URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT June 11, 2025

Agenda Item #: 5

Project Title: 139 W Wilson Street - New Multi-Family Residential Building in UMX Zoning. (District 4)

Legistar File ID #: 88479

Members Present: Shane Bernau, Chair; Rafeeq Asad, Jessica Klehr, Harry Graham, Anina Mblinyi, David McLean, Davy Mayer, and Nicholas Hellrood

Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Acting UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of June 11, 2025, the Urban Design Commission **RECEIVED AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION** for a new multi-family residential building in UMX zoning located at 139 W Wilson Street. Registered and speaking in support were Douglas Pahl, and Randall Alexander. Registered in support but not wishing to speak was Nicholas Davies.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission appreciated the contextualization of the presentation. The front entry is bold, but doesn't look like it provides any protection from the elements. The applicant noted the entry could be better protected from the rain. The Commission inquired about the southern end trees against railroad tracks, and if any thought was given to programming that space for views. The applicant noted there is a pergola in that space.

The Commission commented that in this part of the city it is feasible to not provide any parking.

The Commission noted issues with the site plan that still need work: the views and access through the site, the parking turning radius, delivery drop-off/pick-up needs to be accommodated on this site, the entry does not work at five stories and is out of scale, the proportions are off and don't relate to the datums of other buildings and should be revisited, the approach to the crown is getting better, but because the building is so narrow it has to mimic that on both sides. Those two top ends need to relate to each other better, they are undefined and off. The panel design is different, some of the organization with the windows helps a little but there is still work to be done to strengthen the overall composition.

The Commission noted a great opportunity to design something new for Madison. Function should follow form. The darker material meeting the ground makes it appear more structurally sound. This carries the rest of the lighter, taller building well. The applicant noted the elevator penthouse and tops of the north and south elevations will be all precast concrete panels The walnut finish with aluminum accent is very strong, and is articulated on the longer elevations as well, but a horizontal cap of the same material would be stronger; include the actual wood color as part of the"A" at level fifteen.

Commissioner Mbilinyi commented that the entry is stunning and questioned why more glass should be incorporated. The entry proportions are very good, it's a very stunning mural. She suggested to maintain the punched openings, but look for a way to add more openings for more light, and to articulate that into the awning so it's more powerful.

Alder Mayer commented that the entry is bold in a unique way, and inquired about the light source. The applicant noted it is entirely lit and the whole surface would be illuminated. In the summer it will be a magnet for lake flies, and spiders

under the overhang, a maintenance plan will be key. It's an interesting building in a narrow spot and a very good use of land. Not having parking is a risk the developer decides on; you either get tenants who find other ways to get around, or the building doesn't fill up.

The Commission commented that this building came through as purple metal panel the first time and how exciting that color choice was.

Commissioner Asad commented that they are not here to design the building for the developer, but there are guidelines they should refer to relative to magic packs, louvers and vents that are restricted and that will change the façade. There are considerations in the staff report that have been talked about before and are very important. The applicant will need to come back with more detail, contextual detail, and datums.

The Commission commented on the comparison to flat iron being so narrow and tall. The front façade entry piece may work better if it were brought down or brought up a little bit. The smoothness against the textured panels works nicely. Keep maturing the site development, it is nice to provide amenities for the residents instead of being building-locked.

The Commission talked about the previous color version, the bold move splash of color in the entry, and the proportion of a five-story mass being very different at the human scale than what is being shown. Three stories will feel gigantic and colorful, it would be interesting to see an exploration of a different proportion of that space. The backlighting piece is critical for adjacent neighbors.

The Commission inquired about introducing access to the lake and celebrating Madison lakes, which is key point #1 of the Downtown Plan. This corridor terminates awkwardly and doesn't frame the view but actually blocks the view from the street. There are opportunities within the design that were never fully realized or captured. The parking discussion had focused on a space that will be buzzing with drop-off activity, short term parking needs, as well as a pedestrian corridor; the hatched pathway through the site combined with vehicular turning in and out was never fully resolved nor well designed. There are code requirements for accessibility and aisles that need to be paid close attention to.

The Commission discussed the front glass, and the assumption it would be a subtle glow as opposed to a projection of light. Regarding views to the lake through the corridor, that is questionable as perhaps we don't want to draw people through the site as private property, it could be a safety concern. It seems more of an amenity for the residents of the building. There is a difference between access to the lake and to views of the lake.

The Commission mentioned CUNA on Mineral Point Road and the backlit glass as a glowing mass up rather high, which faces an open area that is not residential, but is still light pollution. In this location, the courthouse is directly across the street and won't be affected the light.

Action

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