



Agenda Item #: 4

Project Title: 418-446 W Washington Avenue + 413-417 W Mifflin Street - Alder Referral for an Advisory Recommendation to the Plan Commission for a New Multi-Family Residential Building. (District 4)

Legistar File ID #: 84628

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad, Russell Knudson, Wendy von Below, Harry Graham, David McLean, and Anina Mbiliyi

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of November 6, 2024, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory motion to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** a new multi-family residential building located at 418-446 W Washington Avenue + 413-417 W Mifflin Street. Registered and speaking in support were Max Komnenich, Alison Mills, and Linda Scott. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Johnathan Lilley, Angela Black, and Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission inquired about the Mifflandia plan recommendations related to the mid-block connection and maintaining a public pedestrian pathway. The applicant notes that the intent of the proposed pedestrian pathway to remain open to the public. The path will include a five-foot sidewalk with a planted area that has illuminated bollards, with a series of brick and window openings alongside the path. No fence, gate, or easement is proposed.

The Commission inquired about the materials. The applicant clarified that it will have two tones of brick and fiber cement.

The Commission noted the improvements to the project, and level of refinement with the patios and simplification of materials. Commissioner Asad noted the proposed setbacks and stepbacks seemed appropriate.

The Commission asked for details on how the W Washington Avenue loading zone would work. The applicant noted elimination of curb cuts, patterned paving extending into the terrace to connect from the sidewalk, and a fifty-foot drop-off zone. The Secretary remarked that Traffic Engineering and Public Works will ultimately determine if a loading zone will be accommodated on W Washington Avenue.

The Commission discussed the Mifflandia Plan and its call for a through-block and inquired about a two-building solution. The applicant noted the redundancy of systems required with a two-building solution.

The Commission inquired about wall pack units and the dark inset in the window composition. The applicant noted that wall pack unit/VTAC units will not be used. The applicant clarified that the use of a dark metal panel insets was intended to make the window frame and opening appear to be larger more proportional to the façade. The fiber cement side of the building uses a different color in the same proportion to match that.

The Commission discussed the intention of the W Mifflin balcony structure and the intent of the frame/structure going all the way to grade. The applicant noted it is somewhat structural.

The Commission inquired about the east elevation and why that is blank. Recognizing that this elevation will likely eventually be blocked by development in the future, the applicant noted that the design intent was to provide a recessed slot in the middle of the building to add articulation. The lower right half of the wall (closest to W Mifflin) is open to access the underground parking garage, on the left there is an entrance to the bike room, and there will be sconces for lighting, which add interest.

The Commission inquired about the materials transitions at the second floor and the fifth floor. The applicant noted that there will be a slight plane change to meet the intent without stepping it a great distance.

Commissioner Klehr suggested moving the bike storage door closer to the street for safety reasons. The applicant responded they will keep working the numbers to see about moving the door closer to Mifflin Street.

The Commission inquired about what people will see as along the path, inside the building, and how the walk will feel public. The applicant noted that there are a number of active shared gathering spaces along that building wall. The applicant was encouraged to study how to convey that this space is public, particularly from Mifflin Street, where it is narrow. The applicant noted that while there is not a clear line of sight for pedestrians to see from W Washington through to W Mifflin Street, they are considering creative ways to include building signage into the pavement to convey that the space is public.

Generally, the Commission noted that more could be done with lighting and landscape along the path to make it more inviting, and let people know they can come in and move through this space. Commissioner Bernau commented that the midpoint block out to Mifflin isn't as successful because it's so narrow, with pretty sparse landscaping. The Commission noted that the applicant should coordinate with the neighboring development and introduce more movement and plant material.

Commissioner McLean commented that the developer has done a nice job with a really big building, but that the upper stories still seem out of scale/proportion to the other stories, especially at the top of the building. The applicant responded that they will look at design solutions to reduce the visual scale of those upper parts of the building, including reducing the parapet wall height or increasing the coping finish at the top.

Commissioner Asad noted that what is in the Mifflandia Plan are recommendations, not requirements. The setbacks are fine, the material change is helpful. The through-lot portion with glazing, and the massing of the building with the legs fits within the context and is very successful. The revised more residential entries are successful. While he shared concern with the through lot, he did not necessarily agree that landscaping is the answer; a more public, hardscape walking connector is better than softening that space from mid-block connection to Mifflin. The building materials, building design and composition components are met, the project meets the intent of Mifflandia, and felt that other items can be handled administratively outside of this body.

Commissioner Rummel agreed this is much improved, and quite attractive, but she still has concerns, especially with the competing claims to the right-of-way. Eventually the Mifflandia area will become an Urban Design District, which was the intent of the recommendations in the plan. She inquired about the loading and delivery zones relying on the public right-of-way, and whether other options, such as a porte cochere, were every studied.

Commissioner Bernau noted a big focus of Mifflandia is the treatment along W Washington and minimizing curb cuts and protecting the terraces, which is not consistent with the use of a porte cochere; this project does do a great job at really activating that corridor and protecting the street trees. The intent is very much to protect that terrace, which this development seems to do. Commissioner Bernau noted that the landscape plan is lacking in landscaping; ornamental trees could help introduce a layering effect and bring the architecture down to a pedestrian scale.

Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission made an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission to **APPROVE** with the following finding and conditions:

- Overall, the UDC found that the development proposal is generally consistent with the intent of the recommendations in the Mifflandia Plan.
- The landscape plan shall be refined to incorporate additional plantings along the through-site pedestrian pathway and to adjust the pathway to be as wide as it can be.
- The landscape plan shall be refined to incorporate a more intermediate scale of landscape, including ornamental trees along the W Washington Avenue side of the building to bring the scale down.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (8-0).