



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 9453 Spirit Street (aka 305 Bear Claw Way)

**Application Type:** Residential Building Complex  
**UDC is an Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [81073](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Ryan McMurtrie, United Financial Group

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a Residential Building Complex consisting of four structures on one lot, including three, three-story, four-unit townhome buildings, one three-story, three-unit townhome building, all with attached garages.

**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 within the Elderberry Neighborhood Development Plan (the “Plan”) planning area. The Plan recommends Housing Mix 2 (8-20 du/ac) land uses for the project site, which includes a variety of housing types compatible with single-family homes including duplexes, four-units, townhouses and small-scale apartment buildings. The Plan also notes that building lots generally provide front, side and rear yards, and building heights are anticipated to be up to three stories in height.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC provides feedback and make findings on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below.

- **Building Design, Materials and Composition.** As noted above, the proposed Residential Building Complex is comprised of four buildings. The material palettes are relatively simple, comprised of masonry and composite siding. As designed, the proposed buildings appear to be consistent with the recently approved townhome and four-unit developments along Spirit and Chaska Streets (Legistar File IDs [70536](#) and [72249](#)), as well as the existing surrounding context.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to adding interest and reducing blank wall expanses on highly visible end walls by incorporating windows or doors in the garage spaces at the first floor. Staff believes this has been addressed.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the overall building design and composition.

- **Landscape.** Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the overall landscape plan and plant schedule giving consideration to the items noted below:

- Interior Parking Lot/Driveway Islands. As noted on the site plan, there are islands located between each unit. Each island is noted to be comprised of cobble stones. Consideration should be given to the finish treatment of these islands, including as it relates to providing consistency with other recently approved townhome and four-unit developments along Spirit and Chaska Streets which have planted islands (Karl Foerster Feather Reed Grass), as well as softening the hardscape area, providing additional screening, etc. between the individual unit driveways.
- Screening. As noted on the site plan there are two transformers, and multiple utility banks and blank wall expanses on the end units of each building. Consideration should be given to providing adequate year-round screening for these areas.
- Open Space. As noted on the site plan there is a large “Lawn” area to the south of Buildings 3 and 4. Consideration should be given to the programming and landscape in this area, including the potential for providing amenities that would encourage passive and active recreation opportunities, and utilizing a landscape design and plant palette that not only provides a buffer and softens the adjacent parking/access drive areas, but that also provides year-round color and texture.

## Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission’s comments from the January 24, 2024, Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Going to the landscape plan, is there anything around that stormwater pond, a trail or path that these residents have access to?
  - Currently not, it’s actually City owned property and not part of the development.
- If there was it would be nice for a simple connection to it. That landscape buffer, where you see the evergreen symbols, what struck me was that those are lawn mowing obstacles and consuming your open space. My landscape comment would be why not pull those to the edge of your lawn at the intersection of lawn and native seed area. It’s a nice selection that creates a nice edge but would be better to reinforce the ground plane material and give you more open space. Residents can get creative with how they might use that open space.
- The earlier iteration of this where you had the quadplex in-lieu of Buildings 3 and 4 had a really nice looking little shared outdoor amenity space between the three buildings that looked like it had a play area and possibly a fire pit and some seating areas and stuff, now we have basically nothing on this property here. I understand the constraints with the City property and stormwater basin. Do you know is it anticipated that the stormwater basin will be an always wet pond, or depends on rainfall?
  - I can’t answer that officially, I believe it will maintain some water but depends on rainfall.
- At the very least on that side with the three pink circles there, if the City does it right and they seem to have been doing this in other developed areas around the City, there seems to be an interest of planting these edges of these basins with planned wetland native plants and it might end up being something nice to look out over, even if there isn’t a big amenity space it might be nice to have a seating area or something that looks out over that view there, and along the lines of what Shane was talking about, I’m usually a big fan of evergreens in plans like this, but if you do so you’d hate to block a view of this with a wall of evergreens, just take that into consideration to make sure you leave some open views and consider some overlook areas there.
  - Makes sense, we can try to do some framed views. We’ll study the topography and see if the grades will be naturally screened already.

- The unit on the corner of Bear Claw and Spirit, looking at the elevations. As I understand it, you're going to be seeing basically the side of the elevated unit over the garage. I'm hoping you're able to do something, even if it's bringing windows into the garage, giving some life to the ground floor elevation since it's right on the corner.
  - That's a great suggestion, we will take a look at that.