

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT

September 3, 2025



Agenda Item # : 6

Project Title: 203 N Blount Street - Major Alteration to an Existing Planned Development (PD). (District 6)

Legistar File ID #: 89581

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Jessica Klehr, Davy Mayer, Nicholas Hellrood

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of September 3, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a major alteration to an existing Planned Development (PD) located at 203 N Blount Street. Registered and speaking in support was Tracy Mac Murchy. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Mike Matty.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission inquired about the lower level units and the amount of daylight they will get with south-facing windows underneath a deck. The applicant noted they will revise the landscaping so it's not in front of the windows.

The commission clarified that the "south" elevation is the Blount Street elevation. The Dayton Street elevation is less decorative, but this is a corner lot and consideration should be given to more articulation/decoration since it will be very visible. The height is fine, it transitions well and fits well with the surrounding buildings.

The Commission thought the building fits in well with the neighborhood context, but questioned the black color of the porches where most in the area are white along with trim. The applicant thought black was a nice accent but agreed to study another color and to match trim and porch colors.

The Commission commented that the stacked porches fit with the context of much of our City, but not necessarily the context we should be matching; it screams college housing. Some of the other improvements as part of this PD look really nice, the format of the first-floor porch fits with the context of this neighborhood, but the stacked porches above it are awkward. The 3-story structures in City Row on Johnson Street are a nicer format at a similar scale and architectural style. Do we feel like the stacked porches are necessary to the project, or consider just having a first floor elevated porch, and different architectural expression and layout above that? The applicant noted it is intended to be workforce housing, aiming towards adults using this as outdoor living space, and trying to keep the character of the neighborhood, which do have porches on the upper floors, but it's something they could potentially look at.

The Commission noted that stacked porches like this are a common style in Chicago. The upper levels will get some nice Capitol views.

The Commission noted that they talk about appropriate scale of architecture on every other project. To see this, it's so familiar, it fits in without question, but it also goes against everything we've been talking about, like modernizing and not trying to replicate what was there. Having just a porch on the first floor is a very different language, having integrated porches as opposed to protruding, but agree this style is seen in bigger cities. This language is familiar and comfortable.

The Commission inquired about the transition between the bay windows and the stacked porches and what that will look like.

The Commission noted that as a PD, thought should be given to the context of this within the Planned Development, some of which is already completed. This is another layer to contemplate, not just the neighborhood or city context. Regardless of how you feel about the stacked porches, the comment about the side, it being a corner lot, it really needs more articulation.

The Commission inquired about the lower units, which are partially below grade, and accessed through the main entry doors. It was noted that the main floor level is aligned with the adjacent buildings.

The Commission confirmed that the main floor aligned with the datum line of the adjacent buildings.

The Commission inquired about the porches having any cover from the roof overhang, noting that they don't feel intentional or are integrated into the design; just being tacked on to the front of the building. The Commission noted that the roof line is very straight except for the notch, and the window spacing seems off and doesn't look quite right.

The Commission overall liked the general look of the building, noting it fits in with the neighborhood, but it needs a little more work.

Action

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