



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 317-323 E Wilson Street

Application Type: Redevelopment of an existing building into an extended stay hotel in the UMX District
Final Approval is Requested

Legistar File ID # [69918](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Andy Inman, North Central Group | A.J. Robitschek, GBA

Project Description: The applicant is requesting Final Approval for the adaptive re-use of the existing buildings currently known as Rubins Furniture into an extended stay hotel with approximately 45 guest rooms, rooftop patio, and fitness room. The scope of work includes the restoration and repair of the four-story masonry building and exterior renovations to the adjacent two-story building.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **approving** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *"All new buildings less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet and are not approved pursuant to (a) above, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#)."* Note, Section 28.071(3) only applies to additions and new construction, not façade alterations.

Related Zoning Information: The property is zoned Urban Mixed-Use (UMX). The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a permitted use under the Zoning Code. The UMX zone district also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings.

Summary of Design Considerations

Planning Division staff requests that the UDC review the project, make findings, and base their decision on the aforementioned review standards. In this case, this item is returning to the UDC for Final Approval to address the comments/conditions specified in the UDC's Initial Approval, including:

- The Commission agreeing with the basic premise of reusing the materials and design of the existing buildings.
- Consideration of an alternate color palette to reduce contrast in brick and EIFS.
- Providing a more unified building composition between the top and bottom of the building, including aligning the window elements and wrapping EIFS around the top of the third floor.
- Giving consideration to the treatment of the John Nolen facing elevation.

Staff provides the following comments related to these items:

- **Overall Building Composition.** Overall, staff believes that positive efforts have been made to create an overall building design that is more cohesive, including adjusting window and wall openings to more in-line on both the upper and lower portions of the building, and wrapping EIFS detailing as well as the masonry base around building corners. Staff further notes the colors have been adjusted to address UDC feedback. Consideration should also still be given to maintaining horizontal and vertical lines between

buildings and building elements, as well as the EIFS detail proportions surrounding windows and the width of EIFS bands.

- **Updated Rear Elevation.** Recognizing that the rear building elevation is not a primary building elevation, it still is a prominent elevation and there is still an opportunity to capitalize on potential lake views. While some window openings have been increased in size on this elevation, consideration should still be given to increasing the number of windows and other efforts considered to reduce the amount of blank wall space.
- **Signage.** As noted on the elevations, potential sign areas and sign types are provided. Staff requests UDC review and comment on the proposed sign locations and types. Please note that the proposed signage on the back of the building are not permitted as this building elevation does not face a public right-of-way or a parking lot that is used by the hotel and which is secured under easement. Signage on this elevation would require special approval from UDC. A separate review and approval will be required for all new signage.

Summary of UDC Initial Approval Comments and Conditions of Approval

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the March 9, 2022, Initial Approval are provided below:

- It's refreshing to see the reuse of some buildings downtown. We often say minimize EIFS, maybe it's worth revisiting the reasoning for that for everyone on the Commission.
- For an informal prohibition of EIFS? It goes way back before my time on the Commission. It has to do with some of the buildings during the post-modern boom that were lacking detail with material that was not very durable in certain locations, it was just a cheap and inexpensive way to mimic historic details that were a little clunky because they didn't have the precision that the originals might have had. The staff report gives us a little guidance as to the building being existing, if we're patching and infilling that's a different case than something coming from the ground up. At some point we should revisit and clarify our directives on the use of that material.
- Right now it's EIFS, it's the maintenance and how you detail it originally. In this instance, I think because the building is already EIFS, if they're going to reuse some of it I would be in support because it's "grandfathered in" somewhat, and also is more conducive, they're not trying to make it look like a Neo-Classical building.
- The EIFS of yesterday is not the same, it's more durable and can do more quality of detailing. I don't know that I love this, I'm almost indifferent. I love the approach of maintaining the four story building, I support that design move, but I don't know that it ends here, that this is the right design. Something about the whiteness in contrast to the other building, or just the vertical portions, not sure but something is fighting a little bit. The connector piece, is that flush or inset?
 - It may want to be flush, we're working with the existing wall and finish, it is relatively in line with that red brick building currently.
 - The connector piece would be more or less flush. Heather Bailey, the City's Preservation Planner did review this, and she really liked how that detail broke up the two buildings. I do believe the white will stand slightly proud of the dark.
- It looks like the white is proud of the dark between the two buildings. The EIFS or the white should definitely be proud by a couple inches just to show that separation.
- You show a regular rhythm of the glazing on the four-story building, except on one side at the top, is that on purpose?
 - Yes, as it relates to the historic tax credit process to not have a new additional opening; that was not there during original construction of the building.

- I agree with the contrast on the building between the dark vertical window bands and the EIFS. We see sleek modern buildings that are typically metal panel, but wonder if it should be a little more toned down between the EIFS and the window bands. Less striking, less contrast to take attention away from the Rubin's building, which is the centerpiece of the project.
- Appreciate the historic care to the building. What's the thickness of the EIFS now vs. future?
 - It is currently a 12-inch CMU wall and a 1-inch EIFS outboard. Given current codes we will have to average 3-inches or so.
- It's successful with the different surfaces being prowed, but I do wonder the practicality of reusing any existing, removing the cross hatch pattern and getting down to the reveals. EIFS does provide some value for energy efficiency, I'd hate to see any removed.
- The rooftop patio is an exciting amenity and feature, I hope you take it farther.
- The north elevation on E Wilson Street, the new EIFS vertical lines and joints themselves make sense, but seem unrelated to the base of what is along the street. If you're putting in new windows where there's stone right now, I question if it could relate more to what's going on up above. Having strong vertical lines coming down with darker EIFS and some glazing could relate to what's happening at the base more. Right now there's so much detail at human scale, to go past the stone with the horizontal rectangular windows, there's so little human scale and a bit of a disconnect between top and bottom.
- I'd echo that the rhythm established on top doesn't relate to the base at all.
- Congratulations for tackling the adaptive reuse. That piece of the Rubin's building and reusing that makes me very happy.
- I would recommend you look at the backside of the two-story building and keep in mind that this is lake view property, prime real estate. There's a railroad and kind of back-of-house of a lot of buildings along this stretch, that's an incredible view and opportunity, but it seems like what you're doing is relatively modest compared to the opportunity you have. Hopefully a someday redesigned Law Park and lakefront could be the premier stretch in our City, this would have a front row seat to that. Maybe there's a missed opportunity happening, not necessarily suggesting it all needs to be glazing.
- The EIFS would look lighter if the darker form came down and went across the base all the way around the building, it would help resolve the punched opening differences between the base and the top.
- The tenant signage needs a bit of resolution, maybe there's something that can be more integral to the forms than just a horizontal rectangle on both sides.
- The base to top relation along E Wilson Street bothered me too. A white box floating on a dark base, or realigning those windows? It's jarring.
- I did wonder about the long vertical EIFS panels and was hoping the front façade broken up by dark strips could be a different material. I worry about two stories of unbroken EIFS, to look clean, crisp and modern in that long vertical application. Would it make sense to give some horizontal reveals to those long panels? The view to the lake, it feels like a missed opportunity on the backside of the building.
- The inset dark lines of the vertical EIFS panels, is that achieved with paint or a darker EIFS material?
 - It's intended to be grooves, to cast shadow and provide a darker break in the material.
- It's awkward looking in several subtle but very notable ways. Happy to see the Rubin's building being maintained and rehabbed, but the building next door...a large part of it is a color issue. It presents as very bright white and starkly modern, you can't get past it when you look at the Rubin's building. You said you don't want to compete with the Rubin's rehab but that's exactly what you're doing. Really detracts from the rehab.
- Several years back we approved the building across the street, then Planning came back and said it was a brick district. Any reaction internally about that related to this building?
 - This is one building, so as far as the brick restoring it is quite an enhancement. The two-story building, we are reducing the amount of EIFS there now. Those base/top related comments, whether we wrap it or the punched openings are modified to relate to the top, we can work

with staff on that. The color of the white, as I look at this image I think the material image does a better job of presenting an off-off white than the rendering does.

- Even if it turns out that saving that one inch isn't practical, there's still a provision in the ordinance that we can with authority approve this material on that two-story building.

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **INITIAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0).

The motion provided for the following:

- Consider an alternate colors to reduce the color contrast between the red brick and white EIFS.
- Consideration should be given to providing a better connection between the top and bottom of the two-story building, including aligning vertical window elements/lines and wrapping the dark EIF around the top of the first floor.
- Consideration should be given to the treatment of the back of the two-story building.
- The Commission agrees with the basic premise of reusing the materials and design of the existing buildings.

