

# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 6, 2016



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 4525 Secret Garden Drive (District 16- Ald. DeMarb)  
**Application Type:** Rezoning and Conditional Use  
**Legistar File ID #** [36751](#), [37226](#), and [39300](#)  
**Prepared By:** Kevin Firchow, AICP, Planning Division  
Report Includes Comments from other City Agencies, as noted  
**Reviewed By:** Jay Wendt, Principal Planner

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The following summary report has been prepared for the consideration of the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for their meeting of April 6, 2016. A full report will prepared prior to the Plan Commission consideration of this item. This proposal was last at the UDC for an informational presentation on June 10, 2015 and again on January 27, 2016.

There are two requests included with this proposal. The applicant first requests approval to rezone the subject property from SR-V2 (Suburban Residential-Varied 2 District) to TR-P (Traditional Residential-Planned District). The second request is for a conditional use for a residential building complex. The purpose of this request is to establish a residential building complex with 17-buildings, 113 Units, and 242 bedrooms. The site includes 190 covered parking stalls and 57 surface parking stalls.

While the applicant could develop a more conventional residential building complex under the existing SR-V2 zoning, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed development was not consistent with allowable building forms and street-orientation requirements of that district.

## Approval Standards

This request is subject to the approval standards for Zoning Map Amendments [MGO 28.182], Conditional Uses [MGO 28.183], and TR-P District Standards [MGO 28.053]. As a residential building complex, review by the Urban Design Commission is also required [MGO 33.24(4)(c)]. That section states that the Urban Design Commission is to 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.

## Background

The subject property is a 12.84 acre site. The property includes two significant development constraints. The first is a 50-foot wide underground gas line that runs along Catalina Parkway. The second is a 40-foot wide electrical easement with overhead utility line that runs across the middle-rear section of the property.

The lot was created with the approval of the "Secret Places at Siggelkow Preserve" Plat, in 2004. At that time, the site was zoned R4-General Residence District. That district allowed for multi-family development and residential building complexes. The site was zoned to the SR-V2 (Suburban Residential-Varied 2) district as part of the City-wide zoning re-write process. That district was the most similar zoning district among the new districts to replace the previous R4 district.

## Summary of Design-Related Comments

This request is the applicant's third formal land use submittal. The new site plan is largely organized around a central green and includes private drives that have some street-like characteristics. Compared to the last formal land use submittal, the site has been reoriented with townhouse units now located along Catalina Parkway and the small-apartment buildings located to the site's interior.

The following is a summary of **design-related** items that the Planning Division requests that the UDC provides specific feedback on with their formal recommendation to the Plan Commission.

- **Site Layout.** The Planning Division believes that the site layout has been improved from earlier versions in many respects. The latest plan locates townhouse-style units towards Catalina Parkway and the small apartment buildings, which include more family-supporting three-bedroom units, are oriented around an internal green and playground. Representatives from the Madison Police Department reviewed the latest plans from a "Crime Prevention through Environmental Design" (CPTED) perspective and offered no further suggestions.

Like with previous submittals, staff continues to question the desirability of the units near the rear of the site that are within close proximity to the overhead utility line. The applicant should also verify that the depicted encroachments within that easement are permissible.

- **Townhouse Grading Concerns.** The Planning Division has significant concerns regarding the proposed grades related to the townhouses fronting Catalina Parkway (Buildings F-1, F-2, F-3, and D-2). Based on the grading plan, these buildings are estimated to sit between 12 and 19 feet above the street level. Slopes leading up to the buildings are relatively steep and the buildings themselves also have much of the basement level exposed. The Planning Division is concerned about this relationship with the street and also notes that plans do not appear to show details such as possible stair connections that appear to be necessary. The Planning Division recommends modifications to the site plan to address these concerns.
- **Townhouse Design and Massing.** In addition to the relationships to grade, the Planning Division has some concerns on the street-fronting townhouse buildings, especially as they are now in a more visible location. These units are relatively long structures, with the longest having lengths of approximately 160 feet. The buildings include some recesses and porches to provide some modulation. The Planning Division also staff requests that consideration be given to ways to break up the long rooflines of these structures.
- **Pedestrian Circulation.** From a pedestrian circulation standpoint, the plans have been improved to provide better pedestrian access across the site. However, it is not clear if the applicant intends to install curbs to grade-separate the proposed sidewalk from the drive aisles. Additionally, unlike previous versions, there are no terrace areas proposed between the edge of sidewalk and the drive aisles. To meet the applicable standards, the Planning Division believes it is very important to have safe, convenient, and well-designed sidewalks and recommends that the applicant provides a curb with grade-separation and terrace. At a minimum, a wider grade-separated sidewalk with additional streetscape amenities may be an acceptable alternative, based on the feedback from the UDC and Plan Commission. The Traffic Engineering Division will be recommending a minimum six (6) foot wide sidewalk when adjacent to parallel parking stalls.

- **Building Materials.** The applicant has revised the exterior materials. While much of the buildings were previously clad in vinyl horizontal and shake siding, the horizontal siding has been replaced with a composite siding. However, the proposed shake siding remains as vinyl. As this component still makes up significant portions of the facades, staff remains concerned of its appropriateness for buildings of this size and how this material relates to the other siding materials.
- **Landscape Plan and Amenities.** The interior of the site lacks landscaping in “front yard” areas and/or along the private street network. To encourage a streetscape-type character, the Planning Division recommends that the plans be revised to provide street trees and other streetscape amenities such as pedestrian-scaled lights, benches, trash receptacles, and other features.
- **Playground Details.** No such details are provided in this plan set. This should be clarified by the applicant.
- **Phasing Clarification.** The applicant should clarify the phasing plan.