



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 710 Ridge Street (formerly 2901 University Ave.)
Application Type: Alteration to Approved Building in UDD 6 – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # 56124
Prepared By: Janine Glaeser, Planning Division

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Randy Bruce, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is seeking approval for an alteration to an existing conditional use to make changes to first level windows and doors of the building’s main façade on University Avenue.

Project Schedule: The Urban Design Commission approved the original Mixed-Use development on January 10, 2018 (see attached UDC Report). Note, the Plan Commission previously approved demolition and conditional use requests and the Common Council previously approved the rezoning from TR-U1 (Traditional Residential-Urban 1 District) to CC-T (Commercial Corridor-Transitional District) to facilitate this development

Approval Standards:

The Urban Design Commission is an approving body on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 6 (“UDD 6”), which requires that the Urban Design Commission approve the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district.

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

The UDC previously approved this five-story mixed-use building with 10,600 sq. ft. of commercial space and 39 apartments, and a two-story, eight-unit townhouse building. As noted in the attached report, the UDC inquired as to the locations of the ground floor “back of house” functions and the applicant responded such functions could be located internally, and tenants would be encouraged to create bathrooms and storage in the middle of the space. The first level retail spaces were approved with clear glazing windows and doors facing both the rear parking area and the University Avenue façade.

To address tenant build-out issues, the applicant proposes to add an obscuring film to (5) window/door glazing panels facing University Avenue.

In regards to the requirements and guidelines for Urban Design District (UDD) 6, there are not specific standards related to façade composition or percentage of window openings. The specific standards for building design require that exterior buildings materials shall be “low maintenance and harmonious with those on other buildings in the area” and that mechanical elements are screened. The suggestive guidelines include the following:

- i. The architecture of new infill buildings, additions to existing buildings and major exterior remodeling should be compatible with but not necessarily similar to that of existing adjacent buildings.*
- ii. Large, unbroken exterior facades should be avoided.*
- iii. All building elevations are of importance and should be carefully designed. When visible from roadways or adjoining properties, roof surfaces should be considered as part of the overall design.*

Additional recommendations are included within the “Design Guidelines” section of the more contemporary University Avenue Corridor Plan (2014) that states that commercial building faces should provide a high percentage of windows on the ground floor to allow clear views in and out. Dark or tinted glass is discouraged.

In addition, the project must also comply with the more detailed regulations in the Zoning Code and staff notes that the proposed application of the screening film appears to meet the detailed requirements of the Zoning Code (Section 28.060(2)) that include:

(d) Door and/or Window Openings. For nonresidential uses at ground floor level, windows and doors or other openings shall comprise at least sixty percent (60%) of the length and at least forty percent (40%) of the area of the ground floor of the primary street facade. At least fifty percent (50%) of windows on the primary street facade shall have the lower sill within three (3) feet of grade.

- 1. Glass on windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass that mimics the appearance of windows may be used for up to twenty percent (20%) of the required area of the openings.*
- 2. Displays may be placed within windows. Equipment within buildings shall be placed a minimum of five (5) feet behind windows. To preserve views, within three (3) feet of any window, not more than thirty percent (30%) of the view through the windows shall be blocked by merchandise, displays, shelving, or other obstructions.*

In conclusion, the application of an obscuring window film, or other techniques to screen “back-of-house” functions were not previously presented to the Urban Design Commission and are not included in the approved plans. The activation of storefronts and commercial spaces has been a significant UDC consideration on several other developments, especially within Urban Design Districts. The applicant and design team have had several meetings with staff and have made façade and floor plan alterations to reduce the amount of obscuring film that is being proposed. Staff does not have objections regarding the request and believes that it can be found consistent with the general adopted plan/design guideline information and the more detailed Zoning Code requirements for glazing. Staff considers the use of the obscuring film preferable to other screening solutions that would be more permanent in nature. The materials show that a majority of the windows will retain vision glass, operable doors, and provide street-level activation.

In reviewing plans or development alterations in UDD 6, Chapter 33.24(13(d)) requires that the Urban Design Commission consider the district requirements and guidelines as may be appropriate. The development shall meet the requirements and conform as much as possible to the guidelines. The ordinance states that the overall design of each development shall be of high quality.