



Project Address: 3915 Lien Road

Application Type: New Two-Story Building with Drive-Thru in Urban Design District (UDD) 5
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [86494](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Mylena Oliveira, Plaza Street Partners | Colin Hooper, Republic Madison Outparcels

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a two-story building for a coffee shop with drive-thru.

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 5 ("UDD 5"), 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(12).

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, mass and windows, providing a direct pedestrian pathway from E Washington Avenue, as well as minimizing site paving and making landscape refinements related to screening the drive-thru use. The Commission's subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item is limited to the design-related items specified in the Initial Approval conditions. It is the role of the UDC to focus only on whether those conditions have been addressed.

Zoning Related Information: The project site is zoned Commercial Corridor-Transitional (CC-T). Within the mixed-use and commercial zoning districts there are general provisions related to building and site design that are intended to foster high-quality development. These standards are in addition to the UDD 5 standards and are outlined in [Section 28.060](#), including those that speak to building and entrance orientation, façade articulation, door and window openings, and building materials.

In addition, the project site is located in the Transit Oriented Development Overlay (TOD) zone. New development with the TOD Overlay is subject to the requirements as outlined in [MGO 28.104](#), including those that speak to:

- Maximum principal building setbacks – At least 30% of the primary street facing façade (E Washington Avenue) shall be setback no more than 20 feet,
- Entrance orientation – Principal building entrances shall be orientated towards the primary abutting street (E Washington Avenue) and be located within the maximum setback (20 feet),
- Minimum number of stories – A minimum of two stories is required for a minimum of 75% of the building footprint, and
- Site standards for automobile infrastructure.

Staff note that ultimately, the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with the TOD Overlay requirements. As proposed, the development **does not meet** the TOD Overlay requirements, including those that speak to automobile infrastructure, which requires that drive-through windows be located fully under an occupiable conditioned story. In this case, to meet this requirement, the second story would need to be expanded to be 18 feet in width, which is the width of the drive-through canopy of the first floor. A complete Zoning review will be conducted as part of the Site Plan Review process.

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.

- Refining the building design to decrease the mass of the second floor, including, but not limited to increasing the window sizes, utilizing consistent window proportions and details across the building, look at the material applications, proportion and types of windows – ribbon versus punched more modern less heavy, etc.

As reflected in the updated elevation drawings, window proportions have been updated to be consistent across the building and the material palette has been simplified to reflect masonry with metal accents. Staff requests the Commission's continued evaluation of this condition.

*Staff note and the applicant has confirmed that the warming hut is no longer part of the proposal. As such, the details have been removed from the plan set.

- Refining the Site Plan to reduce the impervious surface, (i.e., eliminating or reducing the pass-thru lane) as much as possible and increasing the landscape to screen the drive-thru as much as possible.

As reflected in the updated drawings, the pass-thru and drive-thru lanes have been reduced at the southern site entrance resulting in an overall decrease in the pavement width in this area. In addition, the landscape plan has been updated to include additional landscape along the north and south drive-thru lanes, including ornamental grasses and shrubs.

With that however, consideration should continue to be given to reducing the drive-thru lane widths, as well as fully eliminating the pass-thru lane, which is not required for delivery or fire service, which will occur from the access drive and parking area located east of the building.

In coordinating with Traffic Engineering staff, the minimum pavement section for a drive-thru lane is 10-12 feet, where the 14.5-16 feet is shown on the Site Plan. Further reducing the lane widths will decrease the overall pedestrian pathway length to travel from the parking lot, as well as for drive-thru staff, further reduce the paved area on site, and increase the area available for more robust landscape screen. Staff note that final plans will need to be approved by Traffic Engineering as part of the Site Plan Review process.

Staff requests the Commission's continued evaluation of this condition.

*Staff note that while the landscape plan shows a fence along the north and south property lines, the applicant has confirmed that the fence shown is the erosion control silt fence, not a permanent fence. This detail will be removed from the plans as part of the Site Plan Review application.

- Consider incorporating a more direct pedestrian connection from the E Washington Avenue or a pedestrian amenity into the site plan.

Staff believe this condition has been met. As reflected in the updated drawings a pedestrian pathway has been provided that directly connects to the existing E Washington Avenue pedestrian pathway.

- **Lighting.** While lighting conditions were not included in the UDC's Initial Approval motion, staff notes and the applicant is advised that additional information is needed to confirm that the proposed lighting meets UDD 5 requirements, as well as MGO 29.36, including as it relates to light levels at the property line, average light levels in vehicle use areas (drive driveways and drive thru lanes), and along pedestrian pathways and in the parking area. In addition, as indicated on the lighting plan and elevation drawings building lighting is proposed, and while several fixture cutsheets were provided it **does not** appear that all are accounted for in the photometrics for the site (Fixture WS, which is not in the Fixture Schedule). Staff note that additional information will be necessary to confirm that the proposed fixtures will meet cutoff requirements (including mounting/fixture details for Fixtures TL and WS).

Staff recommend the UDC address lighting in their formal action, including whether the continued review could be completed administratively.

Summary of Initial Approval Discussion and Action

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

The Commission asked about the upper floor plan, the applicant replied it is planned for storage and a mechanical room, with spandrel and some clear glass windows.

The Commission commented that the concept is cool but could be enhanced. They inquired about reveals and attachments to the "square" of the panels. The Commission commented that the punched windows are not appropriate for this modern concept, and suggested a spandrel ribbon as an option.

The Commission noted the staff report mentions the development's harmony with adjacent buildings, noting the second floor is jarring and inconsistent with the surrounding context and buildings. The applicant remarked that the building has become wildly out of prototype. The blue banding is a staple of the franchise brand which is being used as an architectural element. The metal panels will have roughly 18" reveals with a substantial thickness.

The Commission asked about the width of the drive aisles. The applicant replied that the pass-thru drive lane is needed for emergency vehicles and delivery vehicles that don't fit under the canopy. The Commission suggested eliminating the pass-thru lane in the perpendicular direction.

The Commission noted the benefit of an infill project, while being unfortunate that it requires so much vehicle circulation space.

The Commission clarified the employee parking spaces that cross where cars are stopping, to enter on the other side of the building. The applicant clarified that there is no public access to the building.

The Commission inquired about the varying window sizes. The applicant responded they provide unique character, and distinguish the two "boxes" of the building, noting they should all be the same width. The applicant confirmed that there are three different windows on the north elevation.

The Commission asked about the window detailing being flush and clean around the masonry. The applicant responded that the windows will be inset in the Nichiha panels, which will be proud of the windows.

The Commission inquired about the width of the pass-thru lane, the retaining wall, and the pedestrian access. The applicant noted that there is an existing ramp that comes down, connects to the sidewalk and a walkway.

The Commission talked about the brutalist look of the building, noting the other prototypes have varying degrees of materials and applications; their similarities could be applied here. This does not have the lightness and transparency of a modern design. Modern is transparency and lightness – if the windows were larger in those openings it will start to lighten up the massing – it's a big brick cube that is heavy and the windows are not proportionate to the mass. There needs to be another round of looking at the material applications and how you treat those elements. It is not the number of materials, but it is how they are applied. Look at proportions; the piece at the top needs to be lighter. There is way more solid than void. Study the relationship of solid to void.

The Commission talked about the Zoning Code driving the design of this building. The Secretary explained the requirements with the Transit Overlay District (TOD) requirements, UDD 5 requirements and the Zoning Code.

The Commission noted the importance of a pedestrian aspect to the project being the very essence of urban design. A small outdoor patio space needs to be accommodated.

The Commission noted that the two rectangular volumes is an interesting concept, but the corrugated metal piece looks like an elevated job trailer. It could be as simple as some of the things that were talked about – the proportions and size of the windows, the types of windows, create more of an openness.

Thinking about how people could arrive here outside of a vehicle. Try to find a way of decreasing the amount of impervious pavement. Taking away the first leg of the pass-thru lane could shift things around.

The Commission discussed granting initial approval, noting hesitation with the site plan, pedestrian access and drive aisles. The Commission is not recommending the site plan flip, it is more about refinements.

UDC Motion and Action

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

- Refining the building design to decrease the mass of the second floor, including, but not limited to increasing the window sizes, utilizing consistent window proportions and details across the building, look at the material applications, proportion and types of windows – ribbon versus punched more modern less heavy, etc.
- Refining the Site Plan to reduce the impervious surface, (i.e., eliminating or reducing the pass-thru lane) as much as possible and increasing the landscape to screen the drive-thru as much as possible.
- Consider incorporating a more direct pedestrian connection from the E Washington Avenue or a pedestrian amenity into the site plan.

The motion was passed on a vote of (3-1-1), with Asad, Klehr, and Graham voting yes; Rummel voting no; and Bernau non-voting.