



Agenda Item #: 4

Project Title: 521 E Washington Avenue - New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 4. (District 6)

Legistar File ID #: 83068

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, Shane Bernau, and Russell Knudson

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of June 26, 2024, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** of a new mixed-use building in UDD 4 located at 521 E Washington Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Duane Johnson, and Joseph Rice. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Joe Porter.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

Overall, the Commission noted that the design has been much improved from the Informational Presentation, noting that the composition is now more unified.

The Commission discussed the use of color and materials to emphasize the building corner. Nothing in the plan suggests that the corner is more prominent, it is mostly emphasized higher up on the building, and the entrance isn't emphasized enough at the street level.

The Commission inquired about the useable open space being limited to the outdoor seating area and whether consideration was given to other opportunities for rooftop spaces.

The applicant noted that the addition of rooftop space would trigger compliance with high-rise building code requirements, triggering the requirements for fire command centers, etc. raising construction costs significantly. In addition, the street tree requirements and sidewalk requirements along Blair Street also create additional constraints with regard to open space.

The horizontal lines versus vertical lines were discussed. The applicant noted that the proposed mixing of the horizontal and vertical lines and reveals will result in noticeable shade/shadow effects.

The Commission expressed concern about the long views and the building corner. A pop of color at street level where the entrance is would help to emphasize it. The white frame element that goes up and around the parapet that abruptly ends could be done away with and would save money. Why not make the east and west ends of the building mimic each other? The ¾ of the building is awesome, if the one corner was just brought into compliance with the rest of the design, wouldn't it still be a good design? Make the corner like the other sides of the building. The special emphasis at the entrance could be at the entrance on the ground floor.

These renderings don't really do justice to how the building will really pop with those actual materials, with reflectivity and orientation change, nice subtle, ins and outs of materials is nice subtle design that doesn't really need the distraction of a red and white band going all the way up to the top.

The applicant noted that their design reflects a unique corner and importance of the corner. It's a prominent corner – the uniqueness in the architecture is to address the importance of the corner and having it be unique.

The Commission noted that if the corner was redesigned to reflect more of the other corners, adding a canopy may be a way to utilize color and emphasize the entrance. Something is off about the proportions; it is a symmetrical building in every other corner except for this one because of the proportions of the red and white elements. Simplification should be considered. It needs some color and excitement. With regard to the long views, it needs something unique that you can see from a distance and not fade into the background.

The Commission discussed reducing the number of parking stalls to provide for more open space. The applicant stated that they are already struggling with parking. The ground floor accessible entrance orientation was explained. The ground floor windows will be clear with views into office spaces.

The Commission discussed the wall pack louvers, which will be located under the windows, as part of the window system, in the darker color, integrated into the window system. The louvers were removed from the units located in the red element.

The back patio area needs something more; some creative energy needs to be put into what that edge could be including a screen fence, vines, etc. to give you a little protection from that parking lot. Something I would like the applicant to look at.

The white band that dies as it turns the corner seems like it could go away with maybe a canopy that wraps the corner at the entrance in its place. At the street level may be as equally an effective place for a pop of color. This is really a nice improvement.

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Knudson, to grant Initial Approval with conditions.

Discussion on the motion:

Expression at the entrance, the ground floor is where it is not symmetrical and repetition is happening.

Taking the red and moving it to the center bay along E Washington and making the design more cohesive with the rest of the corners. Keeping some element of color, but not making that color fight what is happening. The swath of red should go to the ground in place of the dark gray. Keep color in it somewhere, making the sides symmetrical, and then doing something more dramatic or design intensive at the lower level.

Commissioner Knudson recognized the importance of this project, noting that he has learned from colleagues about design and the importance of beautiful architecture for the City's residents. The white piece makes us look up. Remembering the Informational Presentation discussion, reflecting on who is operating this building, there is something nice about having something to aspire and look up to in this architecture.

Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Knudson, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion provided for the following conditions:

- The applicant shall provide additional information related to the landscape design and details of the "seating area" shown on the site plan, including providing a screen fence and/or landscaping.
- Revise the corner element to include a more defined building corner that is more cohesive with the other building corners, and with a higher level of design at the pedestrian level. Consideration should be given to

including a canopy feature, removal of the white frame, or relocating the accent color at the corner, etc. for example.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (5-0).