

ADVISORY STATEMENT

Bassett District Steering Committee
Review of 3/23/16 Request for Major Alterations,
425 W. Washington Avenue

The Bassett District Steering Committee for 425 W. Washington Ave. previously submitted an Advisory Statement on the original application for this proposal on August 7, 2013, and an Advisory Statement on the resubmittal to the Urban Design Commission on September 11, 2013. The Steering Committee last met with Mr. Sutton of Sutton Architecture in December, 2015, to discuss proposed alterations for the existing building which were intended to address compliance issues related to several of the “minor items” related to the construction of this building. At that meeting Mr. Sutton was unable to provide detailed information on those proposed alterations and the steering committee was thus unable to provide any detailed comments regarding those proposed alterations. The steering committee has had no discussions with anyone from the development team since then and the statement in the March 23, 2016, Letter of Intent that all items have been reviewed with the neighborhood steering committee and modified to satisfy their concerns is patently false.

In considering this current request for major alterations it is important to remember that when the proposal first came forward it was granted an additional story under the criteria that it provided a “demonstrated higher quality building than could be achieved without the additional story”.

The standard for considering these major alterations is not “is it generally good enough now and maybe in line with some other buildings which have been approved”. The demonstrated higher quality must be maintained.

Revised Rooftop Fence:

The Steering Committee shares the concerns expressed in the June 1, 2016, staff report regarding this proposed alteration. The original style all metal railing that was approved can still be installed. The other modifications of installing planters around the balcony do not preclude installation of this type of railing. The proposed solution to cut off the top of the wood railing and replace 9” with a metal top rail is not a design that would ever be proposed when starting from scratch. This is simply an attempt to minimize the cost of complying with the previously approved plans. As shown in the drawings submitted for this change a portion of the wood railing will still be visible from street level. (See Sheet A2.1 in the area above the main entry.) This request should not be granted.

3A Screen Fence at East and West Elevations

There was no fence in these locations on the original approved plans. Along the west elevation there was open courtyard, planters at two apartments and landscaped areas at the south and east elevations. The height of the fence and materials do not fit with the urban character of the setting and certainly does not contribute to a higher quality building. If the concern is headlights from the parking lot on the adjacent property there are other options including; planters and landscaping or a lower fence along the property line. Again this design of cutting off the top of the existing wood fence and adding some type of

metal fence to the top is not something an architect would set out and design if it were not for the unapproved fence already being there. The height of the fence appears to remain at 6'. There is no detail provided to actually be able to tell what is being proposed. Or for that matter if it were approved how to know if whatever was built was in compliance. This request should be denied.

3B Remove Landscaping and Install Pavers

The application shows that pavers were installed at the south and west sides of the building. (Sheet C1.5) In addition pavers were installed and plantings deleted along the south end of the east side which are not shown in the application. Plantings have been removed from the east, west and south portions of the site. While the original proposal exceeded minimum City Landscape Point requirement by 60% it now appears that sufficient plantings have been deleted such that the minimum point total may not be met.

Along the west side planters in front of two apartments have also been removed. Adjacent to the south stairwell on the west side in an area which is now grass, not pavers, plantings have been deleted for no apparent reason.

A recalculation of the Landscape Points should be made. Even if pavers are deemed appropriate for some portion of the previously landscaped area all of the plantings should not be removed. The request should not be approved.

Items not on the list for UDC consideration:

1C – The applicant is indicating that this window on the east elevation was removed due to a building code requirement. The window is shown on the plans approved for the building permit with a 1 hour fire wall behind it. So the claim is false. The opening is now filled with a louver for the air intake for the code required parking garage ventilation. The original plans did not provide for a location for this intake. The window was removed to make up for this oversight.

Along the east side of the building the privacy fence appears to have been installed beyond the lot line onto the adjacent property. The fence would not need to be 6' high to block car lights but could be 4' high similar to the fence around the other portions of this parking lot.

The Bassett District Steering Committee continues to have grave concerns regarding the modifications being suggested to rectify the "as-built" issues with 425 W. Washington Avenue and does not feel that the proposed revisions in the March 23, 2016, Letter of Intent adequately address either those concerns or the underlying issues related to this building not being constructed in accordance to approved plans.

Respectfully submitted May 27, 2016,

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For the 425 W. Washington Ave. Steering Committee
Bassett District, Capitol Neighborhoods