

**Capitol West Steering Committee, Bassett District
Broom Street Lofts SIP
Background and Recommendations to the Urban Design Commission
11/15/05**

Background:

The Bassett District steering committee for the Capitol West condominium development has met with the Alexander Company's representatives on six separate occasions to discuss the Broom Street Lofts component of Phase I of the project. A neighborhood forum was also held on 9/26/05 to solicit input from the broader community.

At the outset of our discussions both parties stated that they hoped to achieve consensus on the design of the Lofts, so that a unanimous recommendation could be made to the Urban Design Commission, the Plan Commission, and ultimately the Common Council.

It was clear early on that the design proposed by the Alexander Co. posed two major challenges to reaching consensus with the neighborhood: the height of the building, and the existence of balconies projecting into the right-of-way on Washington Ave. and into the 13-foot setback on Broom St.

The initial design presented for the steering committee's consideration included a four-story building plus fifth-story mezzanine, of contemporary design, housing 22 condominium units (the SIP now calls for 23 units). Steering committee members expressed concern about the height of this building in relation to the two- to three-story homes across Broom St., despite the developer's assertion that it was intended to be a transition element from the taller buildings on Block 51. Some members also felt that the urban contemporary design was not compatible with the Victorian-style residences on the opposite side of Broom, and the developer attempted to address this issue from a materials standpoint.

More problematic, however, was the issue of balcony encroachment. The neighborhood had just gone through a grueling public debate over the Broom St. setback which reduced from 30 feet to 13 feet the space set aside for future city needs, including possible transportation improvements. The neighborhood, along with the city's Traffic Engineering Department, had advocated for a wider setback but the Common Council ultimately decided to map the setback at 13 feet. Steering committee members felt that the developer should respect the 13-foot setback, and not set a precedent for future developments on Broom St. by having balconies project 4 feet into the setback.

As discussions with the developer progressed and the areas of disagreement became clear, the steering committee decided to offer a good faith compromise to the developer. The neighborhood would accept the 5th floor mezzanine in

return for no balconies projecting into the West Washington Ave. right-of-way or the Broom St. setback.

The Alexander Co. responded that this compromise offer was not acceptable because overall they deemed the balconies more important than the mezzanine. They offered another compromise in which they would eliminate the mezzanine, pull back the balconies to the property line on the West Washington Ave. side, and pull back two out of the five stacks of balconies on the Broom St. side to the 13-foot setback line. This left three stacks (floors two through four) of balconies projecting 4 feet into the setback.

Recommendation:

The committee feels that, from a design perspective, the balconies do add visual interest to the façade. If there were no setback encroachment, they would not be controversial. Although the committee and the neighborhood would prefer that there be no balcony encroachments on Broom St., in the interests of compromise we recommend that the Commission approve Alexander's request for initial SIP approval for the Broom Street Lofts, with three conditions:

- 1) The 5th floor mezzanine will be eliminated
- 2) The West Washington Ave. balconies will not extend across the property line
- 3) Two balcony stacks (the 01 and 04 units) on the Broom St. side will be pulled back to the 13-foot setback line.

The Alexander Co. has agreed that these conditions will be included in its request for final UDC approval.

I wish to thank the Capitol West Steering Committee members (Lee Brown, Dory Christensen, Jonathan Cooper, Peggy LeMahieu, Mike May and Pete Ostlind) who volunteered countless hours to this approval process. It was not an easy task and their dedication is much appreciated by the Bassett District.

Stefanie Moritz, Chair
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