



Agenda Item #: 3

Project Title: 501 E Washington Avenue - New Multi-Family Residential Building Located in Urban Design District (UDD) 4. (District 6)

Legistar File ID #: 87243

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad*, Jessica Klehr, Harry Graham, Anina Mblinyi, David McLean, Davy Mayer, and Nicholas Hellrood

Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Acting UDC Secretary

*Asad was recused on this item.

Summary

At its meeting of June 11, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a new multi-family residential building located at 501 E Washington Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Nick Orthmann, Marc Ott, and John Barac. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Matt Ammel. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission complimented the team on addressing previous comments related to setbacks and articulation.

The Commission questioned the narrow courtyard, how much light and shade the units will get, and whether a wind study was done. Using heat for sustainability can create a situation during winter with not enough solar. The applicant replied that as the courtyard has evolved, the Landmarks Commission suggested flipping it to provide relief from the historic district; this is the natural breakpoint for the circulation of the building, they think it works pretty well, and they looked at unit layouts to be sure interiors are usable. They did not do a formal wind study, this height doesn't cause issues with wind in that regard. Sun was taken into consideration, and both sides of the courtyard have times of sun.

The Commission noted the courtyard at the Aberdeen is similar, and never got sunlight into the units. The applicant noted that the ground level units do not have access to the courtyard, but do have balconies, and the courtyard also doubles as a stormwater feature, with maintenance access being worked through.

The Commission inquired as to why the building did not go up higher. The applicant responded it is due to cost considerations and the neighborhood aesthetic.

The Commission talked about the corner conditions and how materials transitioned and terminated, and inquired if a design study has been done to see how that changes the building expression. The applicant responded they are proposing lap siding, and plan to use trim boards, but do not have a specific rendering to show that.

The Commission inquired about the Main Street view to the back of the building, the difference between clap board and metal panel, what kind of relief is between the two materials, and the possibility of getting more depth. The applicant replied they are a one-inch transition, but that with the efficiency of the building it is not something they planned for. The Commission commented that it looks flat and is not as strong as the other street frontages.

The Commission noted that weather has changed, there is more rain and wind, and the need to look at safety relative to our climate when designing buildings. The Zoning Code has not caught up with reality.

The Commission thanked the team for the façade changes and for addressing the at level entries on Franklin Street. With 227 units and 68 parking spaces, there is concern about street parking in this area already. Did Traffic Engineering comment on that? The applicant noted that Traffic Engineering reviewed the design and was comfortable with this set up. City ordinance does not allow for street parking permits here, but it is on the BRT stop and will have significant bicycle parking.

The Commission talked about the lack of cohesiveness with the corner trim. Lap siding refers to single-family residences in this neighborhood. Many of the building details are modern and clean, but the vertical corner detail isn't matching the modern clean transitions. The applicant noted there is more detailing to be added, the plan is not to have boxy traditional residential window wraps, they are studying a very narrow picture frame for the windows, or a metal transition.

The Commission asked about the 1" siding transitions, and the change in depth on the light and dark siding. The applicant noted those are in plane but due to the difference in material there is a profile difference. The Commission asked about the interstitial spaces on the southeast edge in between this building and the one built right now on the corner: who can access them, what is being done regarding safety, etc., as they are lengthy. The applicant noted it is not intended to be used per se, with an access ramp on the other side to provide ingress and egress to the bike parking area. Likely there would be utility meters and back of house, there is no planned gathering spaces or activation in those areas, nor any lighting; they will act as a buffer between the other sites. The fence line along the south property line falls on this property, they are working through that with the neighbors. The fence would need to come down during construction but could be reinstalled.

The Commission complimented the sustainability aspect of the project, and the addition of trees.

Commissioner Klehr pointed out to pay attention to the parking, it's a huge issue, especially downtown.

Commissioner Mayer commented that the onus and risk is on the developer to either over park or under park, to know the parking ratios they need. This is what the City wants in the TOD, to have people rely on the BRT. E Washington Avenue is still only at 50% of its capacity for traffic.

The Commission commented on the sedum trays identified in the courtyard, they will not do very well in that narrow, low light condition. This is a large missed opportunity to just use a very low sedum ground cover in that entire space; some design horsepower is still needed in that courtyard. There are site corners with taller materiality on the building, but pretty low landscape material against it. The scale and mass of the building relies heavily on the street trees to bring it down to the human level. On the E Washington Avenue side at the corner near Porchlight, it would be nicer to have something columnar rather than a line of low shrubs.

The Commission discussed the corner condition along E Washington Avenue. There is overall satisfaction with the pedestrian realm interaction, the applicant addressed concerns the Commission had along Franklin Street, and cleaned it up along E Washington Avenue for more pedestrian interaction.

The Commission discussed the view from behind the Porchlight building where there are blank walls. The applicant noted there will be windows there, and plant material within that space that has some height.

Action

On a motion by Klehr, seconded by Mblinyi, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** with the following conditions, to be approved administratively:

- Revise the landscape plan to incorporate some different plantings in addition to sedum trays within the courtyard, looking for opportunities to have additional height.
- Revise the landscape plan to increase the height of plantings, including the addition of trees, at building corners to anchor the architecture.
- Modify the planters/revise the cladding to better reflect the building masonry. Add planter(s) or reconfigure planters near the building entrance to introduce greenery and texture against the foundation of the building near the bike rack.
- The UDC provided an advisory recommendation to the Development Team to study wind impacts in the courtyard space.

The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1-1) with Klehr, Mblinyi, Mayer, Hellrood, McLean, and Graham voting yes; Asad recused; and Bernau non-voting.