

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING REPORT August 16, 2023



Agenda Item #: 10

Project Title: 1609 S Park Street – Exterior Renovations to an Existing Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 7. 13th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 78641

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Wendy Von Below, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Jessica Klehr, Russell Knudson, and Marsha Rummel

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of August 16, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of exterior renovations to an existing building located at 1609 S Park Street. Registered and speaking in support were Adam Stein, and Wesley MacDonald. Registered and speaking in opposition was Carrie Rothburd. Registered in opposition but not wishing to speak was Helen Kitchel.

The proposal is for the former Arby's to become a Starbucks. Previous comments noted the site circulation issues. The site plan has been updated to remove the access through the copy shop site. There are three access points to the site, one from Park Street and two from Beld Street. This site is drive-thru only, so the pedestrian conflicts have been reduced. The building has been improved. The tower elements are masonry, and the EIFS along the front façade will be fiber cement panel to appear like wood and the windows has been expanded. The glass has been increased to 33% from a previously reviewed 29%. To get to 40% the parapets could be reduced, but that would result in no screening for rooftop mechanical. In addition, details have been added for the masonry knee wall.

The Secretary noted the Commission's focus tonight is on the UDD 7 guidelines and requirements, including glazing requirements and the quality of exterior building materials. The Secretary noted that Commission's consideration should include how the proposal meets the guidelines and requirements, as well as the Commission's findings on how the proposed design is consistent with the guidelines and requirements, the quality of the resulting design aesthetic, and the appropriateness of the application of the guidelines and requirements related to the overall scope of work.

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

- Could you talk a little bit about the southwest corner and the sidewalk along Park Street; how does that walk-up tie in, what's existing at that corner there? And after that please talk about the termination of the parking lot that cuts off the drive-thru to the parking lot to the south?
 - We are creating access to get to the front of the building from both the street as well as the additional parking. The second question was related to cutting off the parking to the adjacent site. We decided to curb it to reduce confusion.

The Commission discussed the following:

- It's an improved site plan for sure. I'm sympathetic that the existing building makes it difficult to meet the 40% glazing requirements. I don't think it would be an improvement to cut the parapet wall down, and erect a mechanical roof screen on top of the building wherever the units would be. This just hardly has any glazing

facing the street. They have also increased their use of quality materials, they're achieving some of what we talked about before.

- I just wanted to note particularly related to the glazing, recognizing that's a south facing facade, from a sustainability standpoint you'd probably want a little less than the 40%. I'm fine with the design the way it is, they've done a fine job of working with Traffic Engineering and improving the site plan.
- A motion in favor would have to indicate the goals of UDD 7 have been met so staff can find the project in compliance.
- The southeast corner rendering, the signage proposed in white lettering on the uniform brick area sticks out like a sore thumb and seems garish. It's such a plain, kind of ugly building back here with this lettering. To me the signage is what made me see how plain and utilitarian this building is. They put some nice materials on it, some nice brick elements there, but it might as well be a big vending machine sitting in a parking lot when you look at it.

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Von Below for Final Approval.

Discussion on the motion:

- At this point we have seen it. We've commented on the percentage of glazing, and we found that based on the fact that it's an existing building and they did the best they can to increase the glazing and not expose mechanicals by lowering parapets, and high design by using higher quality materials. Signage is branding, that's their brand that is what it looks like. It's an existing building and they have improved the site plan, so I would say Final Approval.
- I can echo those comments. I would point out again, there's sort of a conflict here, some of the neighbors feel very strongly about this. It's basically the idea of a business that's strictly drive-thru and very auto-centric rubs people in a really philosophical way that it's not a good fit for the site. These kind of buildings exist and I'm not in favor of shutting them down by nitpicking really fine points of existing ordinances where the City has weighed in on the conflicting aspects of the ordinance. From a design standpoint they've done an admiral job of making this work on site as best they can. I like that fact that there's a lot of landscaping out front that wasn't there before to overrides some of the concerns of that whole issue of cars coming through a drive-way between the building and Park Street – a lot of that is going to be shielded from that landscaping. It's a drive-thru building. I'm happy they got rid of some of the craziness of way going through adjoining parking lots but there's no way this business would exist without the drive-thru going like it does. Given that and the changes that they have made, trying to force them to 40% glass would require lesser, either bringing parapet down and exposing parapets on the roof, that's not good design, that's bad design. For all those reasons, I am thinking this should be approved.
- I am curious how that works, if we are not able to waive that requirement about the windows?
- (Secretary) The language in the code provides us with a certain level of flexibility if we can make findings. The findings need to be based in the appropriateness of their application. It may not be appropriate to apply certain requirements and guidelines. As long as we can make findings that the general design aesthetic or that the resulting architectural expression is improvements within the district, we are able to move forward with an approval with a lesser quantity of windows.
- That answer makes me confused because in the staff memo it says that we cannot waive the requirement. Are you saying that other elements could make up for it?
- (Secretary) Yes, exactly. Technically we're not waiving the requirement, we're making findings that because of certain design related aspects that it is still an enhanced design aesthetic which does also meet all of the other guidelines and requirements with some not being met, but others being met that we can make an overall finding that there is an enhanced design aesthetic and that we do not find that a strict application of the 40% would result in a better design of the building.
- I don't think it meets the standards for UDD 7, it talks about enhancing the pedestrian experience in the front yard setback. Having a line of cars doesn't enhance any pedestrian experience, even with a low fence or trees or

shrubbery, I am skeptical. I know we're not supposed to look at the other zoning questions, but I disagree with the argument that because this canopy counts within the building, which please tell me that the canopy is part of the building envelope, with to me says a structured parking situation where you are driving under. Maybe because this isn't a new building it doesn't matter, but I don't think the spirit of that is met. I would ask the applicant to revise the circulation to snake around the building in another way. I appreciate the improvements in appearance, but don't think it meets the UDD.

- I would certainly agree if this was coming to us as a blank sheet of paper I would feel differently. Given that the driveway in front is existing, it's certainly not making things worse. It's not great, but I think it's preferable to the old empty Arby's. What is the intent of the covered drive-thru; I always thought it was to integrate the menu boards?
- (Secretary) It's the intent of TOD to have the drive-thru as minimal as possible in terms of visibility and in terms of presence. The intent was to make them as integrated as possible with the architecture.
- (Secretary) Before we do vote on the motion, because what the applicant is presenting with regard to the fiber cement board on the upper portion of the building is different than what is on file as part of the public record, I would recommend that a condition of approval be added to the motion to require the fiber cement board be added to the upper building element on the street facing façade that wraps the elevation versus the EIFS.

Action

A motion by Asad, seconded by Von Below, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-2-1) with Asad, Below, Klehr, and Harper voting yes; Rummel and Knudson voting no; and Chair Goodhart non-voting.

The motion passed with following findings and condition:

- The site plan is improved,
- Based on the fact that it's an existing building and the [design team] did the best they can to increase the glazing and not expose mechanicals by lowering parapets, and high design by using higher quality materials, and
- The elevations shall be updated to show the fiber cement board be added to the upper building element on the street facing façade that wraps the elevation as shown in the presentation materials versus the EIFS as shown in the submittal materials.