



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 2230 Pennsylvania Avenue  
**Application Type:** Informational Presentation – New Personal Indoor Storage Facility in Urban Design District (UDD) 4  
**UDC will be an Approving Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [80725](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** William Butcher, Madison Square Storage, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing to construct a four-story self-storage building that includes individual rentable storage space, drive-in unloading, office space, restrooms and support space.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC will be an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 4 (“UDD 4”), 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(11).

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located within the [Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan](#) (the Plan) planning area. As noted in the Plan, the project site is in an area that is recommended for employment related uses, including but not limited to office, low impact manufacturing, specialize employment, research and development and medical uses. This category does not generally include retail and customer service bases uses for the wider community, but may include limited retail and service based uses to support the surrounding employment uses. The Plan also notes that all uses should be compatible with the density and scale of the surrounding development. More broadly, the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan outlines land use recommendations that generally speak to creating a vibrant, mixed-use, transit oriented development that integrates high density residential, employment and commercial uses.

The site is also within the older [Emerson East - Eken Park – Yahara Neighborhood Plan](#) planning area in Focus Area 7, Pennsylvania Avenue Commercial Corridor. Generally, the focus areas were selected due to the potential for future changes in land use patterns, the existing underutilization of developed and vacant lands, their access to and visibility from major thoroughfares, etc. More specifically, Focus Area 7, was identified as a major gateway to the City from the airport. While it is primarily an industrial corridor with some retail and service related businesses, recent improvements include the reconstruction of Pennsylvania Avenue and streetscape landscape improvements. The Plan notes that additional improvements that further develop a neighborhood identity and a sense of place, including uniformity in design, landscape, way-finding, screening of refuse areas, and public art installations are recommended.

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Industrial Limited (IL). As noted in the Zoning Code ([MGO Sec. 28.088](#)), loading and parking areas are required to be screened from views from the street, parking shall be located at the rear or side of the building to the extent feasible, and a principal building entrance shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street.

In addition, pursuant to [MGO 28.173](#), Mixed Use and Non-Residential Building Forms, industrial buildings are required to have vertical articulation at a minimum interval of 60 feet along facades facing a public street.

Staff notes that, as an Informational Presentation, a formal Zoning review has not be completed for this project. However in working with Zoning staff, there are code compliance concerns related to the placement of parking and loading areas along Pennsylvania Avenue, as well as meeting the vertical articulation requirements as noted above. The applicant is encouraged to continue to work with Zoning staff to review the zoning related concerns.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below.

- **Building Design and Composition.** As reflected in the application materials, the applicant has included two options for potential building designs; one that includes framed corner tower elements, and one that appears to show a large format mural installation across the majority of building walls. As noted above, the Zoning Code requires building articulation every 60 feet. As proposed staff **does not** believe that either design meets this requirement.

As noted in UDD 4 Building Design requirements and guidelines, in summary, exterior materials shall be low maintenance and harmonious with context, rooftop mechanical equipment shall be screened, large unbroken facades should be avoided, design should incorporate four-sided architecture, as well as a similar design aesthetic across all elevations.

While there is a current staff preference for the design option that includes the corner tower elements, staff recognizes that there are design options that could include larger scale artwork, and that could also result in the artwork being an integral part of the building design and materials, providing articulation, color, texture, etc.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the overall building design, giving consideration to minimizing blank walls, overall building modulation and articulation, mass and scale of proportions, as well as potential design parameters/details for a large format art installation that could add interest and articulation (i.e. framing, lighting, medium (panels, vinyl), etc.).

- **Building Orientation.** As noted in the Zoning Code, a principal building entrance is required to be oriented towards the abutting public street. As proposed, the staff **does not** believe this requirements is being met. The site plan indicates that the main building entry is oriented toward the north versus directly towards the street, and it is setback in excess of 90 feet from the street, behind the forward-most portion of the building, which is a loading garage. Consideration should be given to adjusting the building setback and design to be more positively oriented towards the street.

In addition, there are several utility doors located along the street-facing façade at the ground floor. Staff recognizes that while the proposed use of the building will inevitably result in a more utilitarian design, consideration should still be given to incorporating various design techniques that result in a higher level of design at the ground level (i.e. glazing, color, framing, detailing, etc.).

Staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the overall building orientation toward the street.

- **Materials.** As noted in the application materials, the exterior material palette is comprised of a mix of masonry, metal panel, and glass. Staff requests the Commission provide feedback on the proposed material palette, especially as it relates to the surrounding context, treatment of blank walls, incorporating articulation, etc.

- **Parking and Loading.** As indicated on the site plan, an indoor loading area and multiple individual utility doors located along the front façade of the building. As noted in the UDD 4 guidelines, *“Off-street parking and loading areas should be integrated into the overall site development. Their relationship to the building they serve and to the street should receive careful attention in preparing the site plan for the property.”* Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the location of parking and loading, especially as it relates to the building orientation to the street and maintaining consistency with the UDD 4 guidelines, for which development *“...shall to conform to as much as possible.”*