

Date: January 22, 2018

To: IID Design Review Committee
c/o Carolyn Laurie, Principal Planner
Planning & Development Services
City of Tucson
201 N Stone Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85701

From: Scott Neeley, AIA
City of Tucson Design Professional

Re: "The FLIN"
110 S Church Ave
Tucson, AZ 85701

I have reviewed the *Design Submittal* for "The FLIN", dated October 23, 2017, and *Additional Architectural Elevations*, dated November 21, 2017, for compliance with the UDC Infill Incentive District (IID), UDC Section 5.12, as noted herewith.

PHASE OF REVIEW:

First review prior to meeting of IID Design Review Committee, pursuant UDC Section 5.12.6.B.4.b.

MATERIAL REVIEWED:

1) Bound *Design Package*, dated October 23, 2017, consisting of 211 pages organized according to applicant's "Table of Contents," as follows:

- IID Application
- Introduction to THE FLIN
- Existing Photo Study
- IID Application Responses
- Elevations
- Architectural Precedence
- Appendices
 - 1 Neighborhood Meeting Documentation
 - 2 Downtown Streetscape Interim Policy Response Letter
 - 3 Parking Plan
 - 4 Historic Documentation
 - 5 Development Plan 2nd Submittal dated September 13, 2017
- Addendums
 - Preapplication Submittal Comment Response
 - Additional Architectural Elevations
 - Conditions of Approval

2) PDF of *Additional Architectural Elevations*, dated November 21, 2017

- Building Elevations

IID STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO PROJECT:

- UDC Section 5.12.8 General IID Zoning Option Design Standards
- UDC Section 5.12.10 Downtown Core Subdistrict (DCS)

RELIEF SOUGHT FROM IID STANDARDS, WITH COMMENTS:

- UDC Section 5.12.8 General IID Zoning Option Design Standards

A. Streetscape Design:

1. Pedestrian orientation

- a. Architectural elements/details
- b. Windows, window displays, or visible activity at least 50% of frontage
- c. No more than 50' of facade without architectural detail
- d. Front doors visible and highlighted
- e. Commercial services or retail trade preferred at first level

Recommendation Against Relief of Streetscape Design Standard

As proposed the project does not promote a pedestrian-oriented streetscape and is not consistent with the goals of the IID.

The project site is uniquely important to downtown Tucson. From the west, Broadway is a gateway to downtown; from the north, Church is a gateway to the Tucson Convention Center, Tucson Music Hall, the Leo Rich Theater, and the National Register Eckbo landscape. The site is across from the historic Marist College, and adjacent to a large downtown hotel and a proposed new hotel at TCC.

The ground floor of the proposed development, where the public will most intimately experience it, is primarily a parking garage and apartments. A large project with primarily residential use at the ground floor is inconsistent with the intentions of the IID. It does not encourage activity at the ground floor or enhance the pedestrian experience. Residents seeking privacy from passers-by will draw the shades on their windows, making a lifeless perimeter. Retail and commercial uses would have doors and windows opening to the street, which are necessary for a lively urban experience.

No commercial services or retail trades are proposed for the new construction. While this Standard is a preference rather than a requirement, the design provides no alternative means to create an active streetscape. This is especially important given that the site's prominence and adjacency to Tucson's cultural attractions. Retail and commercial uses in this location could become destinations and tie the complex into the city beyond.

Above the ground floor, residential uses are appropriate, as are the mostly well-articulated elevations. An exception is the 6-story north façade which presents an essentially blank wall to both Broadway and the pedestrian bridge across Broadway.

The benefit of the project cited in the Design Submittal is an increase in residential density. While increased density helps promote a 24-hour neighborhood, density alone is not an explicit goal of the IID nor is it justification for IID incentives. The incentives are intended to provide flexibility on Standards *in return for a pedestrian-oriented design and a benefit to the streetscape.*

Each of the buildings cited in the section on Architectural Precedence has retail or commercial activity on the ground floor – The Cadence, One North Fifth, One West Broadway, 2 East Broadway, the AC Hotel, and City Park.

Recommendation Against Relief of Standards:

- **Major Streets and Routes Setback Zone**
- **Minimum Perimeter Yard**
- **Landscaping/Screening**

These Standards are intended to provide appropriate buffers between adjacent properties and streets for various uses. In the case of residences, the Standards provide buffers between adjacent uses, and between living spaces and street traffic. The IID provides the option of flexibility on these Standards to incentivize development of active streetscapes. There's no justification for reducing the Standards for residential use at the ground floor, which diminishes the streetscape experience – relief is intended to encourage non-residential use for a vibrant pedestrian experience. Relief of the Standards for the proposed project, which proposes a ground floor of residences and garage parking, is not appropriate.

Recommendation for Relief of Standards, with Comments:

- **Native Plant Preservation**
N/A per materials provided.
- **Motor Vehicle Parking**
Reduced motor vehicle parking is appropriate for this urban site. Proposed reduction of parking space width to 7.5' width, use of tandem spaces, and potential conflicts with column locations should be evaluated by City Engineer.
- **Bicycle Parking**
Reduction of visitor bicycle parking spaces is appropriate for residential uses where bicycles are likely to be brought inside. However, entirely residential use at ground floor does not comply with Streetscape Design Standard as noted above.
- **Environmental Services**
Complies.

Additional Comments:

- **Pedestrian Access**

The proposed site plan does not attempt to improve pedestrian access around and through the site. It creates a barrier between La Placita Park and the Eckbo landscape, when it could enhance that connection.

In comparison to the existing development on the site, the proposed development proposes a more opaque perimeter with fewer points of entry.

The pedestrian routes at the north end of the proposed construction are not currently accessible for wheelchairs or the mobility-impaired. Given the scale of the proposed development, this limitation should be corrected.

Shifting the bulk of the project to the larger southern housing block (while maintaining the same density) and eliminating the smaller northern block would make the site much more porous. It would also create a clear diagonal pedestrian passage from Broadway through La Placita Park around the historic Flin House to the Eckbo landscape and cultural buildings that surround it.

- **Broadway Boulevard**

An earlier version of the site plan brought the FLIN out to Broadway Boulevard, which created a stronger edge both along the street and along La Placita Park. It eliminated a bleak and barren portion of the site, framed by high concrete walls, that runs along Broadway Boulevard. This is a highly visible and important location downtown, and adjacent a streetcar stop. In its current condition, this area is unappealing to look at from a car or streetcar, and unpleasant to walk by as a pedestrian. It should be ameliorated as part of the proposed development.

- **Preservation of Historic Structures on Site**

UDC Section 5.12.7 requires proposed buildings to respect the scale of historic buildings, and that new structures with heights of a significantly different scale provide an orderly transition to reduce and mitigate potential impacts. The proposed new construction proposes 6-story new construction in close proximity to much lower historic structures. In the case of the Flin House, a significant change of scale is exacerbated by enclosure on three sides.

Summary:

As submitted this project *does not* meet IID Standards.

A stated purpose of the Downtown Area IID (5.12.1.A) is to "Encourage sustainable infill development that supports the creation of urban neighborhoods that are pedestrian and transit-oriented..." The proposed design is not a pedestrian-oriented design, nor does it respond adequately to the constraints and opportunities of this important site. The ground floor pedestrian experience and the Broadway elevation are especially problematic.

Submitted by:

Scott Neeley, AIA
City of Tucson Design Professional