



Agenda Item #: 4

Project Title: 425 N Frances Street and 450 W Gilman Street - New Mixed-Use Building in DC Zoning. (District 2)

Legistar File ID #: 89583

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Anina Mbilinyi, David McLean, Davy Mayer

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of November 19, 2025, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** a new mixed-use building in DC Zoning located at 425 N Frances Street and 450 W Gilman Street. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, and Robert Tait. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Johnathan Lilley. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission inquired about the building materials, noting the renderings are somewhat washed out. Of particular concern are the first two floors. The applicant clarified that it will be the Brick 01, light grey modular brick with brass accents.

The Commission noted the bold moves addressing W Gilman Street. The Commission complimented the more modern materials, this celebrates the modern architecture, and the tower speaks the same language as the lower-level front. The Downtown Plan talks about murals and color; looking at the approach from University Avenue (slide 42), the blank walls, are there any plans to address the blank walls of the first two floors on this façade? The applicant responded the same brick wraps back on the return side, but it is an opportunity for a mural. The Commission noted that this is a key view and that it would be worth looking at.

The Commission commented that the towers are more detailed than the base from this angle. The beveled panels are intriguing, it looks elegant on renderings, but how did you come to this color palette? The color palette might get more oomph in shade and shadow with a darker colors. The Commission note that this is also downtown which is lively and dynamic, it is exciting to see architecture that follows that not just in form but in color. The applicant replied that they looked at a number of color variations, and noticed the shadows didn't pop as much with the darker color. The brass accent material also gives it an elegance when paired with the light gray and contrasting color. They wanted to come with a refined and timeless color palette, which is subjective as well.

The Commission confirmed if the floor levels are the same across both towers as the horizontal grids did not appear to align in the renderings. The opposing grids take a Z shaped mass, breaking it down into two smaller rectangular masses. The grid has been broken up with a 2 by 1 grid and a 2 by 2 grid. The horizontal lines are aligned.

The Commission inquired about the pool material, lighting, and drainage. The applicant noted it is an acrylic laminated plastic edge that will be transparent, with a metal panel underside. In regard to concerns related to water and dripping, there is a drainage system around the perimeter of the pool; it will not have an infinity edge pool. There will be splashing and overflow that will be captured in a deck drainage system around the perimeter of the pool. The pool itself does not

go to the building edge; it is pulled back to meet building code requirements. There is also a 48" tall railing. The pool is an inside/outside pool. There is not a residential unit located directly below the pool. The Commission clarified the finish of the underside of the pool – metal panel. The panels in the material palette are more linear (Slide 41).

The Commission discussed the unresolved feeling related to the roof line and pool overhang when viewing it from the ground, with the coping stopping mid-building. The overhang should continue and taper back to the building façade.

The Commission confirmed if there is really no lighting on the exterior of the building at the ground level. The applicant clarified that the interior glow will light the exterior at the pedestrian level. Interior fixtures will not be shining directly out the glass.

The Commission discussed the perforated bronze garage door and agreed with the recommendation from the Landmarks Commission that the door should be more transparent, like a storefront system.

The Commission noted that the two-story piece next to the Grimm Book Bindery needs some attention to minimize blank walls.

The Commission talked about existing street trees, this is still lacking on the streetscape, but acknowledged that is really the City Forestry's job. The applicant noted this is a difficult streetscape because of the underground utilities, but they are using silva cells.

The Commission confirmed if the building is flush with the HUB building; the applicant noted it is 3-5 feet from the HUB on the upper floors, but at the ground floor is it up against the HUB.

The Commission asked about the masonry with six bays across the front on the Frances Street side and how that transitions back to the building tower behind and whether that slopes down as it goes against the tower? The applicant clarified that that wall is a parapet wall that matches the cornice line of the adjacent Hub building, with full height windows beyond this façade.

The Commission noted that while there is not much real estate to work with at the pedestrian level, the canopies on the ground floor combined with the materiality help engage the pedestrian at the street level. The Commission noted that the canopies at the ground floor are interesting and reflective of a building of its time.

The Commission commented that generally the material palette and detailing is timeless, the white metal panel is subjective.

The Commission discussed the chamfered brick piers that are doubled sided, that maybe chamfering out the building corner as it turns the corner adjacent to the Book Bindery could be considered. Maybe using a lighter material above the garage could be considered, although that may make it darker and blander. The Commission appreciated the bronze material there because the bay is used differently.

Overall, the Commission was supportive of the project, noting the challenge to make the building relate to Grimm Book Bindery. From street/pedestrian perspective the design appears to work, but not as much on Frances Street, it comes together complementary but contrasting. Comments related to the design of the pool overhang were reiterated noting that the overhang could be reworked a little to make it look more intentional as part of the overall building design composition.

Action

On a motion by Klehr, seconded by Mbilinyi, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** with the following findings and conditions:

- On balance, the UDC finds that the proposed development is consistent with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines with the recommended conditions being met, including:
 - That the pool overhang shall be revised to taper back to the façade of the towers on either side of the pool to create positive finish at the top of the building.
 - The garage door shall be revised to reflect a more transparent/glazed storefront-type of garage door giving consideration to maintaining a similar mullion pattern (perhaps more vertical) to the storefronts along the ground floor.
 - Continued review of lighting can be completed administratively for the rooftop lighting.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (4-0).