



**Agenda Item #:** 5

**Project Title:** 305 N Frances Street + 533 Conklin Place - New Multi-Family Residential Building in UMX Zoning. (District 2)

**Legistar File ID #:** 88527

**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 made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** a new multi-family residential building in UMX zoning located at 305 N Frances Street and 533 Conklin Place. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, Jeff Zelisko, and Doug Tichenor. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Johnathan Lilley.

### Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission noted the improvements look stunning, and overall seem to speak to the Commission's previous comments.

The Commission asked about the Johnson Street cross section, and the relationship from façade to street, inquiring about any further discussion related to soil vaults. The applicant responded they have been working to enhance and expand the pedestrian realm. They have dedicated additional footage to almost double the size, working on the details of how to finalize different techniques to make sure the trees are viable. The Commission expressed appreciation for the improvements and the team continuing to have conversations with City Forestry.

The Commission asked about the utility vault and landscaping; the vault is recessed to allow for planting depth. The face of the building comes down to grade, the vault is 10-12 feet away below grade.

The Commission inquired about what is happening where the existing houses remain. The landscape plan shows a dog run, and planters. The Commission asked about results of the shade/sun study; the applicant noted it is a similar impact to the last 40 years.

The Commission asked about a hierarchy of the entries and whether consideration was given to carrying the same detailing across both entrances. The applicant noted that the Frances Street entry is closer to campus, the doors are the same on either side and will both read equally as powerful.

The Commission asked for more details on the changes. The top panels are now tan vertical elements, this is subtle but does create a stronger expression at the top. The horizontal banding is also now wider and heavier, and much more pronounced in the architectural expression. Windows were integrated into the bicycle room, and the northeast façade, where the Commission noted blank wall expanses. There is also landscaping in this area.

The Commission confirmed that there is only one entrance along Johnson.

The Commission asked about the fencing material. The applicant noted that it will be 6-feet, opaque at the dog run and ornamental metal in other areas.

The Commission noted that at the northwest corner of Frances/Conklin, there is an existing utility bank that needs to remain that is proposed to be screened. The Commission noted the proposed screening seems out of place with the elegant, lighter façade behind it, noting alternatives should be explored.

The Commission mentioned lighting and the height of the fence as safety considerations.

The Commission talked about their previous comments, the materials changing plane didn't happen, it just changed color. The Commission asked why there wasn't more differentiation with the top of the building. The applicant noted it's difficult to have it make sense within the interior of the building.

The Commission noted it is a stunning building, elegant, and amazing, but the corner needs revisiting. The Commission inquired about sustainability measures. The applicant noted the following: bringing additional housing by redeveloping in an urban manner, amenity components on the first floor, rooftop outdoor space, passive spaces throughout the building, the streetscape and rooftop are key components of this, helping surrounding neighborhood with a safer and more pleasant opportunity to traverse the site, green roof components, additional landscaping, high efficiency mechanicals and appliances and lighting.

The Commission commented that it is a nice project, while wishing the mature trees could remain. Positives that could be replicated: Frances Street has a really nice interaction with the public realm with a strong base, activation at the street level, a strip of planting, this could be replicated along Johnson Street since there is no other in/out along that elevation. More interaction from inside to outside along Johnson Street with something softening that edge. There is depth to the architecture, it does a nice job of activating the pedestrian realm, there is a nice trade-off here.

## Action

On a motion by McLean, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** the proposed development, with the following conditions:

- Revise the screen material for the above-ground utility boxes at the corner of Frances/Conklin to be more consistent with the building materials (i.e., lighter color, consistent with building, more transparent on the upper portion).
- Revise the north building elevation to include more design or detailing (i.e., windows or masonry detailing, change in color or materials, or articulation in the wall, etc.) along the ground floor, **OR** the landscape plan shall be revised along the north elevation shall be updated to introduce more height – additional narrow upright trees or larger shrubs rather than mostly ground covers.
- The applicant shall revise the fence material to be less opaque at the dog run; it shall be more transparent.
- The continued review of lighting and the above conditions can be completed administratively.

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