



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1858-1890 E. Washington Avenue
Application Type: New Development in UDD #8 – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [64302](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, Acting UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Steve Doran, Galway Company, Inc.; Adam Fredendall, JLA Architects

Project Description: The applicant is seeking initial/final approval for a new six-story mixed-use building with approximately 15,000 square feet of ground floor commercial and 290 residential units above with lower level parking.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an informational presentation on March 10, 2021.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on July 26, 2021.
- The Common Council is scheduled review the related Certified Survey Map on August 3, 2021.

Approval Standards:

The UDC is an approving body on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 8 (“UDD 8”), block 9, which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in [MGO Section 33.24\(15\)](#).

In applying the standards, the code states that the Urban Design Commission shall apply the UDD 8 district requirements and guidelines as may be appropriate in order to implement the Core Development Principles of the [East Washington Capitol Gateway Corridor Plan](#). In order to approve, ordinance requires that the development is found to meet the requirements and conform as much as possible to the guidelines.

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

Planning Division staff recommends that the UDC review the project, provide findings, and base their decision on the aforementioned standards for UDD 8. This includes specific findings related to requested bonus stories, as noted below.

Design Considerations

In making their decision, Staff requests that the UDC address the following comments and make findings related to these points and relevant code references. Staff have reviewed this request and believes that it can be found consistent with the height, setback, stepback, and related standards of UDD 8, as noted below.

- **Terraced Retaining Wall.** As noted in the previous report, due to size of the building footprint and grade changes along East Washington Avenue, a relatively large retaining wall is proposed along East Washington Avenue, which will increase in height moving east to west across that frontage. Based on the earlier feedback, the applicant had incorporated a terraced wall with landscaping, in an attempt to break down the wall's scale. Staff continued to have concerns about the wall and the degree of vertical separation between the finished floor height of the first floor and E Washington sidewalk. The applicant has responded with a revised concept that features direct stair connections that will be perpendicular to the East Washington sidewalk, in addition to terracing and landscaping. Updated drawings are uploaded to the Legislative file and [linked here](#). The additional stairs shown on the revised plans are wider and more prominent than those on the earlier plans. Staff appreciates the applicant's efforts and believes the resulting concept provides better visual and physical connections between the building face and sidewalk. Staff request the UDC provide specific comments and findings on this feature. Please note, the applicant has indicated that additional perspective renderings may be available prior to the meeting to depict this revised concept.
- **First Street Setback.** The previous staff report noted inconsistencies with the setbacks along North First Street. In the current plans, the setback along this stretch varies between about seven (7) and eighteen (18) feet. Staff notes the street right-of-way narrows towards the north, which creates the larger setback north of the driveway entrance into the building from N First Street. Urban Design District 8 has a defined setback range of 5-10 feet at this location, however it allows the Urban Design Commission to grant greater setbacks to allow for the articulation of long building facades or for the development of additional usable public open spaces, such as pedestrian plazas, as long as design elements are included to maintain a uniform character in the District. Staff does not have concerns related to the proposed setbacks considering the length of the façade and the varying right-of-way depth, though requests that UDC consider and make specific findings on this item.
- **Townhouse Design.** The design of the North First Street-facing townhouses was among the points raised by commissioners during the informational presentation. The revised plans include modifications to those townhouse facades. Staff request UDC provide a specific finding related to those design elements as they relate to the approval standards. As a reference, staff notes that there are not prescriptive design standards within the UDD 8, though the code includes the following:
 - **Building & Massing Requirement 7(a)i.** All visible sides of the building shall be designed with details that complement the front facade. Side facades that are visible from the primary street shall receive complementary design attention.
 - **Building & Massing Requirement 7(a)ii.** Blank building walls with little detail or variety along primary facades shall be avoided. Improvements to these buildings shall include details at the street level to create a more comfortable pedestrian scale and character.
 - **Building & Massing Requirement 7(a)iii.** Architectural details at the ground floor shall be provided to enhance the pedestrian character of the street. Details shall include window and door trim, recessed entries, awnings, and/or other features.
 - **Building & Massing Guideline 7(b)ii.** Building facades should be designed to create a visual distinction between the upper and lower floors of the building.
 - **Building & Massing Guideline 7(b)iii.** A positive visual termination at the top of the building with decorative cornices or parapets should be provided.
 - **Building & Massing Guideline 7(b)iv.** Buildings should be designed as products of their own time. Copying historic appearance and details is discouraged.

Summary of Previously Provided UDC Commissioner Comments

As a reference, staff refers the Commission to their comments from the March 10, 2021 informational presentation:

- We need a broader discussion on E. Washington Avenue. The townhomes should be redesigned to make them more engaged. There was quite a bit of discussion at neighborhood meetings of resident gathering areas, play areas. They are proposing greenspace, but there was an idea to create a space still in the building. Very visible from east side, west side, south side and public market on the north corner. The community really wants to see how this architecture could be much more engaging.
- I would agree I don't quite understand how the townhomes fit into that façade. That warrants some review, maybe because they're white, those railings look out of scale and out of place compared to the building behind it. The population that might live here, next to the City market, I sure wish there were larger units so families could live there. Madison is considering this to be a hot new spot in town. You broke this up into an "E" shape with green spaces in between, but with the height of the buildings, will they ever get any sun in there?
- I'm really glad you're thinking green roofs, this orientation of the spaces is east-west, at the summer solstice they'd get a lot of sun but that's only a couple months of the year.
- There are some setback concerns that need to be considered.
- There is some language in UDD No. 8 that allows the Commission to make an interpretation. Given the traffic volumes on First Street, the proposed massing of the building, and the setbacks of the new market, those are things the Commission can consider if there's adequate landscaping and activation along that façade. The E. Washington side has been revised so the underground parking is within the setback.
- The townhouse looks very industrial, there's not a real clear connection, no windows on the floor level that would have a view out. It's doesn't look very inviting. That needs a little bit of work.
- On E. Washington I'd like to see some creative design other than a slab with a railing around it, which may not be as attractive in the winter. Maybe more of a continuation of a wall with the opportunity for some plantings. It looks really institutional and repetitive. I'm also concerned with the deep roof areas between the fingers of the building and what those will look like. You really do need to provide some exterior space for your tenants, it's going to be very dark. Is there a pedestrian connection to the park?
- A lot of people park in that lot to use Burr Jones Park. I'm not advocating for more surface parking but as a management strategy that could continue. Echoing some of the other comments, I really like the porch or the plinth on this frontage. Another layer of plantings at the top behind the railing would be beneficial and nicer. Overall I think this side is much more successful in the ways it feels architecturally, especially with plants layered into it. Equity and accessibility need to be thought of. Overall I like how it meets the streetscape.
- On the other side the amount of blank wall and that scale is not nearly as successful. A deeper setback is OK but right now it's not used in a great way, the elevation and height of those porches is too great. The courtyards and general massing of the building, I definitely want to look out over the park and towards downtown, that's the preferable frontage as a tenant. That side does have the surface parking lot and the less continuous façade. Keep in mind that that's probably the more desirable side and that the park and view towards downtown is a real amenity to you.
- I would really advocate taking any parking down to E. Washington and move it farther east as possible to avoid a switchback ramp, it makes it look less accessible. If you go further east you may decrease the amount of ramping.
- The entrance to the apartment building needs a statement, it doesn't distinguish it enough from the commercial development. I echo the townhouse comments, they could be articulated more in a series

versus a strong horizontal bar, and make those porches really usable. You've got the extra setback, maybe a low wall could lessen the amount of railing you need to express there.

- Overall the use of materials, the colors, the openings, and the proportion of the building has a really good start. It doesn't fall back on any revival styles, it shows real nice self-confidence and good scale, particularly what's going on across E. Washington where The Marling is located.
- I strongly hope the windows will be aluminum and not vinyl.