



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

## Planning Division

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**TO:** Urban Design Commission

**FROM:** Chris Wells, Planner

**DATE:** November 22, 2017

**SUBJECT:** 222 N. Charter Street – Informational Presentation/Concept Presentation regarding a proposal to demolish the site’s existing building, rezone the property from the Traditional Residential – Urban 2 (TR-U2) District to the Planned Development (PD) District, and construct a 12-story student housing building with 43 dwelling units (96 bedrooms) on a property located at 222 N. Charter Street, 8th Ald. Dist.

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The applicant, Randy Bruce of Knothe & Bruce Architects, is before the Urban Design Commission for a Concept Presentation which is required for all requests to rezone to the Planned Development (PD) district. They are requesting feedback on the proposed development of a 12-story student housing building with 43 dwelling units (96 bedrooms) on a roughly 0.13-acre site at 222 N. Charter Street. The site is currently zoned Traditional Residential – Urban 2 (TR-U2) District.

### PROJECT HISTORY

The applicant was previously at UDC on August 16, 2017, at which time he also gave a Concept Presentation. However, given Planning Division staff’s concerns about some of the proposals’ 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.

### REPORT OF THE PLAN COMMISSION

At the October 16, 2017 Plan Commission meeting, the applicants gave a Concept Presentation. While the Plan Commission did not take a formal action, they reviewed the project, and the individual commission members offered the following feedback:

#### ***Building Height, Density, and Setback/Stepbacks***

- I believe the proposed [12-story] height is appropriate and the higher density here is a bonus for the University. Pulling the density towards the University would also be better for the neighborhood.
- While not overly concerned with the height, I am concerned regarding the rooftop terrace for the safety of the residents on the rooftop as well as the pedestrians directly below. I would like to see it adequately fenced or somehow addressed.
- I want to see how the height of the building compares to the Capital View Preservation Height Ordinance.

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

- I'm concerned about the future of the bike path and the feeling one would have next to this tall building. I want to know if there is any way to step the building back along this corridor to make it appear that there is more of a setback.
- With all that surface parking at the southern part of the lot, I don't feel the arcade (which wraps around the ground floor level of the building's eastern and southern façades) would feel spacious. I feel it should be something that is available to use by tenants, rather than a parking lot.
- I like the arcade concept and feel it is a good way to address bike parking issues and provide pedestrians shelter when walking in a rainstorm.

### ***Parking***

- My biggest concern is the moped parking.
- The applicant should formalize the location of the exterior moped and bicycle parking stalls on the site plan and show exactly how they all fit on the site and have adequate access.
- The applicant should take a better look at how the internal bike parking stalls are accessed, including by elevator.
- The applicant should verify that convenience and cost factor is not skewing their numbers (i.e. verifying that none of their tenants are choosing to park their mopeds on the terrace in front of the building (which is more convenient), instead of paying for the parking sticker and parking underneath the building in a protected area).

## **PROJECT REVISIONS**

### ***Building Setbacks and Stepbacks***

- The building setback of the majority of the second, third and fourth floor N. Charter Street façades has been decreased from 4 feet to 3.1 feet (the setback at the southern portion of this façade remains 5 feet). However, the setback of this façade at the ground level has been increased to 10 feet. The design provides only a 1-foot setback above the third floor along this façade.
- While the building setback of the upper floors along the future bicycle corridor (i.e. the southern property line) remains 2.5 feet, the building setback at the ground floor level has been increased to 11.2 feet. Regarding stepbacks, there are none on this façade.
- While the building setback of the upper floors along the western property line remains 5.2 feet, the building setback at the ground floor level has been increased to 14.4 – 17.2 feet to make room for 15 moped parking stalls located mostly underneath the overhang.
- The building setback of the along the northern property line has been decreased from 5.3 – 6.1 feet to 5.1 – 5.4 feet.

### ***Building Design***

- An arcade has been created along the eastern, southern, and western elevations. The columns in the middle portion of the eastern elevation measure 3 feet square while those along the southern and western elevations measure 4-5 feet in width and two feet in depth.

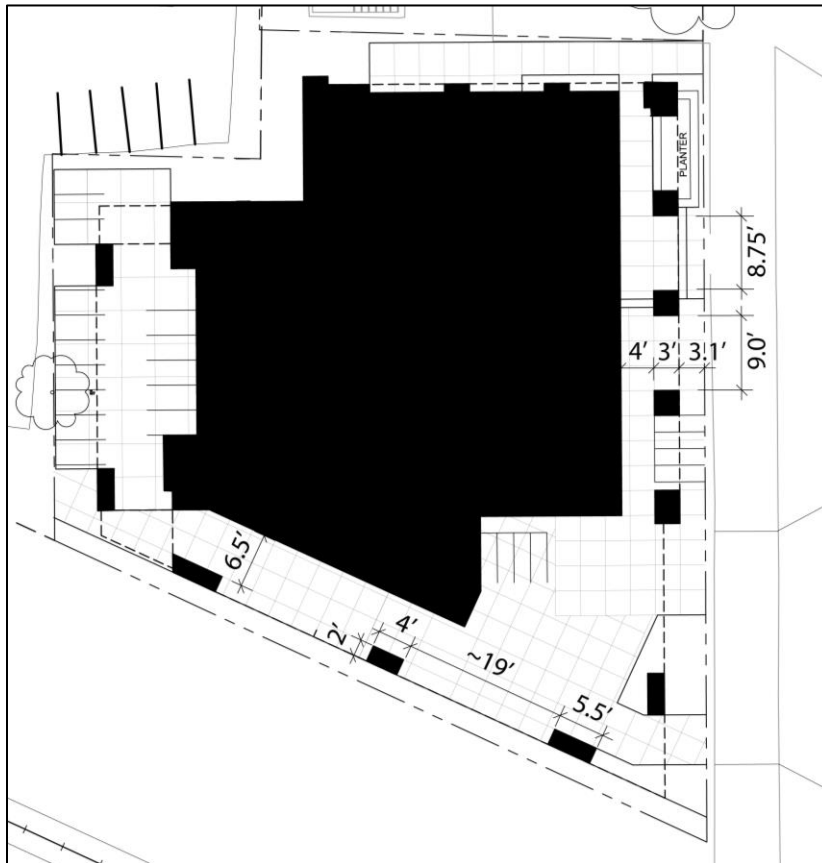
### ***Parking***

- Parking on the site previously consisted of the two automobile parking stalls (one accessible) which were located at the southeast corner of the site, underneath the second floor overhang. Seventy bicycle stalls were located in the basement. Now, with the expanded ground floor setbacks, 4 bicycle stalls are located along the N. Charter Street sidewalk, another 4 are located underneath building's southeast corner overhang, and the 15 moped stalls are located along the western property line. Eighty long-term bicycle stalls are located in the basement.

### **PLANNING DIVISION ANALYSIS**

While acknowledging that some improvements have been made from the August 16, 2017 iteration, Planning Division staff's concerns about some of the proposals' inconsistencies with the [Regent Street – South Campus Neighborhood Plan](#) remain. Only at the ground level of the N. Charter Street and the future bike corridor (i.e. southern) façades does the design comply with the neighborhood plan building setback recommendations. However, while staff believe the building's southern arcade has an open feeling – due to the wide column spacing, the thinner (2-foot) column depth, the lack of obstructions in between the columns, and the larger (~6.5-foot) space between the back of the columns and the façade – Staff do not believe the arcade along the N. Charter Street façade has the same feeling. Staff believe this is due to the shallower (4 foot) distance from back of column to the façade, the greater (3-foot) column depth, their closer spacing, and the landscaping and bicycle parking stalls in between the columns. (Please see Image 1 below). Staff believe that in order to make the N. Charter Street façade feel more open, the depth profile of these columns should to be reduced and their spacing increased. This means either eliminating the 3-story, brick-veneer treatment (which staff is not in favor of as we feel this base treatment helps ground the building), or the applicant needs to actually step back the façade above the third story. Either way, the depth of the columns would be reduced to 2 feet.

Additionally, instead of creating an inhabitable arcade along N. Charter Street, Staff believe the ground floor façade here needs to be set back further, with a preference for at least 6 feet. This would create a space that is actually usable by the tenants.



*Image 1: Diagram of Column Spacing and Arcade Depth*

Furthermore, the current design does not comply with any of the recommended neighborhood plan setbacks (i.e. a 15-foot setback above the third floor for the N. Charter Street façade and a ten-foot setback above the third floor with an additional 10-foot setback above the eighth story for the southern façade). The design includes only a 1-foot setback above the third story along the N. Charter Street and northern façades. It should be noted however that this setback was not included in the August 16 design iteration but rather was created subsequently as a result of the applicant adding the 3-story, brick-veneer base treatment (which projects one foot out from the rest of the façade). The net result is that the position of the upper floors of the N. Charter Street façade have not moved back any.

## **CONCLUSION**

The applicant is before the Urban Design Commission for a Concept Presentation which is required for all requests to rezone to a Planned Development (PD) district. They are requesting feedback on the proposed development of a 12-story student housing building with 43 dwelling units (96 bedrooms) on a roughly 0.13-acre site at 222 N. Charter Street. The site is currently zoned Traditional Residential – Urban 2 (TR-U2) District.

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 remains the setback and stepback recommendations. While the applicant

has refined the design to increase ground-level setbacks, and has moved the moped parking from the area adjacent to the future bicycle corridor to the area along the western property line, 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.”*