch. Have both green and occupiable roofs, as balconies stepping out to the green roofs. Additional stormwater management will be provided along W Washington Avenue as well.

Commissioner Klehr appreciated the break down of massing, hoping finer details will be more developed. She remarked that new buildings on this street have a lovely human scale and detailing which results in a nice pedestrian experience. So far, this is a little cold and plain. Moments of detailing are just as important. This façade [W Washington Avenue] warrants a really deep look at interest and detailing. She encouraged the applicant to use blue wavy panels, while being careful it doesn't look like oil canning; the shadows that could cast, or snow being caught would add much interest. The three distinct buildings on W Washington with the back unified don't work, consider all blue, all white in back and all red brick on the right.

The development team was encouraged to think about how people will receive deliveries, drop-off, loading.

Commissioner Bernau appreciated protecting the W Washington street trees, as well as the subtraction of driveways on W Washington, and does not have an issue with one curb cut remaining. The building creates voids and recesses with courtyards and passageways that have light and shadow. However, he is not convinced that the Mifflin Street building being connected to the rest is a benefit to the community, the City, or either street. Understanding how it aids in the project proposal, in terms of benefitting the community 20-30 years from now, he is not convinced. The perspectives interior to the site are nice, however, some of that is missing along the W Washington streetscape and feels reverse to what we're used to seeing; the streetscape feels backyard-esque. It is not truly taking advantage of this iconic corridor leading up to the Capitol Square. There is opportunity to capture the idea of the porch that is being replaced.

The Commission inquired about Zoning requirements and how those are different from the Mifflandia Plan. The Secretary responded that by virtue of meeting Mifflandia you meet the zoning requirements, and that the portion of the building setback is measured from its closest element from the street, which would be the large columns that are set at 10-feet.

Commissioner Asad remarked that side setbacks are a structural nightmare and not always practical. He asked about the Commission approving something that does not necessarily meet all those expectations. The Secretary reminded the Commission of the Mifflandia Plan intent, which is clearly to break down mass and scale, and to be contextually sensitive, while reiterating there is flexibility in how those guidelines are applied. The Commission will need to make findings that the overall development is generally consistent with the Mifflandia Plan recommendations and intent.

The Commission inquired about the sustainability measures that will be incorporated into the development other than the green roofs. The applicant noted all electric appliances, energy star appliances, high efficiency windows, efficient mechanical system, the development does not have window wall packs, the development will use high efficiency heating/cooling.

The Mifflin Street elevation has too many materials; there is a lot going on for such a small area. W Washington rendering, the smaller two masses should be more similar. The connection piece in the background could be more of a pop of color versus fade away – none of this is going to fade away – it's a big building. The buildings fronts should be highlighted more with more landscape.

Further discussion by the Commission focused on how the proposal aligns with the Mifflandia Plan:

- The Commission noted that they will need to make findings on the appropriateness of building mass and scale. The Mifflandia Plan talks about an alley or inter-block lane. This goes against the idea of an open air space. We're going to have to think hard about making a recommendation that this project is consistent in its mass and scale with that plan. There is no rear setback because it's a thru-lot now. The applicant is going to have to look hard at how that appears from the breezeways and how high that connection is off the ground.
- The Commission expressed concerns with the massing diagram reflecting three different masses along W Washington Avenue. There should be a more cohesive design along W Washington. Concerns about CBA #4. Maybe two masses should be considered instead of three (AA and C or BB and C). As an example, the new 500 Block apartment is really well done, and also goes to comments about the special details. The walk-up elevations are problematic.
- The Commission noted that the setbacks are really not the issue, it's the character of the street, especially along W Mifflin. The pattern of development is with front porch encroachments. This is the opposite of that. This also reads as a commercial space versus a residential space. It gets back to the pattern of development. This is not working and is inconsistent with the pattern of development on Mifflin Street.
- The Commission generally noted that they are supportive of the curb cut on W Washington.

Overall, the commission acknowledged that there is a lot of potential on this project. Thank you for volunteering to come and listen to all these comments and questions. The biggest thing is mass and scale related to whether it is one building or a two-building solution. Conform architecturally to the Mifflandia Plan.

Action

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