

The development at 17-25 Webster Street is before the Urban Design Commission for an informational presentation. The following is a short summary of design-related considerations that the Planning Division has raised on the current proposal.

This proposal is subject to the Zoning Code's Downtown Design Standards with additional guidance from the Advisory Downtown Design Guidelines. The Standards cannot be waived, unless approved as a variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The project appears to comply with those standards, except where further clarifications have been requested by the Zoning Administrator. In this case, the project does not appear to meet the code requirements for door and window openings along the ground floor on Mifflin Street. The Zoning Administrator has also requested confirmation statistics on Useable Open Space.

The Zoning Ordinance also requires the Urban Design Commission review the project against the Downtown Design Guidelines. Numerous guidelines relate to specific issues on this request. These issues are summarized below:

- **Building Mass and Width:** A significant concern for the Planning Division is the resulting bulk that would be allowed by rezoning the property. The Division's preference is a project designed in conformance with the underlying DR-1 zoning standards, in particular, maintaining a maximum building width of 60 feet along Webster Street. The design intent is to require a rhythm of spaces and the penetration of light and air between buildings in areas where smaller buildings exist. Along this block, this standard has the added benefit of providing small glimpses to the rear of the Lamp House building.
- **Articulation and Orientation of Ground Level:** The Planning Division is concerned about the relatively unarticulated ground floor walls resulting on portions of the Webster side of the building where the sidewalk abuts the under-building parking. This has been an issue in other large downtown developments due to the changes in grade. In this case, the grade drops about 12 feet from south to north. At its tallest point, a relatively unarticulated seven-foot tall building wall sits five feet back from the sidewalk. Treatments such as individual unit stairs or other façade enhancements should be considered. Additionally, there are similar concerns on the Mifflin Street side. That building wall includes the underground garage entrance and little other articulation. Both facades must first meet the zoning code requirements for window openings.
- **Building Materials:** The Planning Division has concerns about the two primary building materials. As the primary building material, brick should be used as an alternative to the ground-face CMU. The dark vertical metal panels proposed on the upper two floors cause concerns. A better alternative would be to utilize a material consistent with the rest of the exterior (preferably brick) to unify and simplify the design. As proposed, the highly contrasting materials draw more attention to the top of the building where it would be preferable for height to provide a more neutral backdrop to the landmark Lamp House.

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