



Agenda Item #: 9

Project Title: 425 N Frances Street/450 W Gilman Street - New Multi-Family Residential Building in DC Zoning. (District 2)

Legistar File ID #: 89583

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Jessica Klehr, Anina Mbilinyi, Nicholas Hellrood, David McLean

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of September 17, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new multi-family residential building located at 425 N Frances Street/450 W Gilman Street. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, and Robert Tait. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Johnatha Lilley. Registered neither in support nor opposition was Robert Klebba.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission commented on maintaining mass and scale and with the historic Grimm Book Bindery with a new, modern building. The applicant noted this was well received at the recent Landmarks Commission meeting. They also agreed to take a look at other elements to draw across and give space to that building.

The Commission noted that thought needed to be given to the buildings and how they will impact the future built environment and pedestrian environments.

The Commission commented that the massing and base of project design is there, but the application of the materials, which are fine, is not working and the building could become dated because of that. As a modern structure built in 2025, the materials could be better applied to look like 2025 versus 1970. The language fights itself a little bit.

The Commission commented that the swimming pool and basketball court at the top are great, but there is a lot going on here that is worth taking a look at in terms of materials and proportions, i.e. the angular piece is abrupt, the metal panel, and the masonry. The applicant did confirm this top deck has views of the Capitol and Lake Monona.

The Commission asked about blocking daylight into the Hub building. The applicant noted this building is pulled off from both adjacencies to allow continued light into those spaces. The applicant noted that those windows adjacent are duplicative windows – they are additional windows that were added at the request of the UDC. Most go into bathrooms, and are secondary windows, not primary for those units.

The Commission inquired as to what is happening on the first floor where the fence is located on the Gilman street side; beyond the fence is access panels to the below grade vault, and exterior court.

The Commission commented the detailing around the very unadorned garage door is somewhat jarring, abrupt in the language there between the buildings and could use some refinement.

The Commission talked about concerns with W Gilman Street and the lack of activation; it needs to be activated being so close to State Street and the core of the City, and yet it feels like a passthrough. Redevelopment needs to be sensitive to not perpetuating that, not the design or materiality, the fact that the space is mechanical and parking, and is never going to be occupied or activated, right next to a very blank section of the Hub. Gilman Street can be so much more; it could be nearly as activated as State Street. The Frances side is more successful because of the programming to activate the streetscape.

The Commission noted that on Gilman, the Hub is already a long façade that looks like a back door, whereas across the street, buildings have a better human scale.

The Commission talked about the different architectures and colors existing on W Gilman Street. The applicant was encouraged to explore how to incorporate landscape, a possible mural, activity and movement/activity along the street.

Action

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