



Agenda Item #: 8

Project Title: 310-322 E Washington Avenue - Planned Development (PD) in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 4. 2nd Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 74526

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Russell Knudson, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper, Shane Bernau, Amanda Arnold and Juliana Bennett

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of November 9, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for redevelopment of St. John's Church located at 310-322 E. Washington Avenue. Registered and speaking in support were Mark Binkowski, Brian Reed and Doug Hursh, all representing St. John's Church; and Andy Laufenberg, representing Potter Lawson, Inc.

The development team has spent the last year working through financing, design, neighborhood meetings, and has secured affordable housing funds from both the County and the City to further St. John's mission of truly affordable housing. The proposed building would be built to ten-stories (eight plus the two bonus stories), and has transitioned to a Planned Development (PD) due to the grades on the site and integration of different uses. St. John's would occupy a new space for their congregation and worship facility, with 5,000 square feet of space for a partnering organization on the ground floor, affordable apartments above, a lobby and various support uses. The landscape plan shows how uses are split up, with the middle of the E. Washington Avenue frontage showing a grand stair into the worship space. The residential entry is located around the corner on Hancock Street to distinguish the two separate entries and street frontages. The church has long history of using planters for community gardens and sunflowers along the street; they will build on and continue that with various sized planters all around the perimeter.

The proposed L-shaped building steps back partially along Hancock and E. Washington Avenue at the tenth floor, providing a terrace space along the north façade. The architecture establishes a building language that created separate identities for the partnering space, the church and the apartment building, all while paying homage to the existing church in terms of material usage and building form. Building materials include stone veneer panel that wraps around the whole base of the building, colored or stained glass that defines the worship space, and precast framework that takes note from Old Gothic stained glass as a modern interpretation. This volume extends up the tenth floor level for a very abstract nod to a spire. Openings within that stone panel have become greater for views into that apartment area. The brick veneer façade with punched openings is broken up by a recessed band of glass and brass anodized metal. Height will occur within the plantings to break up that façade. The entrance for the apartment amenity is accentuated by an accent material, and garage elements to the parking ramp are now squared up with the brick volume.

The project is in excess of the eighteen-inch design standard for UMX zoning; they looked at different strategies to modify the proposed design to be compliant with zoning, but found that the project was substantially compromised and not feasible when it was modified to be underneath the eighteen inch threshold of the walk. They prepared a series of sections to explain the proposed design and challenges with applying the zoning. The total grade change along E. Washington Avenue from Hancock Street towards Capitol is thirteen-feet. They looked at stepping the first floor, which would be result in significant internal ramping into the building, causing the first floor to be infeasible. The building

would also get pinched at the southern end for height. Lowering the first floor elevation to the threshold required by Zoning eliminates the occupiable space along Hancock Street, making the first floor too low for an entry off of Hancock Street, exposes the parking and buries the partnering organization into the hill on the other side of the building.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I remember this project very well. I understand the change in zoning approach with the grade considerations. I'm wondering how many of the comments and suggestions from last time have been incorporated, along with the many changes associated with the zoning approach.
 - Some of the big changes include the residential entrance on the Hancock façade stone wrapping around the corner with punched openings, opening that up to a glassier element along Hancock with the plinth not wrapping around the corner. And the detailing around the St. John's entrance on E. Washington, with the canopies extended through into the partnering organization for more continuity, and the brick has been dropped down for more cohesiveness.
- The project remains a very nice project and achieving some really wonderful ambitious goals about the uses in the space, particularly the goals related to below median income housing units. The material palette suggested this is thought to be a long-term building with the heavy stone materiality.
 - That's absolutely correct.
- How long do we understand a commitment can be made for the income levels of the people living in this building?
 - Right now we have committed to a forty-year affordability period. The church has no future plan or intention to not make it affordable housing. We expect it to continue well beyond 40 years.
- Can you speak to the design team's summary of how this project is achieving the PD objectives?
 - Promotion of integrated land use, public and private facilities, the unique mixture of uses with the church and affordable housing, high quality development consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comp Plan and neighborhood plan, fewer parking stalls (sixty-five) due to proximity to the proposed BRT, the Mifflin bike corridor and the Square, as well as the affordable housing component.
- The amount of glass detracts from that. This building doesn't read like housing units, it seems quite cold to me actually. I do wonder if there might be opportunities for fenestration to give us more of that nice materiality you're considering.
- I think it's a really nice project. As always, your attention to details goes a long way. I like your description of the beveled aperture on the corner tower element. The expression and expressive architecture of color and light down on the bottom is really exciting, more exciting than anything we've seen tonight. I like the layering of the landscape into the architecture, into the base and the plinth, as well as the plan selections and furniture on the back terrace. I really like where it's headed.
- I'm not sure about the appropriateness of the wooden planter boxes outside the masonry wall between the sidewalk and the building.
- I didn't notice the details, if they are actually wooden on the inside or if the wood is just a cladding.
- Seems residential on a building like this to have wooden planter boxes along the sidewalk, vs. something more built-in.
- I agree, I overlooked that and thought the photo was associated with the terrace. It does seem a little residential in scale and doesn't really fit with the architecture of the rest of the project.
 - We can certainly revisit that. The idea there was to add warmth in front of the stone.
- You have bike racks in the City right-of-way. I don't have an issue but usually you have to find a home for those within your own property.
- With regard to the amount of glass, some of those bedrooms are pretty small. A bedroom that's 10 x 12 with a bed and floor-to-ceiling glass facing E Washington Avenue southeast, I don't know if I could sleep in a bedroom like that. It will be super cold in the winter and noisy all the time, I wonder if you thought about reducing the amount of glass from a livability and energy efficiency standpoint.

- From last year to now we actually did reduce that window area. Having more glass at that corner helps break down the overall scale, our experience with other projects is that tenants really appreciate having that much natural light. We do provide black-out roller shades in the bedrooms, generally what we've seen in affordable housing is smaller windows. We think providing more open natural light is actually a positive, but we did reduce the glass area in the brick portion of the façade.
- Kudos to the team for the reductions, it is starting to look more appropriate. Maybe the brick mass is right where it wants to be. I like the glass corner detail a lot, it gives a levity to that corner. My question is how far to bring the width of that fenestration and whether it's appropriate.
- There appear to be mullions that suggest mechanical or ventilation plans.
 - Those are operable windows on both sides of the building.
- Really nice project. Where is the congregation going to relocate to while this is being reconstructed?
 - The congregation is actively exploring that right now for the estimated 18 months of construction. They are looking at a fall of 2023 construction start.
- Currently where do congregation members park?
 - The church has a few parking stalls along the Hancock Street driveway, but my understanding is primarily the congregation members are utilizing street parking or potentially the Brayton Lot across the street.
- Is some of that parking underground dedicated for the new church space?
 - We are looking at supplying some of that parking for the church employees, but it will not be a main source of parking for congregants during services.
- I really like the stained glass, it lets people know or at least gives a strong hint of what's inside there. Softly lit from the inside at night will be really nice.
- Kudos for the landscape design, I always like to look at the points provided, this is one of the biggest ratios I've ever seen. The plan is drawn at 15 times what was required by the City, phenomenal.
- I like the fact they are separated by permanent plantings of perennials and spring bulbs. If those beds get planted with tomatoes and peppers they'll get picked by anybody coming down the street, and maybe that's the church's intention. Regarding the sedum levels, maybe the tenants themselves would like a more protected area of community gardening. I can see some of that space being allocated for small raised wooden boxes for the tenants to grow stuff up on the rooftop. Nice project both in its goals and application of solid design to reach those goals. Looking forward to seeing it built.
- I am so excited by this project. I appreciate the social justice move of this, using this real estate in this way. This is primo real estate along with supportive services, good architecture and affordable housing, it's inspiring and I thank the client and the architect for the message you send with this project and how you're going about it.
- We need to make a finding on this ultimately, can you describe how the bonus stories demonstrate for a higher quality building than can be achieved without them?
 - The top two floors contain a total of 27 units. With this site the big challenge is the economics, maximizing the density on the site is critical to the overall financial feasibility, and allows us to do things like the stone along E. Washington Avenue, the framing with the precast at the corner, using the brick, and putting some more money into the façade beyond what you would normally see with affordable housing.
- Integrate the change in grade and minimize the blank wall at the corner.
- I don't have any concerns about the extra eighteen-inches, it's not anything that the architecture doesn't compensate for.
- Really nice landscaping boxes stepping down along there could go a long way. We saw the exhibits on the alternatives and how they complicate things more than simplify them. You're well justified there.
- The planter boxes and the growing food out front is probably pretty aligned with the mission, I doubt they would care if anyone took anything to feed themselves. The only issue I would have with that out front is not necessarily the plants themselves but all the things stuck in the ground around the plants, tomato cages would be more of a detraction from the building than the plants.

- We often see disconnect between landscape and architecture where you have wonderful architecture and the planter boxes follow the grade, so you have this orthogonal rectangular form that's the only thing stacked down the grade. With these strong horizontals it would be really nice if the setting of the planter box was intentioned to keep it orthogonal with everything else.

Action

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