



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 4205 Portage Road

Application Type: Residential Building Complex – UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [72121](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Nick Patterson, T. Wall Enterprises Development, LLC | Interstate Overlook, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a Residential Building Complex consisting of five buildings containing approximately 483 residential units.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on June 29, 2022.
- The UDC reviewed and referred a Final Approval request on October 12, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on January 23, 2023.
- The Common Council is scheduled to review the proposed CSM on February 7, 2023.

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.”*

Adopted Plans: The project site is located in the Hanson Road Neighborhood Development Plan (the “Plan”) planning area, which was amended in 2021. The Plan recommends the project site for multi-family residential development, including Housing Mix 3 (3-story height limit) for the eastern side of the project site and the more intensive Housing Mix 4 (five-story height limit) on the west. Subsequent to the Plan amendment, the project site was rezoned to the TR-U1 zoning district. As part of the rezoning approval an advisory comment was included that stated *“Future development of the site will be expected to reflect the character recommended in the amended Hanson Neighborhood Development Plan, including higher density west of the future north-south street consistent with the Housing Mix 4 recommendation, and reduced scale and density between that street and Interstate 39/90/94 consistent with the Housing Mix 3 recommendation.”* Staff notes that the submitted concept includes taller buildings on the west side of the project site and the buildings on the east had less units than those on the west. Finally, staff notes that the TR-U1 zoning allows buildings of up to five stories in height.

The Plan also provides recommendations related to noise mitigation and future transportation connectivity. With regard to noise mitigation, the Plan notes that the applicable sound mitigation requirements will need to be met for residential development adjacent to Interstate 90/94. Finally, with regard to future transportation connectivity, this proposal depicts the planned extension of North Creekwood Lane, though an additional east-west connection to Portage Road as recommended in the Plan is not reflected on the applicant’s proposal.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC make findings based on the aforementioned standards and design considerations noted below, including the Commission's comments from the October 12, 2022 meeting. As an advisory body, staff recommends that a motion should be structured as an advisory recommendation of the body and which may include conditions.

- **Building Design and Orientation.** Staff has previously noted concerns with the amount of ground level exposure of certain buildings, including Building "A." While staff would expect a residential building to have some vertical separation from grade, the finished floor of Building "A" sits approximately nine feet above the sidewalk level near the intersection of Diloreto Avenue and Portage Road. This exposure is reduced moving east along the Diloreto Avenue frontage. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback related to the ground level exposure of Building "A" and the treatment of the exposed concrete walls along with any other feedback related to orientation and design.
- **Building Design and Proportions.** As noted by the Commission in their previous comments consideration should be given to creating more cohesiveness in the architectural style and detailing by simplifying forms and details, including incorporating further refinements of the scale of exposed timbers and hardware details relative to structural requirements and roof angles. Staff requests the UDC provide findings and make a recommendation on the overall building design.
- **Wall Packs.** Wall pack/HVAC louvers are proposed on street-facing elevations. It has been a common recommendation of the UDC to not locate such louvers on street facing facades, they have been approved in some situations when found to be well-integrated into the design of the façade, located around patio/porch corners, or integrated into the window frame versus being located flat next to a window. As noted by the Commission in the comments from the October 12, 2022, meeting, further refinements to the treatment of walls packs was necessary, including better integration with architecture, window proportions, continuous louvers, and background materials and colors. Staff requests UDC make findings and a recommendation related to the treatment of wall packs.
- **Landscaping Considerations.** Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on various landscaping considerations as noted below and in the Commission's October 12, 2022, comments, including:
 - Plant Palette and Beds.
 - Incorporating additional varieties of planting species into the planting palette, especially evergreens and ornamental grasses.
 - Utilizing Green Giant Arborvitae within the interstate buffer versus the proposed White Pines.
 - Revising the planting bed lines around Building D to be more linear.
 - Utilizing bark mulch in planting beds, especially in parking areas to support plant health and longevity.
 - Screening of blank wall expanses, as well as individual unit patios and individual unit patios and windows from headlight glare.
 - Open Space Organization and Design. Giving consideration to creating a larger, more connected central green space and utilizing the open space as an organizing element in locating buildings on the site.
 - Perimeter Fencing. Finally, staff requests feedback related to the design and placement of the perimeter security fencing.

- **Building Design and Future Signage.** While signage is not part of this application, staff believes that considerations on how a building's exterior design is intended to accommodate signage is a pertinent consideration. Please note that the proposed signage does not appear to be consistent with the Sign Code due to size and mounting height on the building. The signage, as reflected on the building elevations would require special approval through the Comprehensive Design Review process. Going forward, staff would encourage the applicant to consider signage designs that comply with the code and do not require subsequent special approvals.

Summary of UDC Final Approval Comments and Action

As a reference, the Commission's comments and action from the October 12, 2022, meeting are provided below:

- Regarding issues of density and shifting portions of the development, at first glance it's difficult to see where that would happen. Most of the space is already allocated on the eastern side in one way or the other.
- The timber elements have been addressed, it would have been nice to see that in more detail, it is hard to tell on an elevation a decrease of 20-25%. It is the consensus of everyone that those were a bit too sturdy and visually overbearing.
- Glad to see the base addressed, which had looked very much like a miscolored plinth. I am interested in the metal fence around the entire perimeter, and surprised it didn't come up. I am curious if the applicants could speak to their feelings for the need for a perimeter fence, and the nature of the gates at the entranceways.
- The landscaping overall is providing more points than required, that is wonderful to see. I do take issue with some of the plant selections, you have deciduous trees of various types, but the evergreens and perennials are a very limited palette and really minimalist, I'm not sure why. Use more than just calamagrostis, use more variation in the selections of evergreens and ornamental grasses, it does a disservice to the high quality of the rest of the project. On the far eastern side alongside the Interstate, you show a row of Eastern White Pine evergreens to block noise, which will do the job, but I would suggest Green Giant Arborvitae, you will get a 20-25 foot tall green wall in half the time the Eastern White Pines would take. It is also our preference to have a natural wood mulch for the benefit of the plants, particularly in parking lots that are stressful locations for plants.
 - The gates would be all automated by a fob or code. They would all be readily available for emergency services. We have experienced security issues at some of our apartment buildings in the area, break-ins and car thefts, this gives us increased security. Our residents demand more security.
- Presumably the surface parking is for guests and visitors. How does that work?
 - They can be given a code from the resident, there are a variety of systems we could get similar to how a guest would get into a locked apartment building.
- It still feels very vehicle-centric with a lot of parking that bisects everything. The center portion, I want to bring those together for a large open space that helps organize everything around it. Rather we have a parking lot that weaves through everything; it would be much more successful if somehow that central green area could be more connected to the clubhouse and pool area, much better for the project.
- Building A corner and terrace, I like what you have going there, layering the architecture into the landscape is a nice feature.
- Building D and the clubhouse, the bed lines that go in and out in soft little random curves, large sweeping curves could be used at building corners or certain locations, but the beds could be simplified and linear, feel more intentional and less random.
- The improvements made to the architectural timbers (corner of Building A) feels better and more proportional, but I still think it seems busy with this grid like ladder climbing the corner, and an angled roofline above it. Still feels a little busy.

- What is your parking ratio to units?
 - Our ratio is approximately 1.15 parking stalls per unit. We typically target 1.1-1.2 stalls per unit, we would love to have less but we still need parking. We're not quite there with commuters on the east side of Madison.
- That seems reasonable given its location. If we didn't have the Interstate as a boundary it seems you could shift Building D over and create a larger central greenspace. Parking on the Interstate side probably makes sense, but some creativity could be added.
- You need to get some of those site amenities united into a friendlier, more usable area that doesn't have the parking and traffic bisecting everything.
- The timber frame could use a bit more refinement and simplicity. On Building B's west elevation you can see a lot of the timber frame elements, a lot of different angles and proportions, even at balconies with hanging elements, you have a knee brace framed element underneath, but I'm not sure if that's structural or what. Some of those things could be simplified, there's a lot going on here and maybe one or two of them could even be eliminated. I appreciate the simplification of the palette, it is much improved in this submission.
- How do we comment on the one half of the site that is going to be changing if you're making those buildings longer? Has the design team started thinking about strategy for adding density on that part of the site?
 - We would shorten a leg of Building A and B to drop some units, lengthen a couple of the other buildings, and slide Building E down. We might have to relocate the pickle ball court, or lengthen Building C. The character and scale of buildings would remain the same, it's just replacing the units we would lose.
- The surface parking would follow the units?
 - We would have to make sure that all of those ratios are maintained and meet market demands.
- In that light, maybe there's an opportunity to take some of those site amenities and shift them over to the other side where there will be less parking and less building footprint. Make them more cohesive and more of a parklike and friendly area.
- The timber framing elements are highly subjective, the proportions look better than before. It would be interesting to give us renderings that show how shade and shadow will be cast on the elevations from those elements. Without those timber elements the elevations lose detail, and I applaud the detail, particularly on the southwest corner. I would argue that having elements that are a little fussy and detailed is OK because these are pretty long elevations.
- Are the Building C individual entrances coming off a shared walk, and if so, it's hard to understand what is a patio door and what is an entrance to a unit (south). Are you planning on those being double glazed sliding patio doors?
 - Those are entrances into the units, with patio doors creating that streetscape but also providing access to indoor/outdoor transition. The main entrances are on the interior of the building. It's to give the impression of a walk-up unit and to provide glazing; that detail will continue down to create a canopy effect at those entrances and highlight them.
- When you come back I would like to see a closer view of the main entrances, where you have a sloped roof at the first level sloping back to a vertical wall with a balcony over it.
- Where there are three posts coming down, are there still balconies at those units?
 - Those are Juliet balconies. When you get down to that level they are eliminated because of the intersection of the roof to the entrance.
- I think the sloped elements and timber framing give it a lot of interest.
- There has been refinement and simplification, both in the amount of the timber framing but also restraint and more rational thought as to how the different materials appear and where they appear on the elevations.
- The wall pack integration into the architecture could still use refinement, they are nothing but painted. Sometimes we see continuous louvers, openings where the head or sill of a window proportions are in

harmony with the wall pack grills. Certainly some areas will stand out where you have the arctic white and the lighter colors. That will be much more difficult to disguise.

- There is a cut sheet of the proposed fence, it is alluded to in some of the renderings. This will be fully fenced in.

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (5-0).

The Commission noted the following considerations as part of the referral motion:

- Rework the site plan and open space; relook at the open space as an organizing element.
- Incorporate additional varieties of planting species in the planting palette, especially evergreens and ornamental grasses.
- Consider revising the planting bed lines around Building D to be more linear.
- Incorporate further refinements to the exposed timber elements and angles.
- Incorporate further refinements to the wall packs, including better integration with architecture, window proportions, continuous louvers, and background materials and colors.