



Project Address: 5001 Femrite Drive
Application Type: New Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 1
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [86819](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Ian Luecht, Sketchworks Architecture | Wisconsin Data Partners, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing to construct a one-story, precast concrete, 55,000 square-foot building with approximately 10,000 square feet of office space, and surface parking stalls.

Project Schedule:

- At the February 19, 2025, meeting, the Urban Design Commission reviewed and subsequently granted Initial Approval of this project. 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 1 ("UDD 1"), 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\(8\)](#).

As noted above, at the February 19, 2025, meeting, the UDC recommended Initial Approval of this item with conditions, including those that generally, and in summary spoke to refining the building design and details, including materials and roof details, as well as landscape and parapet wall height. The Commission's subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item is limited to the specified items that were included in the Plan Commission approval. It is the role of the UDC to focus only on whether those conditions have been addressed.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the UDC's continued review and evaluation of this proposal 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.

- Refine the building design to limit the parapet height transitions to be more consistent across the building,

As reflected in the elevation drawings, the number of steps in the parapet wall has been reduced from two steps to one on both the north and south sides of the building. Staff requests the Commission's continued evaluation of this condition as the parapet wall height along the east elevation is lower than the other elevations.

- The roof detail in the southeast corner of the roof needs to be refined,

While refinements have been made to this corner elevation, including wrapping the parapet wall around the corner at both ends of the building. Staff requests the Commission's continued evaluation of this

condition as the proposed refinement results in a parapet wall height and stepping that is not present elsewhere on the building.

- Refine the building design to incorporate additional design details, especially where there are blank walls, including, but not limited to adding texture to the panels, adding articulation/changes in plane, incorporating a reveal line, looking at a base module, etc.

Staff believes this condition has been met. As reflected in the updated drawings, reveals (one inch in depth) have been incorporated into the overall building design and composition to create changes in plane where materials transition.

- Revise the landscape plan to:
 - Specify how the bio retention basins are being planted. A native plug mix should be indicated in these areas,
 - Indicate that the mulch should be natural double shredded hardwood bark mulch without dye,
 - Replace the daylily on the north side of the building with a more shade tolerant substitution,
 - On the northwest and west foundation plantings increase the perennials by 75% within that space, and
 - Check the vision triangles to confirm there are no obstructions.

Staff believes this condition has been met. The bio retention basin planting details have been provided, hardwood bark mulch will be used in all planting beds, the day lily has been replaced with a more shade tolerant species (variegated hosta and brome sedge) on the north side of the building, plantings have been increased along Dairy Drive and pedestrian pathways, as well as along the east elevation, and vision triangle obstructions have been removed.

- The applicant shall provide additional contextual information related to surrounding building designs and details.

Staff believes this condition has been met. As reflected in the perspective views and Sheet G003, additional contextual information is provided.

Summary of UDC Initial Approval Discussion and Questions

As a reference, a summary of the Commission's discussion and questions from the February 19, 2025, Initial Approval are provided below:

The Commission inquired about the lack of clerestory on the north side of the building facing the parking lot. The applicant noted the office space will have a drop ceiling. The corner element will be spandrel panels on the upper portion.

The Commission asked about context and the primary street frontage. The applicant responded that Femrite will be the primary thoroughfare with the majority of their clients entering in vehicles. They cannot enter from the corner of Dairy Drive; they pulled the parking to the front corner, which is common in this area. In terms of context, Danisco is to the east, three metal buildings, two residential homes, and greenspace lots.

The Commission inquired about the north and south elevations and why it steps up in the middle of the roofline. The applicant noted reaching the upper limit of transporting panels, reducing the height at the transition of colors reduces the amount of concrete that is needed. Debatable if that is such a small detail that it looks odd rather than purposeful; that detail is for shedding water. The Commission noted the neighboring fire station has

well done details and suggested using them as an example. The south wall is quite blank; the applicant noted landscaping is planned along that façade to help layer and break it down, but it is not a public-facing side of the building. They are prioritizing landscaping facing the roadside of the building.

The Commission noted changes in elevation and parapet heights should be more intentional. The roof slope is not a reason for all of the transitions. You can still slope the roof and minimize the transitions, and also celebrate the ornate corners more as the tallest elements on the building. The applicant commented that the panels on corners are thicker to create shadow lines, and there will be coping with the band.

The Commission also inquired about the materials – acid etched, or sand blasted, or smooth? The applicant panels are painted the colors shown on the elevations that will be smooth. The panels for the “special moments” are thicker so they will create more of a shadow line. The white trim is a painted edge on the concrete – it will match the white panels; it is a 1-foot band. There is a coping at the top. The parapet being continuous would make a better design.

The Commission noted that the bioretention areas are not marked for plantings and should be a native plug mix. The mulch is called out as dyed brown; the Commission asked for that to be double shredded natural mulch without a dye.

The Commission commented on the vision triangles with the driveway off of Femrite Drive and the possibility of safety issues. In addition, the Commission noted that the surface parking area located at the corner of Femrite and Dairy Drive is not ideal; another solution would be to swap the parking and the bio retention basin.

The Commission noted the daylily on the north side of the building is not the best selection for that space and should be replaced with a more shade tolerant substitution. The perennials could be increased by 75% within the given space to fill in better and have a better design impact.

The Commission noted the UDD 1 criteria related to the driveway and parking being consistent with the rest of the area.

The Commission commented on the blank walls, noting the location and building use. Relying heavily on the landscape and tree massing to serve as a foreground. The east elevation is a tight space facing another industrial site, while the north elevation, which is the primary entrance, is also blank.

The Commission noted that there are things you can do with precast to give it some character: reveals, different finishes, larger gestures to building entries; just changing the paint is hurting rather than helping. It's all the same plane with exception of the miniature step downs that should be removed.

UDC Motion and Action

On a motion by Klehr, seconded by Rummel, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL**, with the following:

- Refine the building design to limit the parapet height transitions to be more consistent across the building,
- The roof detail in the southeast corner of the roof needs to be refined,
- Refine the building design to incorporate additional design details, especially where there are blank walls, including, but not limited to adding texture to the panels, adding articulation/changes in plane, incorporating a reveal line, looking at a base module, etc.
- Revise the landscape plan to:

- Specify how the bio retention basins are being planted. A native plug mix should be indicated in these areas,
 - Indicate that the mulch should be natural double shredded hardwood bark mulch without dye,
 - Replace the daylily on the north side of the building with a more shade tolerant substitution,
 - On the northwest and west foundation plantings increase the perennials by 75% within that space, and
 - Check the vision triangles to confirm there are no obstructions.
- The applicant shall provide additional contextual information related to surrounding building designs and details.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (4-0).