



Agenda Item #: 8

Project Title: 1902 E Johnson Street/2010, 2030-2034, 2076 Pennsylvania Avenue - New Mixed-Use Development in Urban Design District (UDD) 4. (District 12)

Legistar File ID #: 91174

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Anina Mbilinyi, Nicholas Hellrood, Davy Mayer

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of December 17, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use development located at 1902 E Johnson Street/2010, 2030-2034, 2076 Pennsylvania Avenue in UDD 4. Registered and speaking in support was Joey Wisniewski. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Eliot Gore.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission asked what podium means to the developer. They responded it is structurally a podium, 5 over 2, and also holds ground floor programming with residential around the perimeter.

The Commission inquired about the plan to interact with and utilize feedback from the neighborhood. The applicant replied they will hold a neighborhood meeting, and that input will be reflected in their next submittal.

The Commission noted that the materials are not very well articulated; there is no continuous datum that is pulling it together. The way the building has been broken down, the first floor has continuous, but the upper floors need a little more. Overall, the Commission liked the idea of a blue container and keeping the railroad idea there. Consideration should be given to having a design to it though, like a building vs. just a shipping container, as well as the color repeating somewhere else in the building design/composition.

The Commission talked about community engagement, with this sitting at a highly visible intersection in the city, and the public market opening soon will increase foot traffic. Consideration should be given to how it responds to the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan, as well as the broader development plan for this area. The Commission commended prioritizing the public space at that intersection, it is a good use of that area. The Commission was also very happy to see the preservation of buildings on the site.

The Commission commented that greenery and plantings along the Pennsylvania Avenue stretch should be incorporated wherever they can be.

The Commission commented on the history of the area and asked about a possible connection at Third Street. The applicant noted they have spoken with Traffic Engineering and WisDOT, who have ideas for this intersection; to be mindful and respectful about what they may come up with in the future, these plans stay within the bounds of their property.

The Commission generally liked the shipping container as something funky and different, suggesting the applicant look at a railroad car rather than shipping container to tie in with the location, as well as give views into the activity happening on that level. Graffiti could also be a fun way to highlight that space. While the pop of color was appreciated, it does not repeat elsewhere in the development and stands out for that reason.

The Commission liked the way the building stands out. Phase 2 is tantalizing, an interesting use of space, like the pool, interesting barriers between private spaces and public green in the middle, looking good. The bottom two stories have an industrial look that fits in with the area.

The Commission inquired about below grade parking. The applicant responded that there is a long history of industrial uses here, combined with the water table makes that not possible.

The Commission talked about what this site might become. Phase 1 is exciting, but there are things that could be pushed further; taking cues from the character of this place, the proposed metals, partitions, and screen fences are doing that. The funkiness is exciting and could be pushed further on this project, including how it marries with the industrial character of this site. The shipping container is another gesture, it is positive, but the way is just sits there; it is a barrier and seems foreign. It is colorful and ties to the railroad/industrial character, but is a very opaque barricade to the life and activity that is happening on the upper level. It could be nice to see through those edges and see activation. Maybe it's a shipping container or something else, either way that edge is an opportunity. The Commission talked about the applicant's funkiness in their portfolio, push that further on this project. This site offers tremendous opportunities, the Commission looks forward to seeing how this is developed and refined.

The Commission talked about bike path along the railroad and back driveway and parking area, noting that how that is integrated into the site design is a priority – thinking about how people travel the shortest path. This is an opportunity to create an environment that people will want to use, another front door. There should be intentional design of that perimeter driveway, not just for vehicles but to be conducive to pedestrians and bikes as well.

The Commission wrestled with the continuous length of the building. It is extremely long and fully continuous at the ground level; this site is very different than the Oscar Mayer site down the road. What does that mean if you're walking along Pennsylvania Avenue? Are the right design features happening to break down that really long length?

The Commission noted that the concept is nice but that the buildings need more depth and articulation on the façade; the building design needs more work.

The Commission inquired about the rooftop garden at the podium level, and what sort of paving and greenery will be there. The applicant replied that the future submittal will show a much more detailed landscape plan on that podium level. The Commission noted that the rooftop landscape seems thin; needs more robust landscape, shading, etc.

The Commission noted excitement about the development team's portfolio, but that this building is not as unique as those shown. It would be great to see something else with more 'wow.' The Commission noted appreciation for how materials are starting to be gathered and placed; the railings and materials and inlays are starting to respond to the character of the area.

The Commission noted that not every building does need to have a base middle top, but that there needs to be more undulation at the top to help break down the mass.

The Commission inquired about the prefab hung balconies, and how the exterior wallpacks or louvers are integrated into the façades. The applicant replied that they don't use wallpacks, they typically use mini split systems.

The Commission talked about the blank gray wall facing the railroad tracks. The applicant noted the parking garage in that location; housing facing the railroad tracks isn't ideal. This was the best solution for three sides of activation without putting units very close to the rail line. The Commission noted that this is a large blank wall and that more consideration should be given to what can be done with it; there is space for landscape or art, it needs to be broken-down.

Action

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