



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 12 N. Few Street
Application Type: Addition and New Construction in UDD 8 – Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [63801](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, Acting UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: John Seamon, SEA Design | Jeremy Knudson

Project Description: The applicant is seeking final approval for additions to an existing single-story masonry block building, and a new two-story addition to provide 8 commercial spaces and 8 one-bedroom residential units aimed at providing live-work units.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an informational presentation on February 24, 2021.
- The UDC granted initial approval on May 12, 2021.
- The Plan Commission referred their consideration of the related demolition request on May 24, 2021, pending a final recommendation from the Urban Design Commission.
- The Common Council approved the related UDD 8 text amendment on June 1, 2021. (File ID [64778](#))

Approval Standards:

The UDC is an approving body on the development request. The development site is currently within Urban Design District 8 (UDD 8) and the newly created block 5c, which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design requirements and guidelines of Section 33.24(15). In applying the standards, the code states that the Urban Design Commission shall apply the district requirements and guidelines for [UDD 8 \(MGO 33.24\(15\)\)](#) as may be appropriate in order to implement the Core Development Principles of the [East Washington Avenue 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. The Commission’s previous motion for initial approval requested that the applicant address issues “regarding circulation, layout, and parking before returning for final approval.” Based on this motion, staff recommend that those items should be the focus of this review.

Design Considerations

Based on the motion of the UDC, staff highlight the below issues previously raised by the Commission.

- **Circulation.** The current plan set includes Sheet A2.0, which identifies the primary paths to business and residential entries. Generally speaking, the commercial entrances are direct connections towards North Few Street and Curtis Court, while the residential entries are located along the rear of the building, with two upper level units accessed directly off North Few Street. In regards to UDD 8 standards, there is not a specific standard for site circulation, though staff notes that Section 2-Building Location and Orientation includes the following related items:

- The building location should be designed to provide for amenities that will enhance the visual and pedestrian character of the street. *Guideline (2)(b)i.*
- Walkways should be provided to connect the building entrance to the building sidewalk. *Guideline (2)(b)iii.*
- **Layout.** The overall site layout and orientation appears to be largely unchanged from the previous submittal. Staff notes that landscaped areas have been added to the driveway-type approaches along Curtis Court, which would physically and visually narrow those approaches. The landscape plan indicates these areas within the driveways would be planted with sedum, while more extensive planting is provided between these approaches. These areas are also proposed to include permeable pavers. Various sections of UDD No. 8 address layout-related considerations including Section 2-Building Location and Orientation, Section 5-Landscaping and Open Space, and 6-Site Lighting and Furnishings. In addition to the points highlighted above, staff note that relevant standards and guidelines include but are not limited to:
 - Property owners are encouraged to provide well-designed landscaped outdoor spaces for the use and enjoyment of employees and customers. *Guideline (5)(b)i.*
 - Landscaping and fencing should be designed to complement the character of the building and provide a pleasing relationship with adjoining properties and the public sidewalk. *Guideline (5)(b)ii.*
 - Landscape islands, open spaces, and porous pavements should be provided, where practical, for additional stormwater infiltration. *Guideline (5)(b)v.*
 - Pedestrian use areas should be adequately, but not excessively lit. Low-level building and landscape accent lighting is encouraged, where appropriate. *Guideline (6)(b)i.*
 - Lighting and site furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, etc.) should be designed to complement the character of the building and provide a pleasing relationship with adjoining properties and the public sidewalk
- **Parking.** While the site plan shows driveway-type approaches, the letter of intent indicates that these areas are not currently intended for parking. As a code reference, there is currently no minimum parking requirement in the Zoning Code for this development. If select uses, such as restaurants and bars located within 300 feet of each other, a minimum parking requirement would apply. The applicable “Parking and Service Area” standards in UDD 8, which are before the UDC, pertain to the design and location of any parking areas, but do not include minimum or maximum standards related to the number of stalls.

Summary of Previously Provided UDC Commissioner Comments

As a reference, staff refers the Commission to their comments from the May 21, 2021 discussion at which the UDC ultimately granted initial approval.

- Interesting looking building. How do you move through these units? Are the four parking spots for the commercial units, and what is the plan for the residential and remainder of the commercial units for parking?
- I see a lot of conflict with residential parking in the front, you’re leasing the first floor to separate entities. You connected the interior of the commercial space with the unit above; is it truly work-live or you have 16 leases here?
- I’m not seeing any plumbing facilities on the first floor. The first floor, will it be rated for interior parking? Could someone lease that lower unit for a garage?
- It’s very attractive, it’s more functional issues that I’m seeing as problematic.

- The project looks great. I was wondering about the functionality too. What type of businesses do you see using these units? I think the perception of a garage door and a car in front of it is what's throwing off the parking question.
- Aesthetically I like the project a lot. The vision triangle shows 12-feet. I don't mind the parking configuration, I'm a fan of these scenarios with an almost patio space that can double as a vehicular space and go back and forth.
- The landscaping in between those spaces, the Eastern Red Bud is a nice selection; make sure it's a single stem and you spec a minimum height on it.
- If the garage doors aren't actually used for parking, consider having an attractive piece of cut stone to serve as a curb stop, something more attractive than a concrete curb stop.
- Are you planning on canopies at all the commercial entrances? It kind of helps it look like more of a commercial entrance,
- The lighting, safety and visibility along that south narrow alleyway, that's a bit of an area of concern to me, what that would feel like to enter if you're by yourself so I hope it's well lit and has some kind of visibility.
- I like this project and how the building looks but I'm having trouble wrapping my head around the essential layout and flow of customers, residents and parking. All four of those parking spots could be made with permeable pavers. The parking is my biggest problem with this project, and the general layout too.
- I share the concerns and comments, I like the building but have severe questions about the parking and layout.
- The mechanical units, I don't see any rooftop units shown or any screening indicated.
- The garage doors, if that went to a storefront system perhaps those four units could still function as you've described without feeling the need to drive into them and reduce the confusion about parking. Storefront systems perform a lot better thermally than garage doors.
- The project wants to look like one thing but then function completely different. Some of this needs to be flushed out with form and function. That's where all of our comments are coming from. I think you have to make some choices.
- A clear access point from the sidewalk to the business that doesn't involve squeezing past a car that may be there for months on end.
- A lot of the confusion would be resolved if these units were rented as true live-work units.