



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 575 Zor Shrine Place  
**Application Type:** Residential Building Complex – Initial Approval is Requested  
**Legistar File ID #:** [72416](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Namdi Alexander, AWH Architects | Mark Laverty, Saturday Properties | Robert Gorsuch, Shriners International

**Project Description:** The applicant is seeking Initial Approval for a proposed age-restricted multi-family apartment building.

### Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational presentation on July 13, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on August 29, 2022.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **advisory body** on this request. [Section 33.24\(4\)\(c\)](#), MGO states that: *“The Urban Design Commission shall review the exterior design and appearance of all principal buildings or structures and the landscape plans of all proposed residential building complexes. It shall report its findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission.”*

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development and provide findings and recommendations based on the aforementioned standards including comments related to the items noted below.

- **Building Design.** The proposed building design is relatively simple in nature with seemingly limited articulation and detailing. Given the high visibility of the project site from the Beltline Highway, as well as Zor Shrine Place, staff requests the UDC’s feedback on the overall building design as it relates to:
  - Incorporating horizontal/vertical articulation or material and color transitions to breakdown building mass and scale, add interest, and define building corners,
  - Creating positive visual termination at the top of the building,
  - Integration of the rooftop equipment and screening into the overall building design,
  - Refining architectural details to be more consistent with architectural style and their application across the building, including balcony covers and railings.
- **Building Materials.** The building material palette is comprised of masonry, metal panel, and fiber cement lap siding. Staff requests UDC’s feedback on the overall building material palette, especially as some of the materials relate adding texture on the building’s longer elevations, as well as incorporating additional material transitions to create articulation, not necessarily resulting in the addition of materials to the palette, but working with the proposed palette.

- **Landscape Plan.** The plant schedule reflects multiple different variations of the same species, including crab apple trees, junipers, and grasses and there are limited amount of flowering perennials. In addition, there are limited plantings located along the project edges, one of which is located adjacent to US 12/18.

Staff requests UDC feedback on the composition of the planting plan in terms of providing year-round texture, color and screening/buffer, as well as plant diversity on the project site.

## Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the July 13, 2022, Informational Presentation are provided below:

- I would like to see this building in a 3D visual as it relates to the adjacent larger project we previously approved. That has a much more contemporary modern feel.
- Do I want to live here? No. Feel like some of the architecture or the design is reduced when we look at affordable and senior housing. I don't know if that's the case here but there's a lot more design that could be added to the massing. I know it's early in development so I hope there will be some fenestration adjustments, pushing and pulling of all that tectonic language we like to see. This could be a lot more interesting, it needs a higher level of design. All projects, regardless of who they serve, should be approached with the same level of integrity and design and I don't know that this is there yet. It has potential, all the amenities are good, I wish some of that same level of care was exhibited in the design. It's a very flat, basic building but it doesn't have to be.
- Those two previous projects, one of the more fruitful suggestions was to turn the buildings inward, give them protected interior space from the noise of the Beltline. How the people were envisioned to be a much younger crowd in the other buildings, how they are visually interacting with the project's amenity spaces. Furthermore, one of the reasons those two initial buildings were decidedly to be turned out was because the owner sees them as somewhat of a billboard for those amenity spaces to be seen and draw people in. I wonder if this new building is blocking the one in the middle.
- You have a protected amenity deck that could be nice, although it might be more shaded than some residents would like. The orientation seems fine, perhaps some of the solutions to be explored are really mature landscaping for that amenity deck as protection from the view. On the architecture I would say a layman's read is "north woods lodge building." All the wood materials expression, I don't know that I quite see coherence with that expression and the nice thoughts and feelings from the design team expressed about the goals of the project. I don't quite see the connection there.
- I understand that this is Informational, there's a lot of development and details that need to happen. With a five-story building you don't ever really read that pitched roof as you're approaching it, you see it from the Beltline; I don't know if the occupants will get the feel of that because it's so far up in the air. I love the screened porches, those are a great amenity. I do think that some thought should be given to how occupants in that amenity area will experience that, expanding on the illustrations so we can see more context would be helpful. There's some contradictions to the exposed glulam, that masonry base and the vernacular, they don't seem to blend very well and need more cohesiveness. Glulam closer to the ground would help people walking up to the building actually see and experience that warmth of what those are trying to achieve.
- One way to take this if you wanted to do the gable is a very minimalist expression of that. I could see the void of the gable end in a different material, there's a real thinness to what we're seeing here. I would agree with everything everyone else has said, some things to explore if you're going to keep the gable.
- On the site plan, in relationship to that neighboring development, there should be crosswalks delineated for safe crossings that align your site to that neighboring site in logical places.
- Along the edge of that amenity deck you have a handful of trees, what a great opportunity to add texture and color along that sloping edge while helping cradle the amenity deck space and provide some privacy and screening from the parking lot.

- Make sure to use organic bark mulch to support the plant life.
- I question some of the building materials and details. People could be moving here from a one-story ranch house with a truss roof, siding and residential sized windows, but when you put it on five stories, it tends to become the scale of a hotel at a Wisconsin Dells water park. It becomes out of scale with the materials, the walls of the screen porches look really thin because of the size of the building. When you screen in that end it's going to end up being one black or gray surface plane, that's going to have to be resolved at the top with a very thin truss. The detailing, materiality and some of the building forms are inappropriate for a building this size.
- There doesn't appear to be a sidewalk around the building. It appears there are sliding glass doors that open out onto that area, but if there are no sidewalks, what are they stepping out onto? People will have pets and want to walk around the building.
- The western side first floor residents are basically looking at the backside of a business on the adjacent property. Some kind of attention should be paid to what's going on there. I would think more in terms of flowering trees and shrubs that look seasonally different for visual interest for these folks.
- I agree with comments about the pitched roof making people feel a little more homelike, but at this scale, I've seen this exact type of building in resort towns. It can be attractive in certain settings but it gives a north woods lodge kind of feel that may or may not be the goal. There is something a little off, good intentions but not quite working visually and not sure it would for the proposed clientele.
- The amenity area looks interesting and looks like a lot of thought was given to screening those residents from those activities with multiple layers of planters, but it needs to be well thought out. Crabapples and bocce ball do not work together.