



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

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

**Legistar File ID #:** [86796](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Ryan McMurtrie, Arden Property Group, Inc.

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a residential building complex consisting of two, two-story structures with attached garages on one lot.

**Project History:** In May 2024, the UDC reviewed and subsequently approved a development proposal for a residential building complex on the project site. At that time the development proposal consisted of four, three-story structures, all with attached garages (Legistar File ID [81073](#)).

### Project Schedule:

- At the February 5, 2025, meeting, the Urban Design Commission received an Informational Presentation.

**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.*”

As a residential building complex, a Conditional Use is required. The Plan Commission will evaluate the request for consistency with the approval standards, including the following Conditional Use Standard No. 8, which is the primary standard related to project aesthetics. For reference, Conditional Use Standard No. 8 is noted below.

*“When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that **the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district.** In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation.” (Emphasis Added)*

**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 requests that the UDC review the proposed development, provide feedback and make findings based on the above-referenced standards for residential building complexes as it pertains to the design considerations noted below.

- **Building Design, Materials and Composition.** As designed, the proposed buildings appear to be consistent with the existing surrounding residential context, which is comprised of a variety multi- and single-family residential product types. The proposed material palette is relatively simple, comprised of masonry and composite siding with stone and masonry accents. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make findings on the overall building design and composition.
- **Landscape and Open Space.** As noted on the Site and Landscape plans, there are several areas designated as open space, including a seating area at the corner of Bear Clay Way and Spirit Street, and a larger yard space adjacent to Building 1. The plans also indicate several locations where above-ground utilities will be located adjacent to or within these open spaces as well as unit entries. As such, consideration should be given to providing year-round screening, color and texture in these areas, as well as the siting of above-ground utilities so as not to adversely impact open spaces and the individual end unit entries.

In addition, given the amount of on-and off-site parking available to serve the site, the applicant is encouraged to continue exploring potential parking modifications (e.g. reduction in stalls, reorientation, use of compact stalls, etc.) that could result in an increase in open space areas, as well as additional landscaping opportunities. Modifications could also improve the relationship between the parking and the building unit entry on the south end of Building 2.

Related to the site planning considerations, for reference and in summary, the Commission's Informational Presentation comments are noted below, including:

- Provide distinguishable individual unit entrance pathways, especially for the Building 1 end unit along Spirit Street and the middle units, which share a walkway along Bear Claw Way,
- Explore ways to minimize site paving and parking, especially where there is head-in parking adjacent to ground floor units, and
- Adjust building locations and setbacks to create additional open space opportunities,
- Incorporate shade trees into the parking islands.

\*With regard to the above-ground transformer, based on staff's discussions with Alliant Energy, the location of the transformer has not yet been confirmed. Staff encourage the applicant to continue to work with Alliant Energy to confirm a location for the transformer that is less intrusive in the open space.

## Summary of Informational Presentation Discussion and Questions

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and questions from the February 5, 2025, meeting are provided below.

The Commission complimented the project and inquired about private versus common entries at the corner. The applicant noted that there is not common corridor, all entries are all private. The Commission suggested designing a separate path to the parking that does not require all pedestrians to pass by this unit entrance.

The Commission noted that in general, there seems to be more pavement than what the Commission previously saw. The applicant noted that they do not know the actual numbers, but they are trying to minimize the drives and parking as much as possible.

The Commission inquired about the number of onsite parking stalls. The applicant noted that the onsite parking is necessary for the product type and location. The Commission inquired about parking behind the garage doors; the applicant noted that that would be possible.

The Commission inquired about the building setbacks and the possibility of pushing the buildings closer to the streets to open up some additional greenspace, and getting some shade trees in the islands in the parking areas. The applicant noted that they would look at the landscape for those areas, but consideration will need to be given to the scale of the islands. The applicant noted that they are looking at the building locations to get more open space.

The Commission inquired about the head-in parking adjacent to the ground floor units. The applicant noted that they would look at the landscape plan and use taller plantings in that area.

The Commission noted that the four-sided architecture and wrapping materials is appreciated, and inquired about whether the at-grade entrances along the Bear Claw Way that are accessible by the same sidewalk could have more definition and separation by increasing the landscape strip.

The Commission noted that the surface parking and amount of asphalt hardscape needs to be reconsidered. We cannot be duplicating all this vehicular space if it is not necessary.

The Commission noted that the project is handsome.