

# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

July 12, 2023



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 529 University Avenue  
**Application Type:** New Development in UMX Zoning  
**UDC will be an Advisory Body**  
**Legistar File ID #:** [78638](#)  
**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Jeremy Frommelt, Iconica | Kevin Carey, The Carey Group

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a twelve-story, mixed-use, multi-family building containing ground floor commercial space and 33 residential units.

**Approval Standards:** The subject site is zoned UMX (Urban Mixed Use District). Per MGO Section 28.076(4)(c), All new buildings and additions greater than 20,000 square feet or that have more than four stories in UMX zoning shall obtain conditional use approval from the Plan Commission following review by the Urban Design Commission for conformity to the design standards in Section 28.071(3) of the Zoning Code and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and report its findings to the Plan Commission.

**Zoning Related Information:** As noted above, the project site is zoned UMX. The Zoning Code outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings in both the UMX and DC zoning districts. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX and DC zone districts are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

As noted in the Downtown Height Map, the maximum height allowed for the project site is 12 stories/172 feet. As noted in the Zoning Code, buildings must meet both the maximum number of stories and the maximum height.

Staff notes that while the proposed building appears to be consistent with the maximum height limitations, given the extents of the rooftop improvements, ultimately the building height/stories will need to be confirmed by the Zoning Administrator.

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) (the “Plan”) planning area in the Johnson Street Bend Neighborhood. As noted in the Plan’s recommendations, this district should continue as a primarily higher density student housing areas mixed with some new neighborhood serving retail uses. The Plan also recommends building heights of up to 12-stories.

## 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. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Design and Composition:** The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to designing buildings at intersections to have strong corner elements, maintaining visual interest across all facades, sensitivity to context, scale and datum, as well as providing an enhanced design aesthetic at the pedestrian level, etc.

As indicated on the elevations, there are significant blank wall expanses, including those on the south and east elevations. While future potential development could limit the visibility of these blank wall expanses, consideration should still be given to the treatment of these expanses, especially as it relates to materials transition and articulation. In addition, there appears to be minimal architectural detailing at the street level, including pedestrian scale elements or architectural details, clear building entrances, etc.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the overall building design and composition, especially as it relates to minimizing the appearance of blank walls, overall articulation and modulation, proportions (top, middle, base), the level of design/detailing at the pedestrian level, and creating positive termination at the top of the building, and integration of rooftop mechanical.

- **Rooftop Improvements:** As noted on the roof plan, a rooftop amenity is proposed, as well as fully enclosed mechanical screen and appurtenances, including multiple stair towers and an elevator overrun. As seen in elevation view, there are canopies that bridge the gap between appurtenances, as well a window into a corridor. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the proposed rooftop improvements, especially as they relate to creating positive termination at the top of the building, as well as their integration with the overall architectural composition.
- **Long Views:** Due to the high visibility and viewsheds of the building along portions of W Johnson Street and N Frances Street, consideration should be given to the façade composition and integration of the proposed building and visibility of rooftop improvements as it relates to the overall cityscape and long views. Staff requests the Commission provide feedback, especially as it relates creating a positive termination at the top of the building, maintaining a cohesive architectural style, visual interest, etc.
- **Building Materials:** As noted in the application materials, the material palette is comprised of a precast panel system in a variety of colors and patterns/textures. The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to utilizing high quality, durable materials, maintaining the same level of design aesthetic across all four sides of the building, materials transitions, etc. Staff requests UDC provide feedback on the proposed material selection, especially as it relates to utilizing a palette of materials, scale, color, texture and architectural detailing.

**ATTACHMENT:**  
**28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
  - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
  - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
  - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
  - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.