



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 519-547 W Washington Avenue  
**Application Type:** Alder Referral – Advisory Recommendation  
**Legistar File ID #** [70439](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

**Background Information**

**Applicant | Contact:** Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Jim Stopple, Virtue, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is seeking an advisory recommendation regarding the development of a six-story, 140-unit apartment building with underground parking in the DR2 zoning district.

**Project Schedule:**

- The Plan Commission will review this proposal on May 9, 2022
- The Common Council will review the proposed Certified Survey Map (CSM) on May 24, 2022

**Approval Standards:** As noted in Section 33.24(4)(a), MGO, the Urban Design Commission shall make recommendations to the City Plan Commission, Common Council and any other concerned commission on all matters referred or assigned to it under the provision of this ordinance and other City ordinances. This application is before the UDC at the request of Alder Verveer. As such, the UDC will be an advisory body in their review and action to the Plan Commission.

As part of the Commission’s review, the Commission is requested to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission related to the applicable Conditional Use review and approval criteria pursuant to Section 28.183, MGO, more specifically subsection 28.183(6)(a)(9), which states:

*When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation. (Am. by ORD-14-00030, 2-18-14).*

**Related Zoning Information:** The project site is zoned Downtown Residential 2 (DR2). As noted in the development standards, buildings within the 500 block of W Washington Avenue, the maximum height is four stories, however may be allowed two additional stories with a 30-foot setback. The additional stories are required to be reviewed and approved through the Conditional Use process.

The DR2 zone district also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the DR2 zone district are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area in the West Washington Neighborhood. As such development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). As noted in the Downtown Plan, the maximum recommended height for the project site is four stories, with the

potential for two additional bonus stories if there is a noticeable setback. The Downtown Plan notes that the design of new buildings should “...engage the street and help maintain an active, pedestrian-scale environment through façade articulation and provision of multiple front entrances to larger buildings, porches and balconies, and other street oriented features.”

The project site is also located within the [Mifflandia Plan](#) (the “Plan”) planning area. The Plan supports larger redevelopment in this area and the development proposal appears to be in general compliance with these recommendations. It recommends maximum building heights, setbacks and stepbacks for the project site, including a maximum height of four stories, plus two bonus stories provided the upper stories meet the setback requirements. As noted in the Plan, upper levels above four stories shall have a setback of 30 feet from the building face on W Washington Avenue. The Plan also notes that building setbacks shall closely align with the existing and historic setbacks for the neighborhoods, and should act as a build-to line. Setbacks along the W Washington Avenue corridor, as noted in the Plan, are 20 feet.

In addition, the Plan also identifies Urban Design Recommendations and considerations, including the creation of an Urban Design District specific to the Plan’s planning area. The Plan notes proposed general guidelines to guide development within the district, including those related to building materials, building design and orientation, articulation, and sustainability. As noted in the Plan, the planning area also has unique and distinctive transition between the public streetscape and private development sites that are marked by large terraces, ample sidewalks and setbacks, especially along the W Washington corridor.

As part of the Commission’s evaluation of the proposed development, due consideration should be given to the Plan’s urban design guidelines, especially those related to residential buildings (see page 20 of the Plan), the Downtown Plan recommendations, Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, and Conditional Use review and approval criteria noted above.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC evaluate the development proposal for consistency with the aforementioned design guidelines and Conditional Use review and approval criteria, and make findings on the development proposal related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Height.** As noted above, the maximum building height permitted is four stories with the potential for two bonus stories provided the upper levels above four stories are stepped back a minimum of 30 feet. While the proposed building appears to be in general compliance with this requirement, consideration should not only be given to context, but also minimizing the appearance of rooftop appurtenances. As noted on the elevations, there are two rooftop appurtenances that provide access to the roof. While the Zoning Code allows for such roof appurtenances to exceed the maximum height, it does require them to be “...the minimum structure necessary to provide access.”

With regard to context, structures within the 500 block of W Washington Avenue are primarily three stories in height and of a vernacular residential architectural massing. There are two four-story structures located within proximity to the project site, including those to the south on W Main Street.

Staff requests the Commission feedback and findings with regard to overall building height, not only as it relates to context, but also in term of the scale of rooftop appurtenances.

- **Building Entry Orientation and Ground Level Activation.** While walk-up units are proposed, it is difficult to discern main building entries from unit entries. In addition, the building footprint includes large recesses in the building wall along the street, and the garage opening is located flush with the front building wall along the street. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the street level activation and building orientation.
- **Building Design and Composition.** While the overall proposed building design incorporates articulation and façade modulation, consideration should be given to site's context and the building rhythm with the 500 block of W Washington Avenue. Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the overall building design as it relates to the overall mass and scale, building proportions and articulation (vertical/horizontal and varied floor-to-floor heights), size and rhythm of windows, positive termination at the top of the building, etc.
- **Materials.** As noted in the plans, the exterior material schedule includes a composition of composite panel system, masonry both brick and stone elements in multiple colors and finishes, and metal panels. Staff requests UDC make findings on the overall composition of the material palette, as well as ornamentation and detailing.
- **Landscape and Open Spaces.** The project site presents a unique redevelopment opportunity given its location within the W Washington Avenue corridor. Consideration should be given to design of the proposed street facing courtyard plaza spaces and front yard landscape areas not only in terms of enhancing the pedestrian environment, but also in terms of framing/transitioning from both the public and private realms. Staff requests the Commission's feedback and guidance on the proposed planting plan, and plant selection and quantities as it relates to providing year-round color, layering and texture, as well as an adequate buffer from the street, and the overall landscape and programming of the at-grade courtyard areas in terms of softening hardscape areas and planned amenities, i.e. seating, lighting, etc.

Note, since the Commission is an advisory body on this request, the Commission's formal action should be structured an advisory recommendation. Staff would advise against the use of the Initial/Final approach for this request.

**APPENDIX – Sec. 28.071, “General Provisions for Downtown and Urban Districts,” MGO**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
  - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
  - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
  - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
  - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.
4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

**Table 28E-1:** Building Materials in Downtown and Urban Districts.

Building Materials	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	Standards (see footnotes)
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Concrete Panels (Tilt-up or Precast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	C
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			D
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			D
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Transparent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than thirty-three percent (33%) of any building.

B - Wood and fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story except between the sidewalk and the bottom of storefront windows or as an accent material.

C - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.

D - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used on building facades facing State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

E - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal

F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.

(g) Equipment and Service Area Screening.

1. Outdoor loading areas or mechanical equipment are not permitted in the front yard. When visible from an abutting public street or walkway, they shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall, or screen of plant material.
2. No doors or openings providing access to parking or loading facilities shall abut the Capitol Square, State Street or King Street.
3. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the principal structure.

(h) Screening of Rooftop Equipment.

1. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
2. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials. (Am. by ORD-15-00104, 10-15-15)