URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT December 13, 2023

Agenda Item #: **8**

Project Title: 1202 S Park Street - New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 7

Legistar File ID #: 81072

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Wendy von Below, Shane Bernau, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper, Marsha Rummel, and Rafeeq Asad

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Summary

At its meeting of December 13, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new mixed-use building located at 1202 S Park Street. Registered and speaking in support were Bernie Lange, Ross Treichel, Steve Shulfer, and Julian Walters.

The proposed five-story, 39-unit mixed-use building would center on youth-centered transitional housing with first floor commercial tenants. Entry points are not yet fully determined and may move after topographical maps. Floors 2-4 contain 39 apartment units and resident amenities, with a club room on the fifth floor with a smaller outdoor patio space and residential units. The first floor does include a public bus shelter. Color in a wide range of tones is common in youth-centered housing, they are presenting several different concepts, palettes and intensity of colors. The general color palette is light and dark earth tones with pops of color in dark gray modular brick, fiber cement panel systems with extruded aluminum channels, and metal storefront for commercial. The gable roof design would allow solar panels. An official WHEDA submittal would be in January 2024.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Could you explain where building articulation occurs?
    - East elevation articulation stays at the fourth floor with a mild stepback to a dark gray vertical element, there is a stepback at the third floor to the white façade. On the back we alternate between 2-15 feet.
- This is Informational, as you progress your design you will need to have renderings. It's hard to understand your ideas in elevations. These are varying concepts? This pitched roof element is not in every concept, correct, but it is basically the same height?
    - We have to study them all, but the pitched one is basically the same height.
- On Park Street, a lot of the architecture is very flat. As you look at long view or context, you see a lot of buildings that are somewhat coplanar with not a lot of articulation or undulation or push 'n pull. That is a missed opportunity for some of these smaller multi-family units. There could be more dynamic material changes, as well as different varying planes to help celebrate the architecture. This could benefit from that, so we don't have planes of single colors that are either coplanar or very close to being coplanar as the design progresses. Years ago we looked at a building further north or east on Park Street that had a pitched roof that did not go over very well. I will rethink the pitched roof concept and probably something a little bit more flat or with a parapet is more appropriate for this level of design. Four different pitches doesn't work at this scale. Look at that.
- Am I reading this right that the balcony doors, the head height on those is not matching window heights, is that on purpose?
    - The doors are a typical 7' and the windows are at 8'6." We were trying to maximum bringing natural light into the rooms as far back as we can without over-enlarging the window itself.

- Some of the moves make sense, where you enter the site with parking from the west side. I would encourage you to go further with color. There are touches of color, but overall the palette, especially at the pedestrian level, is not as exciting as where you have patterns of color. I would encourage you to go stronger on color.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I would agree with the comments on color. I think the introduction of color is fun and I like it, but it would be important to carry it down to the pedestrian level where people by car, waking, or biking will get to experience it more. I kind of like the first concept the best, that datum is kind of held by the windows and doors, the color brings them to the same datum, there was more of a clean organization with this one, plus the colors. If you could pull that color down to the base plinth, even better. There is something kind of funky with a touch of a historical nod in that last one with the pitched roofs. I could maybe get on board with that too. Otherwise, I would say when you come back, I would be looking for what's happening with the street trees on Park Street, that street frontage would be great and it's a common thread with all these Park Street projects, thinking about an improvement to the pedestrian environment and improving that environment, including bike parking, street trees, just adequate space for pedestrians. If there are any other bike parking areas outside of the building, just seeing how that works.
- I'm definitely pro-color, this particular one doesn't really work for me as much as the colors around the windows in the first and second variations that were shown. I agree, pulling those colors down and somehow finding ways to incorporate them on the ground floor would be good. Especially because the applicant alluded to it, but the idea of color going along with the stated purpose of this housing for transitional young adults coming out of foster care, I mean you know you're moving on to bigger and better things in your life hopefully, and you know, living in a place that has some fun exciting color I think is an expression of those goals and ideals and that kind of resonates with me. Don't be shy about the color. As far as landscaping goes, you have tentative plantings in the wider green areas on the west side of the building towards High Street. If those narrow strips along the building allow it and I think they do, you could break up those long views there with some really narrow columnar evergreens, pencil point junipers and the really narrow arborvitaes, not like emerald or techny but north pole or degroot spire, there's even columnar rose of sharons that only get three feet wide if you wanted a flowering shrub, so there's things that could go along there to add greenery and color and also break up those long kind of boring ground level north and south sides of the building. I don't have strong feelings about the gabled roofs, but it seems like if solar panels on the roof are part of that, it seems like that could be worked out with flat roofs as well. I would lean more toward the flat roof expressions.
- I wanted to call out the stair towers, pay some more attention to them. They're kind of facing the street and seem plain, maybe they could be something else. I think Christian's point about the pitched roof for solar is the only reason I can think you would do it. Otherwise, it will just collect snow, it doesn't seem to go with this multi-family more urban style, a pitched roof seems more suburban in a way. Own your urban-ness and consider that.
- I would encourage the applicant to think about what's happening at the pedestrian level. There are quite a few sections that have blank walls in some of these schemes, please take a look at that.
- This also relates to the ground level and what Alder Rummel said about the stair tower, pay close attention to the integration of that bus shelter. That could be a really nice element or it could be just a place to collect used newspapers. Something to really focus on because I think it will be well used. I think the pitched roofs add some visual interest, especially if you're going to start integrating color. Don't be timid if you're going to use color like everybody else. Where you have small modular vertical siding versus big squares, the smaller the module you can break that cement board siding down it will give it a more residential scale. Not that is has to look like board and batten or be oriented a certain way, but the smaller modular really help especially if you're considering the use of those extruded metal reveal joints. Those French balconies can look really cheap and tacked on if they're not done right, we'll be looking at how you integrate the railings with the patio doors there. If you could just have operable windows there it might be a bit cleaner.
- To your point about the pitched cap, I think it looks weird when it's all in the same plane. If they were staggered, color and materials that weren't just a solid white. If there was some interest or more design elements to those,

it could be a little bit more successful. When it's all in the same plane it almost looks fake. The roof is a really thin profile, giving it some more detail could work. It definitely has to contrast what's going on below it.

- If they pushed in and out even a few feet that could be dynamic or if one went out and another went out in a series, it could look really cool as you look down Park Street.

Action

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