

ADVISORY STATEMENT

Bassett District Steering Committee
Review of 425 W. Washington Conditional Use Alteration
Submittal to the Plan Commission, June 8, 2015

Introduction

The Bassett District Steering Committee previously submitted Advisory Statements on the original, and revised, applications for this proposal to UDC in August and September of 2013. The neighborhood committee focused on this building's lack of "exceptional" design features needed to qualify for an added (5th) story, as well as zoning/setback inconsistencies, lack of landscaping, and the security of the roof-top patio and green roof, among other factors.

The pattern of noncompliance evidenced in the Planning Division staff report realizes the worst fears held by the Steering Committee. The violations are widespread, deliberate, and egregious. Any architect who encounters the need for major HVAC design/facade changes during early construction has a duty to respond in an ethical and professional manner. Notification to, and requests for consultation with, the appropriate planning office should be made promptly. Instead, this development team apparently chose to wait until after completion and tenant occupancy had occurred to make third parties aware of the numerous unauthorized modifications to the project.

Esthetics:

The steering committee supports Planning Division's assessment that the revised HVAC venting would not have met the standards to allow for excess height (5th floor). In lieu of removing the building's 5th story, we recommend the developer be required to modify all HVAC venting to meet stringent esthetic standards pre-approved by both UDC and the Planning Division.

Safety and Security:

The 5th floor patio/green roof concept has been substantially modified without prior review and approval by the City. The Bassett District has repeatedly, and successfully, opposed common area roof patios overlooking public streets and sidewalks. For this project, our committee was given numerous assurances that safety conditions would be carefully implemented on the 5th floor, including:

1. a permanent metal fence set back 5 feet from the parapet wall to preclude verbal and visual interactions between W. Washington passersby and the tenants/guests on the roof patio.
2. video monitoring of the patio and key fob entry controls.
3. concurrent hours of operations with the fitness center for safety oversight.
4. no amplified music or decorative lighting.

Inspection and photos by the Planning Staff show the above conditions were violated. We recommend full implementation of the above measures and restoring landscaping to the original green design. Further, since the patio can operate essentially as an unlicensed private club, the developer should provide a security plan for alcohol control and response to unruly behavior, satisfactory to Madison Police Department. The roof patio should be closed and locked off until these provisions are met.

Summary

The steering committee urges the Plan Commission to support the findings and recommendations in the Planning Division Staff Report of June 8, 2015, and allow UDC review of the resulting changes. Any failure to uphold the clearly stated zoning, planning, design, and conditional use requirements will only encourage future violations of this magnitude.

Respectfully submitted,

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425 W. Washington Steering Committee
Bassett District, Capitol Neighborhoods