



Agenda Item #: 10

Project Title: 437-445 W Johnson Street/215-221 N Bassett Street/430-440 W Dayton Street - New Student Housing Project. 4th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 75228

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Amanda Arnold, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, and Rafeeq Asad

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of April 26, 2023, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission to grant Initial Approval of a new student housing project located at 437-445 W Johnson Street/215-221 N Bassett Street/430-440 W Dayton Street. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson and Trina Sandschafer. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Aaron Ebent, Suzanne Vincent, Carter Lanser and Austin Scott Pagnotta.

The team has worked with staff to resolve the mezzanine, resulting in a twelve-story building along Johnson Street and six-stories along Dayton Street. They enhanced the pedestrian experience largely by limiting the interactions with vehicular access points, which are all off of Dayton Street, with the primary entrance for pedestrians on Johnson Street. The site does have underground parking for vehicles and bicycles, and seven stalls are dedicated for drop-off and pick-up to not back-up traffic along Dayton Street. The first floor on Johnson is setback a number of feet for more breathing room and quite a bit of landscaping. Fitness and residential amenity lobby spaces activate Johnson and turn the corner around Bassett. The primary pedestrian entrance shows landscaping all the way around the building, keeping some of the street trees and replacing others. It was important to enhance this condition with ample landscaping and a privacy fence, as well as enhanced lighting for a positive experience. Moving along Dayton Street you can see enhanced ornamental trees, and a raised planter wall for a gracious feel along that street, with double the required setback, maintaining sight lines and maintaining privacy. The metal privacy fence is five-feet tall and will allow light and air through while offering some visual connection to adjacent properties. The rooftop six story portion is primarily greenspace with adjacent places for residents to gather. The 12th story has amenity spaces and more articulation added around the exterior façade, as well as water features, gathering spaces, green space and landscaping. They will be utilizing some string lights in addition to permanent light fixtures. The masonry brick base is a warm color and meets the datum line present in the neighborhood. The two massings are broken intentionally in the middle to create depth and interest, creating more visual interest as you recess back with composite wood panel for additional warmth; those materials continue on Bassett Street. The buildings speak somewhat the same language but are different. The townhomes have been voluntarily setback an additional five feet to maintain a nice open walking space for residents along the property line with the Domain, and will include landscaping but no additional lighting. The Lux has ground level townhomes and apartments further back, all three of those spaces are connected in a nice way.

The Commission discussed the following:

- There is an extensive and comprehensive staff report to digest. There are a number of concerns and issues they would like us to address: building materials and composition, adequacy of the front façade detailing on Dayton and Johnson Streets, whether they are appropriately differentiated, is the Dayton façade under detailed, looking

at entries, colors, balconies, compatible with the townhouse scale of that street, long views and transitions, unit entries, which staff has some objection to, and of course our landscaping and lighting issues as usual on projects of this size. Taking all that into consideration and given the presentation we just heard, questions or comments from the Commission?

- Most of my questions are related to the townhomes and that access corridor. Your only access point is through that side of the building, not internally at all? You had the detail with the fence, but the something taller, the pergola slats above it, where is that in relation to these sections? I think what we're all wrestling with is the funkiness of having to enter through that corridor, which could be dark and foreboding if not designed right. How does that detail of the upper part of the fence come into play, is there any lighting besides building-mounted lighting, lighting on some of those site features? If you could explain some of that and your design rationale.
 - There is lighting on the building and landscape lighting around all the townhome faces. There is not a pergola at the townhomes, it is setback from the portion above. There is a pergola over the primary entry into the building, the first floor is pushed back inside, there is lighting in that area and additional landscaping. There is adequate lighting all the way around the building, regardless of what door you enter through.
 - The entrances for the townhomes will each have an interior hallway entrance as well as a direct entry door. With the combination of setbacks where the fence is, the insets, the design is both the five foot setback and overhang of balconies, coupled with landscaping and building lighting to create an experience there that is welcoming. That's why it's not an eight-foot fence; this creates the sense of privacy and entry point.
- Those spaces I think could be very successful or not. I'm trying to picture spaces around the world, in other cities with that narrow corridor in the built environment, large buildings all around you. Sometimes it's cozy and lovely and intriguing to make your way back through those patios if it's designed right. It seems like you're acknowledging that and trying to provide those things, but I do think as an insurance policy, if it doesn't feel right for people to wander back to their unit that they always have the interior option. As far as the rest of the project, I've always really liked what you were doing on the street level with the first floor setbacks, creating a pedestrian realm along the street, I still think those are successful. Thank you for the information.
- On the subject of these units, the ground floor units on the tower are accessed internally, I don't see how the units from the six-story portion are accessed internally unless you go all the way around to the back and then go into the corridor. Can you establish a Dayton Street lobby to allow people to come in the building and access their units?
 - There is the entrance point to the left.
- That doesn't necessarily satisfy the concern where it could be uncomfortable, I'm not sure it's unsafe or not, but having to walk all the way around, would it be more welcoming if there was a way from the main lobby, if not then a dedicated entrance off of Dayton Street to access the rear of those units? They could more quickly and directly go straight into their unit. More of an egress thing than anything. The ones facing the Lexington, it looks like you can go straight through the lobby to the back of the unit. That space is more of a place for accessing light and private terrace versus going all the way down an alley. My biggest concern would be the six-story building.
- The landscape concept sheet showing the green all the way around, how to get into those townhouses. What is the route from Johnson Street to get to that entry point? It's really pinched in there.
 - You can come across on plan north from a walkway under the overhang, with windows along half of that facade. From the Dayton side there is a walkway that comes around plan north.
- When you're coming through where #7 is on one side of the fence, you're coming right past all those other doors?
 - Correct.
- That seems problematic; students are coming home at 2 or 3:00 a.m., it seems kind of hidden, I'm not crazy about that idea for a main entrance to be facing an existing building and virtually an alley. Again, back to the

architecture, the expression of the building, the rhythm of the materials, I really like it, the only concern I have is that entry for the six-story.

- There would be key card access there.
- So it's controlled private access, there's no other access into that little alleyway? That makes me feel a little bit better.
- Going back to the Dayton Street rendering, on Dayton Street where they so skillfully disguised the garage door openings with trees, it looks like the door is now maybe nine-feet, which would be appropriate. I want to make sure we clarify and nail down what that is, because it doesn't need to be eighteen-feet. What is the head height of that garage door going to be?
 - We actually have the head height internal to the parking garage and not as a lower height of nine or ten-feet, but at the exterior that is higher to allow for taller vehicles to come into that location.
- I look at the floor plan and it looks like you have an extremely tight area, I don't see anything like a garbage truck going in there, it seems so out of scale to have that big huge gaping hole on a big portion of what's facing Dayton Street. When we see it in the renderings it doesn't look as imposing but I think as I can imagine it being that huge opening, and inside who knows what's in there; cars, Ubers, pizza drop-offs, what's going on in there before the second floor?
 - That would be a drop-off point to make sure there's not congestion on the street. We could look at lowering that exterior portion of the garage door.
- You've got seven parking stalls in there, loading and pick up. Given the fact you can't do anything but back up, I don't know why it needs to be any higher than an accessible van. We are being asked to comment on this buildings' appropriateness of scale on Dayton Street versus Johnson Street.
- The adequacy of detailing of materials on both main parts of the project, the Dayton and Johnson Street buildings. To be clear we have a metal panel on the tall structure and a cement panel on the shorter one?
 - Correct, metal panel on the tall townhouse and fiber cement on the shorter.
- The fiber cement will be probably more of a matte finish and help differentiate the two while still relating to each other. Those are the kinds of things Jess wants us to make a finding on.
- It does look like they are planning on beefing up ornamental trees on the blank walls on either side of the garage opening. Hopefully that will help the portion of the project that is not entrances to the townhouse apartments.
- (Secretary) We should provide feedback to the applicant team, but also think about the Plan Commission and their review of those individual unit entries. Planning staff has concerns with regard to the design of those individual entries, the returns of the doors, safety, lighting, ultimately making it a place that has interest and is safe for pedestrian passage.
- Looking at the plan, except for those ground floor units along Dayton Street, all other tenants have a way to get to the fitness and other amenities without going outside of the building. It's obviously not a code violation but is kind of unique to those few units on the Dayton Street part of the project. I would think that a dedicated entrance, even if it didn't connect back to the Johnson Street side, could definitely improve that or address that concern staff has.
- I'm not hearing any major architectural concerns about building materials and composition; that one seems to be satisfied. The adequacy of the front façade detailing seems sufficient. Long views and sensitivity to context, I think is all agreeable. Unit entry orientation I believe is the big one here, otherwise landscape I think is agreeable. Staff makes some comments on lighting, which it appears like that one also would need to be revisited or at least a condition to meet ordinance requirements.
- Are we making a motion advisory to the Plan Commission?
- Yes, that the Plan Commission either approve the project with the following conditions or send it back to the UDC for the following items, or not. But that is an advisory recommendation. What we advise the Plan Commission to do and those elements, if any, we believe either need to be revised and/or brought back to the UDC.
- So, my motion would be to advise that the Plan Commission does send it back to the UDC for approval after the unit entries have been substantially revised and I would point back to our comments about internal access to the townhome unit entries from Dayton Street rather than the parking lot of the Lux.

- In terms of the entry orientation, what if the entry orientation came out to Dayton Street? Would that be amenable to UDC as a condition, to bring that interior hallway entrance, reorient so the hallway comes out toward Dayton Street? Would that address the concern on access?
- Isn't that what the motion says, for a common entrance to come out towards Dayton Street?
- Yes, that's what I intended to say.
 - I guess we'd be comfortable with that as a condition.
- So, that's an advisory recommendation for approval with that condition for a modification to the design.
- (Secretary) To confirm, I have one condition for a common building entry along Dayton Street, but also sounded like you were intending to include that lighting plans to meet requirements.
- Yes. I don't think we need to see that again necessarily, that could be a condition approved at staff level.
- (Secretary) Also to clarify, we are making an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to grant Initial Approval with the project returning to UDC for Final Approval?
- Yes, if the Plan Commission can grant Initial Approval.
- Might you have intended to include the condition of lowering the head height of that initial vehicle entry portal?
- Yes, I did intend that.

Discussion on the motion:

- I'm stuck on the Dayton Street entryway garage door, I definitely want to make sure we, it's kind of a blank space and we have not seen in the plans how it relates to the sidewalk and street, it's kind of a big wall. I'd like to see more attention to that but I'm not quite sure what to ask for, but it strikes me and resonates with the comments that were made earlier.
- With that requirement we could just ask for more detail, maybe a detailed elevation or perspective of that showing us what it will look like inside, how it might be lit, framed and landscaped.

Action

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission made an **ADVISORY RECOMMENDATION** to the Plan Commission to grant Initial Approval, with the project returning to the UDC for Final Approval. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0). The motion passed with the following conditions:

- Provide a common building entrance from Dayton Street.
- Lower the head height of the vehicle entry portal on the W Dayton Street elevation. The UDC noted that a detailed elevation or perspective of that façade that shows how the door is detailed, lit, framed would be helpful in determining that this condition is met.
- The lighting plans shall be revised to be consistent with City staff requirements for lighting, which can be reviewed and approved administratively.