



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 3841 E Washington Avenue
Application Type: Alteration to an existing development in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 5
Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID #: [71120](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Morgan Van Riper-Rose, Repvblik Madison, LLC | Shaun Elwood, Schwerdt Design Group

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Final Approval for conversion of the vacant former Madison Plaza Hotel into multi-family apartments. The existing 197 hotel rooms will be converted into 180 studios and 10 one-bedroom apartments, each with a full kitchen, fully upgraded finishes and a modern paint scheme. Corridors, common areas and amenity spaces will also receive new flooring, paint, and furnishings. Exterior upgrades include patching and repairing the existing exterior EIFS and gable roofs with a new color scheme, additional sidewalk connectivity and additional landscaping. Once completed, on-site resident amenities include a fitness center, co-working spaces, lounges, communal laundry facility, storage and a landscaped courtyard.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** as the site is within Urban Design District 5 (“UDD 5”), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design requirements and guidelines of [Section 33.24\(12\)](#).

Additionally the UDC is also an **advisory body** to the Plan Commission as the building is part of a planned multi-use site containing more than forty thousand (40,000) square feet of floor area where twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet of floor area is designed or intended for retail, hotel, or motel use. Prior to the Plan Commission acting on the conditional use, a recommendation on the design of any specific proposal is required by the Urban Design Commission. As a reference, the approval standards for conditional uses are in MGO 28.183(6).

Adopted Plans: The project site is also located within the [Greater East Towne Area Plan](#) (the “Plan”). The Plan recommends Community Mixed Use (“CMU”) development on the project, which includes residential development. The Plan aims to create complete neighborhoods, which are identified as having safe and convenient access to services, a range of housing costs and types, a well-connected streets and pathways, and open spaces. Also noted in the Plan, there is a priority planned public roadway connection that connects Lien Road to Mendota Street that would run through the project site directly in front of the existing hotel building.

Summary of Design Considerations

Planning Division staff requests that the UDC review the development proposal and make findings related to the requirements and guidelines of UDD 5, including the design considerations noted below:

- **Building Design.** Staff commends the design team for making many of the exterior building improvements as noted by the UDC in their Informational Presentation comments, including the addition of canopies at the first floor, and the replacement of the large canopy at the front entrance with a smaller entry canopy feature. In addition, large single-pane windows have been replaced with divided lite windows. Staff requests UDC review and make findings of the proposed architectural changes to the building for

consistency with the UDD 5 guidelines and requirements, including those that speak to compatibility with existing adjacent structures, avoiding large unbroken facades, low maintenance and durable materials, as well as the proposed modifications creating a more residential building appearance.

- **Wall Packs.** As noted on the elevations, the use of wall pack units would be continued on all elevations. For new construction, it has been the current practice to not locate wall packs on street facing facades, though they have been approved in some situations when found to be well integrated into the façade's design. Staff requests the Commission's feedback regarding the appropriateness of the continued use of wall packs as part of the renovation and conversion of this structure. Additionally, staff requests feedback on painting or other options to better integrate the louvers into the façade.
- **Landscape.** Landscaping can play an important role in aiding the conversion to a residential development. Limited information was provided with regard to landscaping and the treatment of open spaces. The UDD 5 guidelines and requirements state that *"Landscaping shall be used for functional as well as decorative purposes, including framing desirable views, screening unattractive features and views, screening different uses from each other, and complementing the architecture of the building."*

As part of the Commission's review, consideration should be given to the location of landscape in relationship to blank wall expanses, screening, interior parking lot landscape, providing year-round color and texture, programming details for the interior courtyard space, as well as the use of rock mulch. Staff requests the UDC provide comments and make findings with regard to the proposed landscape plan's consistency with the UDD 5 guidelines and requirements.

- **Lighting.** The photometric plan appears to have inconsistencies with the City's Outdoor Lighting requirements (Section 10.085, MGO) for low level activity areas, including light levels in excess of 5.0 footcandles in parking areas. In addition, light levels along pedestrian pathways and at building common entryways are primarily shown to be 0.0 footcandles and no lighting details were provided for the central courtyard amenity space. Consideration should be given to providing lighting along pedestrian pathways not only for safety, but also to add to the residential character of the building. As noted in UDD 5 guidelines and requirements, *"...lighting shall be used to illuminate building façades...pedestrian walks and spaces and to illuminate parking and service areas."*

As a potential code compliance issue, the applicant is advised that an updated photometric plan and fixture cutsheets, including those for the under canopy lighting, consistent with MGO Section 10.085, will be required to be submitted for review and approval prior to permitting.

- **Considerations Related to Conditional Use (Advisory Opinion).** Staff believes that the below points closely relate to the conditional use standards that will ultimately be part of the Plan Commission's advisory review, including:

Conditional Use Standard 5 states that: "Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, parking supply, internal circulation improvements, including but not limited to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided."

Conditional Use Standard 9 states, in part, that: "When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district."

- **Pedestrian Connectivity.** Staff believes that providing a strong pedestrian connection to the public sidewalk network is among the most important design-related considerations needed to successfully transform the use from a hotel into a residential use. Plans currently show two striped pathways on the eastern portion of the site, one to E Washington Avenue and one to Lien Road. Providing enhanced pedestrian connectivity both internally, as well as externally to the adjacent commercial uses and transit services along E Washington Avenue and Lien Road are important considerations. Staff believes consideration should be given to relocating the E Washington Avenue connection to the center of the site to better align with the front door and to not conflict with future development on the adjacent sites. Other related amenities, including improvements to the pedestrian connection to Lien Road should be considered as necessary to promote the functionality, safety, accessibility, and aesthetics of the site’s overall connectivity.

- **Parking Lot Design and Related Improvements.** While renovating the development site presents a unique opportunity for housing, sustainability, and walkability, staff believes that establishing an appropriate residential appearance and setting for the project site are important design considerations. Staff understands that the existing parking will be resurfaced and restriped. In consultation with Zoning staff, the limited scope of the proposed improvements would not compel the site to be brought up to current Zoning standards for parking lot landscaping, including the requirements for additional tree islands. Likewise, since the UDD 5 standards reference compliance with the Zoning code, staff does not believe that UDD 5 requirements for off-street parking and loading areas would be applicable to the project.

However, as part of those improvements consideration could be given to incorporating alternative parking stall dimensions and/or orientation (i.e. compact, angled or parallel stalls) to limit headlight glare into units, or reducing the overall parking onsite given the proximity to transit and shared parking opportunities. Lastly, as noted on the site plan, the proposed short-term bike parking is located in a parking lot, across the primary vehicle drive from the building’s front door. Consideration should be given to locating the parking closer to the building’s main entry.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission’s comments from the May 11, 2022, Informational Presentation are provided below:

- Do they have to upgrade their parking with the 12 space island rule?
 - Typically the parking lot will largely be up to them. Based on my understanding of the development proposal, the applicant is not doing anything to trigger any improvements more than resurfacing and restriping.
- You have an interesting serpentine driveway coming off Mendota Street, and a nice built in buffer from E. Washington Avenue, but that large patch of grass with evergreens is a huge opportunity for really nice landscaping. No matter what you do to the outside it’s going to give away its former origin as a hotel. That’s OK, but one thing you can do to soften it and make it more appealing is to upgrade the landscaping, you’ve got plenty of space for it.
- That central courtyard space looks like a prison yard with only two trees and turf. Please find somebody with imagination to activate that space. There probably won’t be a lot of kids living here, so outdoor seating and grilling areas, more trees and shrubs. It’s a blank slate, go crazy in there.
 - We share the same thoughts about that interior greenspace, we’re excited to make it a usable and appealing space for the residents.
- I don’t think this is an improvement over the straightforward way the color scheme works with the windows. You’re accentuating the through wall HVAC units, I would encourage you to find a way to help

bring this into a more residential look than a hotel look. The drive under canopy screams hotel, eliminating that would be a huge improvement. Consider awnings or canopies at least on the first floor. It's very flat, start sprinkling in some 3D elements along those windows to provide shade and identity throughout the building. That along with enhanced landscaping will be a big improvement. The paint scheme just didn't seem like it was an improvement to me with the horizontal stripe to it.

- Even if it's not required, it is a better design of the site and might help us sway our opinion of the project if there were more tree islands, more trees separating those long stretches of stalls, urban heat island mitigation, shading of the pavement. Especially in this area of the City, that's critical. Don't jam a tree into a tiny little pocket, give it a couple stalls to give it a chance of surviving.
 - The site itself is three parcels and there are no current plan for those two outlots. For the conditional use application we are strictly focused on the back hotel parcel, and do need the parking that is on that parcel itself.
- Look at getting rid of that canopy and having landscaping and daylight all around there. I see an opportunity for a big landscape island at the entrance.
- Since those two parcels aren't part of this project, maybe putting in a strip of lawn at the entry instead of that very massive canopy could designate the entry but give it more greenspace.