



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Planning Division

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TO: Urban Design Commission
FROM: Timothy M. Parks, Planner
DATE: July 31, 2017
SUBJECT: ID [47269](#) (UDC); [47756](#) (Plan Commission) – Approval of a conditional use to construct a four-story addition to a two-story commercial building at 668 State Street; 8th Ald. Dist.

The applicant and property owner, Scott Faust, is seeking approval to construct a four-story addition to an existing two-story, 11,200 square-foot commercial building located at 668 State Street. The addition will contain 24 dwelling units on floors 3-6. The existing commercial space on the two lower floors and in a finished basement will largely remain with the exception of a small addition on the second floor and a redesign of the lobby leading to floors 2-6. A portion of the basement will be finished as common space for residential tenants. Two of the four proposed stories will be constructed at the front property line abutting State Street, while the top two floors will be setback 29.5 feet.

The property is zoned DC (Downtown Core District). In DC zoning, all new buildings and additions greater than 20,000 square feet or that have more than four stories shall obtain conditional use approval from the Plan Commission. In addition, the Urban Design Commission shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code, if applicable, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission is scheduled to consider the conditional use request for the addition at its August 14, 2017 meeting.

In making its recommendation to the Plan Commission, the Planning Division requests that the Urban Design Commission consider the following regarding the proposed six-story mixed-use building:

- The proposed addition is generally consistent with the bulk requirements in the DC zoning district and with the Design Standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code. The Downtown Height Map in Section 28.071(2)(a) allows up to a maximum of four-story building at State Street, with a maximum of six stories allowed following a 30-foot stepback above four stories. There are no side or rear yards required by zoning. On June 22, 2017, the Zoning Board of Appeals granted a variance to the 30-foot stepback requirement in the amount of one foot at the fifth and sixth floors of the proposed four-story addition. In requesting the variance, the applicant noted that the elevator shaft that will serve the proposed six-story building exists and will be extended to serve the four additional floors. It was represented that the shaft cannot be reasonably relocated or reduced in size due to Building Code requirements.
- The Planning Division asks the Urban Design Commission to comment on the overall composition of the building. Given that the building is effectively being tripled in size, including the doubling in height of the façade at State Street, the architectural detailing of the project is of considerable importance.

As submitted, the exterior of the building will primarily be clad with a combination of dark-colored horizontal corrugated metal siding and lighter-colored vertical “flatlock” metal panels, with the remainder of the facades to be clad in buff-colored brick. Staff has two concerns with the exterior composition of the building related to the proposed materials palette: the amount of metal to be applied, and the overall appearance of the building.

On the first issue, staff asks that the Urban Design Commission comment on the amount of metal cladding proposed for the six-story building. In general, the Design Standards for the Downtown zoning district allow metal to be used at the base, middle and top of a building and as an accent/trim material, but require that it be used in conjunction with a palette of materials, and be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal. Staff is concerned that the building as currently proposed may not satisfy the building material guidelines in the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which recommend (page 15):

- a. A variety of complementary exterior building materials may be incorporated to provide visual interest to the building. The palette of materials should not be overly complex.
- b. All sides of a structure should exhibit design continuity and be finished with high quality materials. Materials should be those typically found in urban settings.
- c. If material changes are proposed, they should generally occur at inside corners or be delineated by a specific transitional detail such as a pronounced belt course or substantial reveal.

In particular, staff believes that the metal cladding proposed dominates the “palette of materials” for this building. The amount, color and detailing of the two-toned metal lacks richness and does not contribute to the architectural character of State Street. The vertical section of metal in the four-story façade at State Street should be eliminated in favor of the continuation of the buff-colored brick, which staff feels would respect the simple, strong, and symmetrical character of the existing two-story brick facade. Above that, the addition is effectively entirely clad in metal with the exception of brick returns at the southwestern corner of the building and along a portion of the rear elevation. While most of the emphasis thus far seems to have been focused on the design of the building closest to State Street, staff would submit that the upper floors of the building will be visible from across State Street and from the upper floors of nearby buildings, and that the detailing of those floors is of similar importance.

- The exterior of the proposed addition features two significant areas where no openings are proposed. This includes the western half of the fifth and sixth floors of the southern façade where the elevator shaft is located, and almost all of the western façade with the exception of the northwestern corner of the building where the building is sufficiently setback to allow for west-facing balcony doors. The effective lack of window openings on the western façade is the result of the placement of the addition at the western property line adjacent to the small one story commercial building at 670 State Street. The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines recommend (page 13) that all sides of a building should have a similar design composition and quality of materials that make a positive contribution to the built urban environment. While staff acknowledges that the absence of window openings on the southern and western facades is driven by limitations in the Building Code, staff does not feel that these facades represent design composition that is similar to the other facades or quality of materials that will contribute

to the urban environment. In particular, the lack of openings along most of the expanse of the western wall is unique in staff's opinion for a building of the scale proposed. Staff believes that the western façade will be visible from State Street above the adjacent one-story building, as well as from the east-facing apartments located in the five-story mixed-use building located 25 feet west at 509 N. Lake Street (corner of State). While any addition above the existing western wall of the subject site would be visible from these vantage points, staff is concerned about the scale and expanse of the blank wall of the proposed four-story addition and feels that it gives credence to comments made by members of the Urban Design Commission that the scale of the six-story building may be too much for the site.

In closing, the Planning Division feels that an addition to the existing two-story commercial building at 668 State Street may be appropriate. However, staff is concerned about the amount of metal cladding proposed for the exterior, the design of the four-story façade at State Street, and the areas of blank wall proposed along most of the western façade and the western half of the southern wall at the fifth and sixth floors. Staff requests that the Urban Design Commission consider these issues as it reviews the project for conformity to the design standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, and reports its findings to the Plan Commission.