



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 3100 E Washington Avenue  
**Application Type:** New Multi-Family Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 5  
**UDC is an Approving Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [77926](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Nick Orthmann, Bear Development | LLS Enterprises, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the construction of one five-story building to be comprised of 192 apartment-style units. The project will also include 5,800 square-feet of amenity space and 142 parking stalls (55 surface stalls and 87 structured).

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **approving body** on this request as the project site is located in Urban Design District 5 ("UDD 5"). Under those standards, the Urban Design Commission shall review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section 33.24(9).

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Commercial Corridor-Transitional (CC-T). Within the mixed-use and commercial zoning districts there are general provisions related to building and site design that are intended to foster high-quality building and site design. Such standards are outlined in [Section 28.060](#), including those that speak to building and entrance orientation, façade articulation, door and window openings, and building materials (see attached).

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the revised development plans, provide feedback and make findings based on the standards noted above as it relates to the following design considerations:

- **Building Siting.** As noted on the site plan, the building will be located fronting East Washington Avenue with setbacks ranging from zero to 18-feet. Staff recognizes that some positive adjustments have been made in how the building is situated along East Washington Avenue, including providing an ADA accessible pathway to the main building entry, increasing portions of the building setback along East Washington Avenue, and incorporating additional articulation and modulation in the building to breakdown the mass along the street. While positive adjustments have been made in the building siting, staff continues to have significant concerns regarding both the portions of the building and especially the resulting blank wall (approximately five feet tall) that are adjacent to the street/sidewalk for long stretches, especially as it relates to creating an enhanced pedestrian environment along E Washington Avenue. UDD 5 Building Design guidelines and requirements generally speak to designing with a sensitivity to context and avoiding blank walls.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the building placement relative to context, especially as it relates to intensity and being able to provide opportunities to create a layering of building and landscape within the pedestrian realm.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and findings related to the building's siting, especially with regard to the site's context, creating an enhanced pedestrian environment, minimizing blank walls, as well as the perceived mass and scale along the street.

- **Building Orientation.** The primary street frontage of the site is East Washington Avenue, however there is only one building entrance along this frontage. UDD 5 guidelines and requirements generally speak to designing with a sensitivity to context, as well as carefully designing all elevations. As such, consideration should be given to providing additional common building entries or individual unit entries along the East Washington Avenue frontage. Such design details/elements may also aid in creating a more positive orientation to the street, pedestrian interest, increasing overall connectivity both internally and externally to the site, and breaking down mass/scale. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings related to the building orientation.
- **Building Design and Composition.** Staff notes that while positive modifications have been made to the building design and composition that result in a more uniform building design, consideration should still be given to the modulation/articulation and proportions of the building, especially as it relates breaking down the overall mass and scale. As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the details of changes in materials, including color and changes in plane, as well as revisiting the building mass in various locations to be more sensitive to context, as well as the onsite open spaces.

Generally, the UDD 5 Building Design requirements and guidelines speak to utilizing design elements and treatments that reflect compatibility with context, avoiding large unbroken facades, and incorporating the same level of design and details on all sides of a building. Staff requests UDC provide feedback and make findings related to the overall building design and composition, especially as they relate to creating a cohesive and/or complementary architectural expression.

- **Building Materials.** UDD 5 Building Design requirements and guidelines state that, *"...materials shall be low maintenance and harmonious with those used on other buildings in the area."* As noted on the elevations, the materials palette is anticipated to be primarily comprised of cement board lap siding and panels, and masonry. Staff notes that not all materials are clearly labeled on the drawings, including the accent panels, wall and railing details, rooftop screening, etc., nor was a final materials board or details provided related to the application of the proposed materials (i.e. fasteners, transitions, change in plane, etc.), which were details of interest noted by the UDC in their Informational Presentation comments Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the proposed building materials as it relates to consistency with context and UDD 5 guidelines and requirements.

Staff notes that final materials details and palette are required as part of a request for Final Approval.

- **Landscape.** As part of the Commission's review, consideration should be given to the overall landscape plan and plant list with regard to creating year-round texture and color, as well as softening hardscape areas, breaking up long building facades and blank walls, providing adequate screening, and providing shade and interest at the pedestrian level, particularly along East Washington Avenue.
- **Lighting.** While a lighting plan was not provided for the updated plans, a lighting plan was provided with the initial submission, prior to the relocation of the building slightly further back from East Washington Avenue. As such the applicant is advised that a lighting plan, consistent with MGO 29.36, will be required to be submitted if exterior lighting be proposed. As a result, additional UDC review and approval will be required.

## Summary of July 26 Second Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the July 26, 2023, second Informational Presentation are provided below:

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- I recently looked at this property, there's some existing elements that I wonder if they will survive the construction process. There's a long row of tall arborvitaes, is that on your property, will that be maintained? As it exists it's a really nice barrier of the parking lot from Ridgeway.
  - We agree, there is actually another row along the L shaped property line bordering the houses. We think it's a great idea to keep them, so if we can we will keep them.
- The six-foot tall wood fence separating your parking lot from those 3-4 single-family homes, would it just be the L shape there or beyond that?
  - Just the L shape.
- At the end of the cul-de-sac on Ridgeway you have a little sidewalk that goes up to the street, I was struck by the fact that it just goes out to the street, there's no sidewalk on that side of Ridgeway. There's only a sidewalk on the far side of the street. I wondered what your thinking was, is there any concern that that sidewalk doesn't lead to another one on Ridgeway but just to the street?
  - The original genesis of that sidewalk was an emergency access requirement. It is a little unique that it doesn't connect on our side of the street, but as you cross of the cul-de-sac there is a sidewalk there.
- From a practical standpoint I'm always interested in these large buildings. The real world logistics of moving in and out, it seems sparse in terms of entryways and elevators. How does that play into your thought process of the layout of the building, where those access points are?
  - We do have two elevators, we have done at least an ok job spreading them around. Something we will study further.
- I appreciate that you rethought how to shape the building and put those social uses right on the edge. I still remain concerned with how close it is to E Washington Avenue, in general because of the decibel levels and it seems like a really intense place to live. The BRT stop will be in front of those social spaces, from what I understand if you are coming eastbound you will not be able to get into Melvin Court. I want to make sure you've thought about how to enter the site.
  - Our understanding is you'd have to go up one additional block and turn-around. It is a bit of a challenge, but we think it is ok.
- I asked you to look at that letter from Safe Skies Wisconsin that included a noise contour map. You're in the 65 decibel level; I don't know that I support residential here, but assuming I'm in the minority, I want to make sure you're investing what you can to address/mitigate that and are fully aware of what this location brings.
- Could you tell us the extents of the underground parking?
  - It essentially mirrors the floor plans; it is identical to the first floor footprint.
- My crosshairs are on the surface parking. I appreciate that the greenspaces are coalescing together for more opportunity to use it, but at the same time one of the key areas is inside the hook, which is going to be pretty heavily shaded. It becomes a little less attractive in terms of being out in the sun during some of the colder times of the year. Can green space find its way where there is surface parking now? Can you tell me the parking ratio now?
  - 1 to 0.73.
- Does the BRT encourage any change to your surface parking?
  - Typically on a standard development like this it is 1 to 1. While it could be modified we would prefer not to.

- The box, the square that comes off the J hook, you have delineated that as something special from a design perspective. It stands out. Programmatically, is there something interesting about that square or that façade distinction?
  - The space is just more units, there's nothing really different about the space, just utilizing what we have on site there. We thought it would be interesting to have different colors and materials there to break it up a bit. Nothing really more to it than that.

The Commission discussed the following:

- It was an ok project before, it's better now with increasing setbacks and switching units from being right up against E Washington. My only criticism is the materials. Where two materials meet there should be a change in plane. Something should be propped and something should be recessed. You should revisit where you have certain materials located, there's a randomness that doesn't really connect this form because it is so irregular. Because it is so irregular there needs to be some regularity in the materials. Where they start, stop and how they intersect with each other.
- It's an improvement, I still see 192 units and I think it's just too much program for the site. I like your streetscape inspiration photos but have a hard time with those six units right on the sidewalk or right on the property line; four stories above the first floor plan. As I look up and down E Washington for blocks from this site, I don't see anything right on the sidewalk and it's virtually at an on-ramp there. I am just thinking ideally from an urban design standpoint, you'd lose those six units on each floor and move that whole wall back. With regard to the square, I think it would work better as a three-story element, but to have that piece step down will provide a little more intimate space and better daylight for the occupants. I'm a little concerned about the parking lot, but I know you're pressed for stalls. The occupants will end up doing a lot of pulling in and backing out as they search for a parking stall. The big concerns are the setback on E Washington and the square element being the same height as everything else.
- You captured my comments, but I was going to go a step further and question whether the cube could just go away altogether to give you a more cohesive, usable greenspace. Maybe those units can be placed elsewhere. I was looking at street view and trying to picture that mass of the building at the corner of Melvin right up against the sidewalk. I'm all for holding the urban edge but it is hard to picture that much building right behind the sidewalk in this streetscape. The 18-foot setback is great, it gives you space for a tree canopy and as a pedestrian it feels a whole lot better. All your precedents had some sort of setback, layering of building and landscape to the pedestrian realm. There are places where that would work and is appropriate but this cross section of E Washington is hard to picture. Thanks for looking and responding to all the things we requested last time. I think your site plan is way better than it was previously. I agree that the parking lot circulation will be difficult with regard to vehicle maneuvering, should all the stalls be full.
- With regard to the patio in the courtyard, if the cube stays, if the patio can become more of a polygon to respond to the shape of the greenspace, it is pinching the two usable greens, there is a pinch point. If the patio was more of an angle, there would be a wider area connecting the two greenspaces.
- Looking at Sheet SD6.1, there is something about that window arrangement and separation of windows from the balcony, those are the most successful portion of your facades. These are long facades to deal with, there is something about the design of that cube that really breaks it up in a different way than all the other ones, where you have the white base surface. I think that's working well proportionally for the height of this building, it might be worth looking at making that language stronger throughout the building and giving it more of an identity. The cube part really sticks out as being more successful, more recognizable and having more of a flair to it.
- I will agree with all other comments. I'm bothered by the cube in terms of the courtyard experience, knowing it is north facing; it is going to cast a lot of shadow. Have you looked at shifting it or any other way of configuring that to give a little more breathing space to that valuable green space? For a complex this large it is really very small in terms of usable open space. The two units facing east are looking

straight on into the other units, that won't be a very pleasurable living situation. Look at how that can shift in any way.

## 28.060 GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS.

(1) Statement of Purpose .

Mixed-use and commercial districts are established to provide a range of district types, from the small neighborhood center to regional-level retail centers, while fostering high-quality building and site design and pedestrian, bicycle and transit as well as automobile circulation.

(2) Design Standards. The following design standards are applicable after the effective date of this code to all new buildings and major expansions (fifty percent (50%) or more of building floor area). Design standards shall apply only to the portion of the building or site that is undergoing alteration.



Figure D1: Entrance Orientation

- (a) Entrance Orientation (See Figure D1). All new buildings shall have a functional entrance oriented to an abutting public street. Additional entrances may be oriented to a private street or parking area. For buildings with multiple non-residential tenants, a minimum of one (1) tenant space shall have a functional entrance oriented towards an abutting public street. Other tenant spaces shall be connected to the public street with a private sidewalk connection. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features. Barrier-free entrances are encouraged. (Am. by ORD-13-00113, 6-26-13)

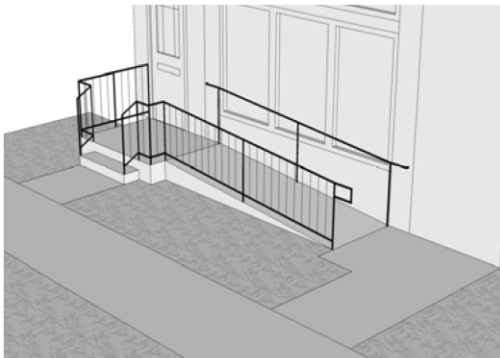


Figure D2: Barrier-Free Entrance Example

- (b) Facade Articulation. Consistent with the design of traditional storefront buildings, new buildings of more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller increments, through articulation of the facade. This can be achieved through combinations of including but not limited to the following:
1. Facade Modulation (See Figure D3). Stepping back or extending forward a portion of the facade.
  2. Vertical divisions using different textures or materials (although materials shall be drawn from a common palette).
  3. Division into storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.



Figure D3: Facade Modulation

4. Variation in roof lines by alternating dormers, stepped roofs, gables, or other roof elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval (See Figure D4).
5. Arcades, awnings, and window bays at intervals equal to the articulation interval.

(c) Design of Street-Facing Facades.

No blank walls shall be permitted to face the public street, sidewalks, or other public spaces such as plazas. Elements such as windows, doors, columns, changes in material, and similar details shall be used to add visual interest.



Figure D4: Variation in Roof Lines

- (d) Door and/or Window Openings. For nonresidential uses at ground floor level, windows and doors or other openings shall comprise at least sixty percent (60%) of the length and at least forty percent (40%) of the area of the ground floor of the primary street facade. At least fifty percent (50%) of windows on the primary street facade shall have the lower sill within three (3) feet of grade.

For residential uses at ground level, a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the ground level of residential facades or side and rear facades not fronting a public street shall consist of windows and door openings. On upper stories, window or balcony openings shall occupy a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the upper-story wall area.

1. Glass on windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass that mimics the appearance of windows may be used for up to twenty percent (20%) of the required area of the openings. (Am. by ORD-13-00205, 12-10-13)
2. Displays may be placed within windows. Equipment within buildings shall be placed a minimum of five (5) feet behind windows. To preserve views, within three (3) feet of any window, not more than thirty percent (30%) of the view through the windows shall be blocked by merchandise, displays, shelving, or other obstructions.
3. Window shape, size and patterns shall emphasize the intended organization of the facade and the definition of the building.

- (e) Equipment and Service Area Screening. If an outdoor storage, service or loading area is visible from adjacent residential uses or an abutting public street or public walkway, it shall be screened by a

decorative fence, wall or screen of plant material at least six (6) feet in height. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the primary structure.

- (f) Screening of Rooftop Equipment. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
  - 1. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street.
    - a. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials.
    - b. Screening shall be constructed to a height of at least one (1) foot above the height of the equipment.
  - 2. Exterior mechanical equipment such as ductwork shall not be located on primary building facades.
- (g) Materials. Nonresidential or mixed-use buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials such as brick, stone, textured cast stone, or tinted masonry units. Table 28D-1 below lists allowable building materials. When applying these requirements, consideration shall be given to the use, amount, placement and relationship of each material as part of a comprehensive palette of building materials. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway should employ materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

**Table 28D-1.**

Building Materials	Allowable for use as/at:				Standards (see footnotes)
	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/ Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓		
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Concrete Panels, Tilt-up or Precast	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			C
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	D
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			C
Vinyl Siding	✓				E
Glass Curtain Wall System	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Storefront)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than 33% of any building wall adjacent to a public street or walkway.

B - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.

C - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used in heavily trafficked pedestrian areas or where high pedestrian traffic is anticipated.

D - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge metal, and; shall be non-reflective.

E - Shall be used in limited quantities due to its limited durability.

F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.





Figure D5: Compatibility with Traditional Buildings

- (h) Compatibility with Traditional Buildings. (See Figure D5.) New development shall relate to the design of traditional buildings adjacent to the site, where present, in scale and character. This can be achieved by maintaining similar, facade divisions, roof lines, rhythm and proportions of openings, building materials and colors. Historic architectural styles need not be replicated.



Figure D6: Building Alignment

- (i) Building Alignment. (See Figure D6.) Buildings shall be aligned with facades parallel with the street to create a well-defined street edge.
- (j) Building Articulation. (See Figure D7.) Buildings shall have horizontal and vertical articulation, which may include dormers, cornice detailing, recesses and projections, stepbacks of upper stories, changes in roof types and planes, building materials, and window patterns. The base of the building shall relate to the human scale, including doors and windows, texture, projections, awnings, canopies, and similar features.



Figure D7: Building Articulation

- (k) Ground-Floor Residential Uses. (See Figure D8.) Ground-floor residential uses fronting a public street or walkway, where present, shall be separated from the street by landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls in order to create a private yard area between the sidewalk and the front door.



Figure D8: Ground Floor Residential Uses