



**Agenda Item #:** 7

**Project Title:** 2101-2115 E. Springs Drive - Residential Building Complex Consisting of Four, 4-Story Multi-Family Apartment Buildings. 17th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 69543

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Tom DeChant, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper and Jessica Klehr.

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of June 15, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL** of a Residential Building Complex located at 2101-2115 East Springs Drive, with comments noted below. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, representing Forward Management, LLC; and Ulian Kissiov. Registered in support and available to answer questions were Dan Day, representing Forward Management, LLC; and Matt Saltzberry, representing D’Onofrio Kottke & Associates.

Munson noted that the context is guiding a lot of planning decisions, as the site is bordered by wetlands, a flood plain, and public ownership along East Springs Drive. The site is higher than the creek by about 10-feet, with frontage on an environmental corridor and limited frontage on the Interstate. Updates to the plans include elimination of dead-ends, two entry points and internal circulation around the entire project connecting to East Springs Drive. The design concept intentionally creates amenity spaces within the project that are connected to the Starkweather Creek, with the average setback between 178-200 feet. The building placement shelters the open space creating an amenity to serve the entire project, and a large courtyard component supports open space for Buildings B, C and D. There is some meander in that corridor, but overall the corridor to the west will be significantly bigger than the 400-feet called for in the plan. There has been a change of color in the extruded areas of the buildings.

The Commission discussed the following:

- The staff report notes that we give an advisory recommendation that will go to the Plan Commission, with feedback on building design and appearance, and the landscape plan.
- Parking area #3, what is the grade change between the parking lot and the Interstate and railroad further to the south east?
  - The Interstate is elevated in that location. The railroad is going underneath the Interstate so it’s roughly at grade with the site.
- That helps when we think about how effective trees and shrubs can be for any screening there.
- I like the updates to the site to have a residential street and continuous loop. In the asphalt area just north of parking lot #1, I’d like to see more landscaping there instead of having this speed ramp situation. Is that really necessary in this development to make the parking functional?
  - In terms of the bypass entrance? The thought was to help differentiate the parking into assigned clusters. Lot A would be functional for Building B or go underneath if you’re not parking in the surface lot.
  - The darker portion between our property and Bowl-A-Vard lanes is an easement for that purpose as a shared driveway.

- That's the primary drive aisle for the bowling alley?
  - They have another two approaches. This is like going to that service area beyond the parking to the southeast.
  - That is an existing drive aisle.
- I like the urban street on parking lot #4. I also like the fact you bent the drive aisle between buildings C and D, that calms things down a little bit. You can look into the courtyard as you're making that maneuver there.
- We last saw this as an Informational Presentation for the first time. I don't know that this presentation has changed or mentioned anything we talked about last time, other than this addition to the parking. The buildings and materials are a little stepped back from what we saw before. I feel like the initial presentation had a lot more details and renderings. The staff report agrees that a lot of the things brought up last time have not been brought up here. Are you just ignoring those comments? Are we not there yet?
- We definitely need to make an advisory recommendation. Our motion will and should address all the things that were mentioned before, and how we feel about them for this request for approval.
  - You should directly refer to the informational presentation. It was Rafeeq pointing to the different. We have eliminated the yellow-orange accent color.
- In my mind, I don't know what is shade and what is shadow vs. what is a change in color.
  - Nothing changed except the accent color. Because when I addressed Rafeeq's comments it was OK but at the end it was Cliff that brought it up again and it's in the report. You said with all these colors it looks like a Rubik's Cube at the corners. The solution was to eliminate that third color.
- That's just one item that stood out to me. There were issues about orientation of the buildings. Even with this bypass road, this ring road around the project seems excessive without direct access or some more pointed routes without driving through this entire ring. I don't know that this is the best solution.
- How you oriented the buildings, I don't want to design that part for you. It can be looked at again. These crowns on these protrusions seem so tacked on, they only go back one foot past the parapet and seem heavy, especially in this exhibit. I don't know the purpose of it, it's not working for me especially as it returns to the façade of the building.
- It looks very thin above the roofline where the roofs for the upper balconies go past the parapet wall.
- It might be more successful if it went back further, but it's still heavy, that datum doesn't line up with anything.
  - We tried that option without these volumes at the top. It looked so unfinished, even the owner said no way. Don't look at it as volumes, look at it as compositions please. This tells us something about the society that produces it and also a lot about the principal individual responsible for the design. This is result of months and months of work.
- How are you treating the underside of these balconies?
  - They are exposed but we create that band that defines the same width of the module that works and talks as a volume. You only see that if you go close and look upwards. To camouflage these exposed joists at the decks, we used that detail at the balcony rim that is two-feet deep and creates that deep shadow. The picture of the Edison demonstrates that if you don't look closely you don't see it. Our detail works very well.
- The top of that third floor balcony looks so out of place and out of scale with every other floor. It's heavy and too tall.
  - There is Brutalism in architecture and fine art. Everybody has a different feel about composition and materials. I tried all different sizes, this works the best. We can try what you are suggesting and compare, I am willing to do that.
  - We had dead-ends before where we now have a ring road. We missed a fire code detail. That ring road is either outside of the buildings or inside of the buildings but it has to be there. Do you want the service lane to be inside taking up greenspace? No. We are pushing the parking and service to the noisy I-90 side and shielding the greenspace from the noise by the buildings the way they are shaped and oriented. The access points are located where they have to be. It integrates our lot perfectly into the scheme. That's the scheme proven for centuries.

- This was a point of discussion in terms of the building orientation. The location of buildings is driven by zoning, it reinforces the street and creates the edge. Moving back the clubhouse and building B responds to the shape of the lot as well as creates a view corridor and ties out to the open space to our west. Looking at buildings C and D, the driving forces were fire access, is it better on the outside towards the Interstate or on the inside breaking-up the greenspace? We are trying to deliver efficient use while minimizing pavement where we can, at the same time creating greenspace in the middle sheltered by the buildings rather than have those open spaces degraded by the Interstate.
- Appreciate that the loop was completed, that was problematic for access to the site without people using it as a speeding ring. The site plan is improved. The development is large enough that it could support more than just a two color palette for every building. I opened up the old submittal to compare with the yellow, the way it was applied because before half was blue and half was white, which probably provoked some of the comments then. I did like the third color when it was used in a very regular pattern, it was on the inside element repeating and you had color on the inset of those enclosed balconies. That was successful with a little lighted look (the four square around the corner, not adding the color at the corner) and was added relief from the two tone as you marched along. A more restrained and predictable use of a third color would help liven up the elevations.
- On the corner of Building A, only the top of the balconies has the return wall, where others have columns or openings on the side of the balcony. Could the third floor continue with a slightly different look where just the top piece comes around the corner and meets the projection at the end wall? It would help it look a little less flimsy. Just at the top completing that would help give it a solid feel and a little less like it's too heavy.
- If there is any grade difference we're probably going to see some kind of foundation. I'd like to see what that looks like, how much of a foundation are we going to see? I'm not sure we're seeing a realistic integration of the foundation and the grading.
  - We'll try to do something, maybe communicate with you too. We never do exposed foundations, and you can see the grade changes on the grading plan. This is pretty much what it will look like, we will cover exposed foundations with material.
- The staff memo mentioned walpaks, I don't know that I've seen them on the drawings.
  - You can see them on the straight elevation of Building A, or you can go to the full submittal packet. That's all we have exposed on this street facing elevation.
- You had a photograph of the underside of the deck, there was a walpak on that image.
  - We'll have them on the side walls yes.
- Call that out to the Plan Commission.
- The long elevations where there are private vs. public entrances, I'm assuming the sidewalk is sloping away from all of those doors because there are no steps up into those individual units. Curious about sense of privacy and landscaping there for those private entrances.
  - That can be addressed by the landscape architect. There are private sidewalks to each of those entrances.
- They seem very exposed if there is parking very close by facing into their front doors. What kind of landscaping might help shield them and not have headlights shining in the door?
  - The parking lot is at 17-feet, ten-feet from the building, plus another four-feet to the doors. 21-feet from parking edge to these private doors. The landscape architect can answer that. We always have one step for sure. This building specifically, the private sidewalk is flat but we have huge differences at the other buildings.
  - The intent is to break that up so there isn't full on headlights going into those windows. There are foundation plants there, we can hone those in where the windows are.
- Your particular concern is where the entrances are, right?
- Yes, it seemed like cars were very close to somebody's front door, which doesn't seem protected as far as privacy, security or vision.
  - The grades are shown on there and it looks like there is some step up along that whole façade, which should help a little bit. We have some 3-4 foot tall plants in there to block that.

- There would be quite a striking difference between the front door facing parking or facing the greenspace. Seems really different.
- Overall the landscape plan plant list is very impressive.
- The diagonal stretch of Building C facing the Interstate, those trees are mostly a series of columnar Red Maples, which are a really nice tree, but given that is the direct view to the Interstate, I'm wondering if you might consider going with a tall evergreen there, there are hybrid varieties of arborvitae that may be a good solution. If you push them to the back of the property line you'd possibly have room for more columnars in front of them. Thuja Green Giant is one that gets to be twenty-five-feet high in six to eight years. The long views down those driveways, even in winter, looking to the Interstate you're at least looking at trees, but that diagonal corner is a direct view. The variety and placement is very well done and nice to see.
  - The Interstate is at forty-feet above our ground. Trees would be effective for the first and second floor, this is a slope starting at our property up forty-feet.
- I have concerns about the colors, I was a fan of the first version with the yellow accent colors, which was a lot more visually appealing than just the two shades of blue.
- I love the solution of the ring road along Building D and the swimming pool where you have the parallel parking. I'm wondering about use of the BRT that will be within ¼ mile on E. Washington Avenue. Do you have any plans to encourage that use with a shuttle or bike path to get these residents to the BRT and reduce the overall demand for parking? It is still closer to a suburban parking ratio.
  - In terms of the ratio we're a little lower than the informational presentation. More typical complexes in this stretch are 1.75-2 so we're already reduced. Market demand out here is unfortunately more cars. We're relying on sidewalks, we haven't had a conversation about a shuttle but we have a complete sidewalk connection up there.
- Even if they do use the BRT they'll still have a car. It's a pretty realistic scenario that the parking provided is going to be needed by the residents and a certain amount of visitors as well.
- Consider items that could result in a better project.

## Action

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **RECOMMENDED APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-1-1) with Braun-Oddo, Klehr, DeChant and Harper voting yes; Asad voting no; and Goodhart non-voting. The motion noted the following:

- The UDC recommends that the improved site plan is acceptable.
- The UDC recommends that a row of evergreen trees (Thuja Green Giant) be added to the portion of the site that fronts the Interstate. Consideration should be given to pushing the evergreens as far back on the property as possible to allow for the row of maples to remain. .
- UDC recommends including a third color or material in the building material palette and design to provide less similarity from building-to-building.
- At the subjectivity of the architect, UDC recommends that the third floor roof element be re-examined with the goal of reducing the heaviness of the element. Consideration should be given to returning this element to the vertical projecting element on the building end wall. .
- UDC recommends pushing the walpaks back from the primary edge of the balconies to reduce visibility from the street.