



Project Address: 4520 East Towne Boulevard

Application Type: Exterior Building Modifications to an Existing Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 5
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [85970](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Terron Wright, The Architects Partnership, Ltd.

Project Description: The applicant is proposing to convert a former restaurant building into a retail banking center. The proposal includes exterior modifications to the building, as well as various site and landscape improvements.

Project Schedule: UDC reviewed and subsequently granted Initial Approval at their November 20, 2024, meeting. The Commission's action included conditions of approval, which are outlined below.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 5 ("UDD 5"), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section 33.24(12).

As noted above, at the November 20, 2024, meeting, the Commission recommended Initial Approval of this item with conditions that spoke to reducing the height of both the parapet wall and entry tower to be more in scale with the building, as well as minimizing/screening the blank wall. The Commission's subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item should focus on whether those conditions have been addressed.

Adopted Plans: The project site is located in the [Northeast Area Plan](#) (the "Plan") planning area. The Plan recommends the project site for Regional Mixed Use development, which are areas within the city that generally include existing and planned high-intensity centers supporting a variety of multi-family housing options and commercial activities serving the needs for the region. The Plan does note that within the Northeast Area, the most visible change could be at or around the East town Mall, which is envisioned to transition from a suburban regional shopping center to a vibrant urban mixed-use neighborhood.

Zoning Related Information: The project site is zoned Regional Mixed Use (RMX). 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 development as outlined in [MGO 28.060](#). Staff notes that these design standards are not applicable to this development proposal given its limited scope. As noted in MGO 28.060, the design standards are applicable to all new buildings and major expansions (fifty percent or more of building floor area), which is not the case here.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the UDC's continued review and evaluation of the proposed parking structure and associated landscaping for consistency with the conditions of approval as outlined below. The UDC's role is to ensure that these previously established conditions are met. The UDC cannot waive or change these requirements.

- The building design shall be refined to minimize/screen the blank walls on the south and north elevations, including landscape and architectural design elements; reduce the height of the entry mass to be more in scale with the building; and reduce the parapet wall height to be more proportional to the building mass and scale.

As noted in the applicant's Letter of Intent, refinements have been made to the building design to address these conditions, including:

- *Screening and minimizing blank wall with additional plantings to create a more visually dynamic landscape with textures and layers,*
- *Utilizing one consistent parapet wall across the majority of the building, creating a true "top",*
- *Reducing the overall parapet height (approximately nine inches),*
- *Introducing a second tower element opposite the entry tower to screen mechanical equipment to create symmetry and interest, and*
- *Reducing the entry tower element height by three feet.*

Staff believes these conditions have been met.

Summary of Initial Approval Discussion and Comments

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and comments from the November 20, 2024, Initial Approval are provided below.

Summary of Commission Discussion and Questions:

The Commission noted this is an improvement from Outback Steakhouse. It was noted that the applicant's letter of intent refers to Whitney Way; formal documents should be corrected and updated.

The Commission inquired about the transition between EIFS and fiber cement, the overlapping detail on the south elevation, and the flush transition on the north elevation. Both elevations should be updated to match.

The Commission inquired about the height of the tower element, noting it looks out of proportion. The applicant noted that the height acts as a visual attraction to the building's entry.

The Commission noted that the entry way is better for ADA accessibility, and maintaining the existing brick and windows is great.

The Commission inquired about the "unused space" on the floor plan. The applicant noted that the bank does not need the whole building, noting that this space could be used as another line of business for the bank down the road. The Commission noted that this results in a lot of blank walls and that the entry seems out of scale with the rest of the building mass. The Commission noted concern for the resulting blank walls, especially those street facing elevations.

The Commission noted that the landscape plan looks nice, and that bark mulch should be used in all planting beds.

The Commission noted that there were concerns with the portions of the top of the building.

The Commission suggested keeping the doors but replacing them with doors that have glazing.

Action

On a motion by Knudson, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** with the following finding and condition:

- There is general consensus that the site plan as proposed is acceptable.
- The building design shall be refined to minimize/screen the blank walls on the south and north elevations, including landscape and architectural design elements; reduce the height of the entry mass to be more in scale with the building; and reduce the parapet wall height to be more proportional to the building mass and scale.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (5-0).