



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1802 - 1902 Pankratz Street

Application Type: Addition to Existing Building for Isthmus Montessori Academy Located in Urban Design District No. 4 – Final Approval is Requested

Legistar File ID # [68727](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Brad Koning, Sketchworks Architecture, LLC | Bill Walsh, Isthmus Montessori Academy

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Final Approval for a two-story addition to an existing two-story academic building providing additional learning spaces, a gymnasium, and theater. Site improvements include a new main entry, central arrival courtyard, and new student drop-off area. Building materials include masonry, glass and metal panel.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on December 15, 2021.
- The UDC granted Initial Approval on May 11, 2022.
- The Plan Commission approved this proposal on May 23, 2022.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The development site is within Urban Design District (UDD) 4, which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design requirements and guidelines of [Section 33.24\(11\)](#).

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development and make findings based on the UDD guidelines and requirements, including the conditions that were part of the Commission's Initial Approval motion as noted below:

- Look at the orientation of the theater and the practice rooms and/or the architectural detail of the curved wall facing the parking lot.

With regard to exterior materials, consideration should be given to the UDD 4 guidelines and requirements, including those that speak to minimizing large unbroken facades, presenting four sided architecture, and exterior materials being consistent and compatible with those of the existing and adjacent buildings. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and findings related to the overall design of the proposed building addition.

- Provide a plant schedule as part of the Final Approval submittal.
- Bulk up the plantings on the north side of the site. The motion further included guidance with the landscape plan as noted in the [staff report](#).
- Break up or change the fencing in the courtyard space to be more organic and complementary to the space that it is in.

With regard to the landscape plan, consideration should be given to the UDD 4 guidelines and requirements, including those that speak to screening ground mounted mechanical equipment, providing year-round interest and color, the overall landscape planting palette and design serving both a functional and aesthetic purpose. Staff requests UDC review and make findings on the proposed landscape plan.

Per the Commission's adopted Policy and Procedures Manual, Initial Approval signals approval for general site plan layout and building massing, noting that architectural or material revisions are still found necessary prior to final approval. In this case, the motion for Initial Approval specified that the four considerations noted above needed to be addressed in order to reach Final Approval. Staff advises that the Commission base this review on those previously-specified elements.

Summary of UDC Initial Approval Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the May 11, 2022 Initial Approval are provided below:

- Along the entryway circle drive, are those panels glazed or blank?
 - Those are blank, that is the back of the stage.
- The original Informational Presentation had the back of the stage facing north. Consider facing north instead of east to avoid this big blank wall staring at us as we drive through the parking lot.
 - We enlisted the help of a theater consultant. The previous layout had you entering at the stage, they suggested flipping it so as people enter they aren't disrupting any production going on, which led to the panels vs. curtain walls. It's easy enough to replace some of these with spandrel panels.
- I'd suggest flipping it 90 degrees, so people are walking through the little break out space that might face the courtyard. The functional things could still be in the same location, but it's the first thing you're seeing and it's the closest to the street.
- The shape of the courtyard is more functional.
- The only element I had any concerns about, if the designers do choose to keep the layout the same, is the brick infill, there may be a nicer, more subtle way to show variation on that wall. Right now it looks like you blocked windows. Maybe some other geometry, looking at the ribbon window element, bringing some more horizontal elements across, some textural difference to enhance the monolithic.
- The landscape plan has no worksheet.
 - The staff report noted concerns and requested Commission feedback in terms of quantity, quality, texture and screening blank walls.
- At a first glance that north elevation seems a little sparse of plantings.
- I was frustrated trying to guess what these plants were based on the acronyms. I get the gist of it for the trees, but not the plants or stormwater areas. You're on the right track for bulking up and foundation plantings, I would love to see some more detail of what that all entails. The open turf and parking lot areas need more trees. I'd like to see those missing sheets to really be able to get a feel for what's going on here. I agree about breaking up that curved wall, it does look like a bricked over window. I just can't get past that, there has to be a more elegant treatment.
- Your choice of fencing (size and scale) could benefit from a second look, or consider more of a wall; this is kind of ornate for the application. The detailing is so very different than the building, it looks miniature compared to the massing and style of the building.
- You have organic curves, then a straight fence, then square paving. The organic shape of everything going on in the plaza doesn't flow into the parking lot and it's separated with a long linear fence. There is opportunity for more connections from the plaza going into the building, part of it is the scale of that fence.

- The fence could be replaced by a wall to reduce the amount of fencing you're presented with. Those really long expanses of fence, no matter what the style is, reads as kind of institutional.