



Agenda Item #:	6
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, Harry Graham, Anina Mblinyi, David McLean, Davy Mayer, and Nicholas Hellrood
Prepared By:	Kevin Firchow, AICP, Acting UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of June 11, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new multi-family residential building in UMX zoning located at 305 N Frances Street + 533 Conklin Place. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, Misha Efremov, Matt Stevens, Justin Otincar, and Doug Tichenor. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission discussed building height, with 12 being the maximum allowed but also 172 feet, and the floor-to-floor heights. The applicant noted they typically use a 9'8" ratio, which allows for floor thickness and ceiling heights in bedrooms being 8' and over.

The Commission commented the building is broken up well with great articulation. The wood tone at the entry corner and roof is powerful, but it would be more powerful in articulating those materials within the horizontal if they were thicker.

The Commission noted this is a great use of a site with some tired buildings and surface parking. They inquired about the three remaining houses abutting the site; the applicant responded that they did try to acquire them but were unsuccessful. The Commission talked about context and what may be developed on those parcels in the future. It is hard to picture that as a long-term reality and it seems like it would affect the design someday. The applicant is focusing more on the space between the two with landscaping, the façades of the buildings and the utility boxes, etc. These have been there since the Saxony was built and will remain. They will be limited in what can be redeveloped there by the size of the lots.

The Commission inquired about the corner of Johnson and Frances, the corner lobby, and the first floor Johnson Street uses. The applicant noted the space contains a lobby, co working spaces for students, seating groupings, and fitness. The Commission asked if any thought was given to another entrance on Johnson. The applicant noted it was discussed, but that sometimes multiple entries become a security risk. They have created openings through a nano wall or operable windows.

The Commission talked about traffic on Conklin, garbage pick-up and retail deliveries, snow and pedestrians, inquiring about discussions with Traffic Engineering, as Conklin is really more of an alley. The applicant noted the idea of a drop-off lane, and trash staging, which is what several adjoining buildings do. They are not expecting to see a lot of traffic with these residents as they can walk to campus and the BRT. The transformer in the southeast corner is being worked on in

terms of scale, configuration and location. The applicant is encouraged to push it back and add landscaping in front of it, and make sure the walkway to the left of it is well lit and safety is paid attention to.

The Commission inquired about the Johnson streetscape, with a lot of congested traffic, vehicular pedestrian conflicts, and the line of mature trees, which will likely be removed as part of this project. The applicant noted they are talking about expanding the streetscape for an expanded terrace and sidewalk, and that the trees are actually on this site. They are looking at an urban paver system with tree grates, a more urban cross section. The Commission responded that they should really consider soil vaults to provide root volumes for those trees for a healthy canopy along that streetscape. This is an opportunity to make it a safer space and better element of urban design in the city.

The Commission commented on the very dynamic base, the wood layer, the dimension, and the top as being successful, but the middle is struggling. The tall vertical volume, even with joints is still very flat. Without undulation in those vertical pieces there does need to be some type of greater horizontal expression to tie this all together. The wood entry works very well and the top is starting to work very well. Consider recessing the top a little bit, or a brow to put it in another plane.

Action

Since this was an **INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION**, no formal action was taken by the Commission.