

Dear UDC Commissioners:

While originally filing a UDC application for initial/final approval, the applicant has decided to again go for an informational presentation at the August 20, 2014 meeting. No action can be taken by the Plan Commission without a recommendation from UDC. Staff doesn't typically provide reports for informational presentations, though we thought it would be helpful to provide a list of staff's design-related issues on the project for your consideration.

The Planning Division acknowledges there have been many improvements to the project. In staff's opinion, the project has moved closer to meeting the approval standards. The applicable standards are those for Planned Developments (including height exceeding the Zoning Height Map) and the Standards for UDD 4. The simplified façade is enhanced with vision glass at the corner, additional street-facing entrances, the use of masonry, and the removal of wall packs. Despite these improvements and the project's many positive aspects, the Planning Division notes the following design-related issues.

In conversation with the project architect, staff understands that certain design refinements are likely possible to address some of the below concerns. However, the first two items regarding height and sidewalk width are understood to be beyond the proposed program and would result in substantial changes to the building's program.

- **Height & Plan Consistency.** A key question for the UDC, Plan Commission, and Common Council is whether the project can meet the standards for excess height and bonus stories. Staff notes that height was among the key considerations of the Lamp House Report, which was adopted in March 2014. The portion of the building on 15 north Webster Street is four (4) stories taller than recommended in adopted Plans. In staff's analysis, the four (4) proposed extra stories of height along North Webster Street add approximately two additional hours of shade on the roof of the Lamp House during the Fall and Spring Equinoxes. (Equinox impacts are used as they measure the average amount of sunlight that would reach the building throughout the year.) A key question is whether the building, while much improved in its design, can meet the "truly exceptional" bonus story-threshold as recommended in the Downtown Plan.
- **Webster Street Sidewalk Width.** Since its initial discussions on the project, staff has recommended that the applicant provides a three-foot wide easement to allow for the widening of the public sidewalk along North Webster Street to eight (8) feet. The recently approved apartment building to the north is providing such an easement and wider sidewalk. The subject site represents the balance of that block and as proposed, the sidewalk "necks down" at the hotel, where both the Planning and Traffic Engineering Divisions anticipate more pedestrian movements and conflicts. The Traffic Engineering Division is currently recommending this as a condition of approval, though if implemented this would require substantial changes to the building which is proposed to be built to the sidewalk edge along portions of its North Webster Frontage.
- **North Building Elevation – Lamp House Side of the Building.** The Planning Division believes changes should be considered to the side/rear of the building where it lies in close proximity to the Lamp House. Among the concerns is the emergency generator enclosure. Staff would prefer that if this feature cannot be relocated to a non-conspicuous location, it should be integrated into the building itself. While the façade has some articulation as it "steps" up away from the Lamp House, that portion of the building lacks an articulated base. Staff question the

amount of metal siding on the north side of the building. There are also discrepancies between the Landscape Plan, Site Plan, and First Floor Plan on details for this area.

- **Parking Garage Door on Webster Street.** The project has overhead garage doors within four (4) feet of the street. If the project were developed in conventional zoning, the code would require the parking garage door be set back at least 10 feet. However, the applicant is proposing to rezone out of conventional zoning for the purpose of achieving additional height. This garage door placement standard is not required under the broader, more flexible PD standards. However, staff believe the garage doors should be further recessed and be of a design quality to enhance the street-level on Webster Street.
- **Further Articulation of Street-Facing Facades.** The Planning Division very much appreciates the use of masonry and simplification of the building's body in one color and is of the opinion that this is the most successful façade composition presented for this project. In reviewing the latest plans, the Division believes the building body (floors three-eight) does read somewhat "flat" and would recommend the applicant consider ways to provide additional depth variation in the facades and/or treatments to the windows and openings. Staff would emphasize more subtle details versus significant changes that would again have the facades read too "busy." Staff also has concerns on the lack of articulation of the building's east side, when viewed on inbound East Washington Avenue.
- **Review of Primary Exterior Materials.** Staff would also like the Urban Design Commission to weigh-in specifically on the selected material palette, including the proposed masonry. While staff has not seen the material samples, the architect has explained that the block has a subtle "groundface" texture, which is intended to be of a slightly different texture from the smaller block proposed windows. Staff would like a confirmation on the actual colors being proposed.



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