



Agenda Item #:	9
Project Title:	929 E Washington Avenue - Major Alteration to a Previously Approved Project in Urban Design District (UDD) 8. (District 6)
Legistar File ID #:	80425
Members Present:	Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad, Wendy von Below, and Russell Knudson
Prepared By:	Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of November 8, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a major alteration to a previously approved project located at 929 E Washington Avenue in UDD 8. Registered and speaking in support were Doug Hursh, Curt Brink, and Rebecca de Boer.

The applicant reviewed the overall site context, including future development potential to flank the site making the building seem more like a U shape. The proposed building will attach to the parking structure. The fifteen story building proposes a lifestyle brand and an extended stay hotel brand. The first three floors of parking are surrounded with similar articulation of the brick, metal and translucent windows. The trellises, articulation of the top floor with eyebrows and more steel help reference the East Capital Rail Corridor historic industrial area, referencing loft type buildings similar to the Kleuter building. They are looking at a cream city colored brick which is in contrast to other buildings on the block that are dark and red, to make it look like it was developed over time like a city would be. A corrugated type metal will surround the windows. A recessed porch entry feature with a light fixture will draw your eye upward. Inspiration photos were shown. The ground floor is proposed cast stone instead of the brick to reference the Breese Stevens Field across the street, as those walls are made out of local sandstone. The landscape plan will maintain the same consistency in terms of the rhythm of planters, and large planters with trees narrowing down in the E Washington Avenue terrace development, as seen in previous iterations of the project. Bicycle parking is still maintained on E Washington Avenue. The drop-off zone is anticipated to be articulated as specialty pavement. A sixth floor terrace is developed as active social space adjacent to the indoor tenancy of beverage and food service. A hot tub and lawn space is framed with large planters that could support trees, and specialty overhead lighting on north side of L-shaped tower volume. The south side patio terrace is more intimate and meant for the use of hotel guests, with the north terrace being accessible to the public.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Was there any consideration of trying to maintain some of the initial or original aesthetic of the previous project even with the program change? It's still a big brick building.
 - I think the L-shaped building came about because of the program of the hotel and this idea of a more public outdoor terrace that is related to the restaurant bar spilling out onto it, and the need for a more private green roof in the back for the extended stay guests, along with future apartments and condos. And to take advantage of this terrace as a destination, being able to overlook Breese Stevens Field for concerts will be a draw to be up here. It's breaking up the building along E Washington a bit more than

we had before, and with the future potential apartment building to the east, I think would provide a nice rhythm along the street so it's not just a solid wall.

- And the third through fifth floors are parking?
 - Correct.
- Is there a reason you abandoned the clear differentiation between the parking and the inhabited floors? The previous one had an X bracing and was clearly a different use and set itself off as a strong well designed base with a nice tower on top. As I recall it got really high marks from the Commission, any reason you're being more homogenous?
 - I don't know that I have a good answer for that. It is a bit more homogenous. We're interested to hear what your comments are. We are looking at reducing the glass a bit more on those parking floors, I think we had more glass than we're showing here and we're thinking the windows are probably not as large as they should be, there could be more solid elements.
- The staff report talks about the bonus stories. I'm interested in the mid and thru block pedestrian connection. I need to understand and make sure I'm clear how this would work.
 - We're referencing the internal drive. The whole block is being developed by one developer and owner, except for the Madison Credit Union. That through block drive and parking has been shared amenities for the whole block, shared by the different dedications on the site as well as the sidewalks to get pedestrians through the site. Thinking legally, they will have condominium parcels, so they're broken up that way, but still the ownership is similar.
- I guess I'm still struggling with an existing condition that you're claiming to apply to this building. Maybe it works but I'm thinking about it.
 - We have always looked at it as a whole block. It's all open and light and you can walk through it. We're able to do here where the other sites, we want everything to have the internal drive so you can walk around the interior without walking through a parking garage. It's a whole block where everything interacts.
- You're talking about the justification for the bonus stories?
- Right, I am sure the structured parking is enough, but it's kind of like cheating, it already exists, it's not something you're providing.
 - We are adding a sidewalk on the side of the hotel.
- But it is kind of a holistic master plan being carried through. To their point we're benefiting by not seeing big garage doors and vehicular entrances at each and every building.
 - The loading areas are back on the internal streets.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Was this the angled glass building?
- Tom was all tied up because of the glare and reflection.
- We always want new and exciting building, we had this glass building that would have been a great addition to the urban skyline. Now we have a brick building and there's a lack of detail. But you presented this brick building that was one of my favorite brick buildings, you had the cross bracings and the detailing, all this industrial and the wood and it fit in the context of the whole block. It was seamless and exciting, everything about it was kind of cool. Then we get this, it's not a bad building but I can't understand how some of those design moves that we were really excited about didn't transfer into this project, specifically the parking with the cross braces. We talked for a very long time about how it would be lit at night, with that translucent material and the cars behind it, the blue lights. There were so many fine details to that project that I see nods off here but it could go a lot further. We talked about railroad bridge and the aesthetics of the I-beams and I see them here but not as integrated to where the windows really screamed industrial. I think this is a decent design but it could be

stronger. Going to cream city is a huge miss, keeping it consistent with the surrounding context makes it a stronger project. The cross bracings were a very unique design element that we don't see and made this project stand out, I would love to see that come back if possible. The top doesn't really work for me, something about that lip or lid that sticks out a couple of feet, I don't know that it works with the overall massing of the building. It's like an oversized coping that doesn't fit. It has some really good elements, I like the integration of the steel but it needs more detail to stand out. Right now it's just a very basic building without a lot of ins and outs, which it doesn't necessarily need if you have those other details that add a stronger design.

- I echo everything you said. Those horizontal bands every third floor look like the world's largest brick ledges. The other design was so much more elegant and sensitively detailed. But this is Informational. This is the beginning and we have a lot of confidence in the team.
- A big difference on this overall is the windows changed proportion. They went from narrow and taller to shallower and wider for a very different feel all around on this. One of the previous strengths was the parking looked like parking, and this looks like you're trying to hide the parking. Something was lost in there, it was ok to have a parking garage look like it and the hotel look like a hotel. The windows on the portion that is setback versus the part closer to the street, you have wider metal panels to the side and I understand we're getting into a subjective area but it's starting to look like fake shutters a little bit, it appears like it lost a bit of its urban appeal and verticality of the language you had. Not saying that's wrong but maybe worth revisit.
- I appreciate the team's look at some of the historical references while trying to be somewhat modern. Would like them to take a greater look at the exterior lighting. The daytime version has the top metal band lit and it looks like its creating hot spots on the eyebrow piece. I am anxious to see what that approach will be. A little concerned about the parking levels and how they're actually going to read in real life versus a rendering. I understand the proportions are the same as the hotel area, but if you're putting a translucent glass in there, whether it's daytime or nighttime it will always look different than the vision glass. I wonder if that's the right approach or if it should be something completely different. I don't mind the cream city brick but I'll be curious to see what you come back with.
- Speaking to what Rafeeq was saying, I had a similar reaction about the history of this site. I'm struggling with, but we also don't want to penalize this team either for some of the great things they have brought before us. All of my comments are hopefully taken with well intentions and encouragement. Stronger reaction about the bonus stories to try to guide how I'd like to approach this. I reread the ordinances related to mid-block pedestrian access and took those as more encouraging of pedestrian use of that mid-block connection. I'm not seeing something here in this master plan, as a pedestrian I can go through there, but its pretty car oriented without a lot of greenspace or human scale experience through that block. I appreciated the comment about the American Family Spark building with artwork and things that suggest that this is a place where people can be, a little more inviting. For my support on the bonus stories I'd want to see more there for pedestrians. I'm struggling with the notion, while I commend about rehabilitating some of the buildings, I'm struggle with granting bonus stories with an intention or promise to do that. It could strengthen the application to understand what that rehabilitation plan is at a minimum, and learn more details about how those existing buildings are being rehabilitated to line up with the master plan and this development.
- I wanted to express appreciation for activation of the corridor and streetscape, some of those pedestrian amenities go a long way for its impact on the urban design of this space. The street level porch is a nice and necessary feature for elevating that first floor, the amenities and plantings that go along that edge as well. There's some generous roof terrace space on this at a nice scale where it really activates the street level where you can still perceive it and see some of the activity going on up above. Those are exciting features for the E Washington corridor to have more projects with that type of amenity. As with the last proposal, the wild card for me is the parking structure layer, the glazing, the materiality, headlights, shadows, all that conversation is coming back to me now from the last proposal. There's some architectural things I agree with, some maybe I don't agree with, I don't mind the top cap as much, that's just me, I don't mind the cream city brick either but I

also think there are some detailing things, like the louver on the windows that are interesting comments. In that parking ramp layer, those three floors, I think it might be interesting to explore it having its separate identity related to the rest, but by no means do we want to see this as a traditional parking structure that you identify as an open parking structure. It has to definitely be more than that, and I'm sure you'll explore materiality to disguise and integrate that into the building, but don't misread our comments that it should look like the old parking lots we're used to seeing.

- Strong foundation, there are some really good positive things to say about this project, we're just spoiled from the nice things we've seen in the past and have our expectations up.
- I'd like to give a shout out to the owner and architect. That entire block and buildings that have been going up are sharp, it's looking good and a great addition to the city. Thank you for your work throughout this huge area.

Action

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