

Urban Design Commission  
Meeting of February 4, 2026  
Agenda #6, Legistar 90917

Should the UDC decide that this project has merit and could work, I urge the UDC to refer the project to a future meeting in order to obtain additional information before making a final decision. That information could include the following (the reasons are detailed below).

1. Have the applicant provide samples of the metal that will be used for large areas (Steel Master roof + siding; McElroy Multi-Cor – Galvalume).
2. Have the applicant provide a 3D view (like on page 33) of what the building would look like from across Park Street.
3. Have the applicant provide renderings specifying materials for (1) the side abutting the residential area and (2) the side abutting the rear yard on the northerly side.
4. Have the applicant specify all places where various materials will be used (e.g., the northerly flat-roof section only specifies some black trim), and provide consistent renderings to show where brick/other materials will be used on the ground floor.
5. Have the applicant clarify whether the current fence will remain and, if so, to describe the condition of the fence. If the fence will be replaced, to specify materials and height.
6. Obtain more details on the lighting.
7. Request the Zoning Administrator to provide an opinion on whether the use of metal in the proposed project meets the Zoning Code requirement of: "Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge metal, and; shall be non-reflective." That is, whether the building has a palette of materials and whether the metal is deemed non-reflective. If the building does not meet the Zoning Code in these important aspects, then UDC does not need to come to a decision.

MGO 33.24(14)(a) states the goal of Urban Design District No. 7:

"When [these design requirements and guidelines are] applied, they will ensure against fragmented or incompatible development and will *help prevent the negative visual and functional impacts of uncoordinated design decisions.*" (emphasis added)

In order to accomplish this goal, the design requirements establish key elements and compliance with those requirements is mandatory:

"All development in the District ... shall be designed, erected, and maintained in compliance with this ordinance ..."

The proposed project has interesting and unusual features, and it could be viewed as innovative. However, it does not, or may not, comply with the following requirements.

UDD #7 Requirements

Ordinance requirements are in black lettering, comments are in blue.

All visible sides of the building shall be designed with details that complement the front facade.

The northern side of the building (the side with the 20 foot rear yard) is visible. Yet the plans provide no information on how this side of the building will look, nor any description of the materials.

The side that abuts the residential area does not complement the front façade – it is an unrelieved wall, about 11 feet in height, made of some unknown material. For the most part, it will only be residences that will have to look at this blank space. However, from Lakeside Street at least the first 15 feet of that blank wall will be visible (up to where the 6 foot high cedar fence may block at least part of the wall).

New buildings shall be at least two (2) stories in height ...

Since a lot of the building is 4 stories, it does provide residential density. However, the purpose of UDD #7 is not to increase density, rather it is to have coordinated design decisions.

How will this building be perceived from across Park? The building is only one-story along Park. The ends are under 13' in height while the center portion is about 14.5' in height. It does not read as a two-story building, yet other new buildings along S Park do read as two stories or more. As stated in the staff report, the two stories is intended to "create a comfortable sense of enclosure along Park Street."

Unlike other buildings which directly address Park Street, this building is oriented towards the corner. The applicant's visuals (e.g., page 33) are from the corner and there is not a view of how this building will look from across Park Street. (The second image on page 34 does provide a sense of how the building might look, but it is not the same as having a perspective view like that on page 33.)

Screen fences and/or landscaped buffers shall be provided at property edges. Where a commercial property adjoins residential properties, this separation shall be provided pursuant to the Zoning Ordinance.

The applicant states: "Where the property adjoins residential properties, appropriate separation and buffers will be provided in compliance with zoning ordinance."

- UDD #7 has its own landscaping requirements: "Screen fences and/or landscaped buffers shall be provided at property edges." (The second sentence about the zoning code addresses the amount of separation, not landscaping requirements.) There is a 6' cedar fence between the property and adjoining residences, a fence that has seen better days. It is unclear whether this fence will remain: page 15 of the plans, demolition, states "remove wood panel fence around perimeter of site" while page 20 states, under the notes section: "existing cedar fence (save & protect)."
- At the northeasterly portion, about 35 feet in length, there is not any landscape buffer between the residential area and the project and there may not even be a fence. This area should have landscaping since the 11' back wall abutting the residence is an unrelieved mass of some unknown material. (See page 22 of the plans.)
- Working southerly along the side abutting residential, there are Autumn Brilliance Serviceberries (n=4, height about 20'), then Green Giant Western Arborvitae (n=16, height 40-60'), then an area abutting Lakeside of about 25 feet where there is no fence and the landscaping merely consists of a few hydrangeas and Shenandoah Switch Grass.
- It is interesting that the 16 arborvitae, which grow to a reported minimum 12 feet in width, are being planted in an area which has about 9' between the building and the existing fence – an area which is designated on page 16 of the plans as being the fire hose access area.

The applicant states: "Landscaping in the shallow front setback area will feature resistant, low-maintenance plantings and ornamental shrubs selected for their ability to withstand the high-traffic conditions of this urban corridor."

- There are 4 planting beds along Park. The planting beds will have a curb around the beds, unlike other plantings on newer building sites along Park (plans page 20). One might question whether this poses a tripping hazard to pedestrians.
- The 4 beds will be a monoculture. These beds are about 3' in depth. Unlike other buildings, like the Peloton, which have perhaps about a foot of space for planting, 3' offers the opportunity to create a more interesting landscape.

Full cut-off light fixtures shall be used to illuminate the site.

The staff memo states additional information is required to fully evaluate lighting for consistency with the UDD 7 guidelines and requirements, and that further review can be completed administratively.

While, perhaps, administrative review post-approval is generally acceptable, this project has several unique features that merit UDC approval. (1) The lighting is very close to residential lots, in one portion as little as 5.5'. Placement and intensity will matter as these lights shine down. The 4<sup>th</sup> floor patio lighting foot-candles are only reflected for areas within the buildings envelope, not for how much light may be cast on the residential lots. (2) Originally, Kalwall panels were proposed. While Kalwall panels are not mentioned in the submitted plans, the 'frosted acrylic panels' may spill a lot of light. How much lighting for this building, at this corner, is not only an ordinance compliance issue but is also an issue requiring aesthetic judgement, an issue that is better made by the UDC.

The ground floors of commercial retail buildings shall have at least sixty (60) percent of the street wall area devoted to windows to enhance the pedestrian character of the primary street.

The staff report states this is a non-retail building, thus only requiring 40% of the area devoted to windows. Even at that level, UDC cannot be certain that the 40% requirement is met, yet this UDD #7 requirement must be met for the UDC to approve.

The question is the meaning of the "ground floor of a commercial retail building." The entire frontage along S Park is retail, though the building is primarily housing - this is how buildings are built these days. It would be almost impossible to have a two-story entirely retail building in today's market as there is not the demand for retail. Thus, if mixed-use buildings are deemed non-retail, UDD #7 will have buildings with 40% window coverage along the length of the UDD. It may be better to deem the ground floor retail portion of a mixed-use building as a retail building, thus inviting the openness that is desired by UDD No. 7.

Exterior materials shall be durable, high-quality materials and appropriate for external use.

The product for the arched towers has a 50 year warranty. One manufacturer states Galvalume "is projected to have a service life between 40-60 years in industrial and rural environments, based on long term data from actual building installations." Is that durable?

#### UDD #7 Guideline

While other guidelines could be reviewed (such as the residential entrance being a corner feature), only one guideline will be addressed.

Brick, stone and terra cotta are preferred primary materials for new buildings or additions.

Applicant's materials state: "The composition features two distinctive four-story arched towers clad in galvanized steel, flanked by two flat-roofed masses finished in high-quality brick and lapped siding."

- The ground floor is, at least partially, brick. Above that is metal siding. (The Lakeside flat-roofed mass specifies metal as the material for the 4<sup>th</sup> story but not for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> stories. The northerly end on Park does not specify the material.) The plans do not identify high quality brick and lapped siding as building materials, though these materials were used for the flat-roofed masses in the initial informational plans.

Applicant's materials state: "The building employs brick as a primary material for the ground floor and portions of the upper floors, aligning with the District's preference for brick, stone, and terra cotta."

- Does a building with one story of brick and three stories of metal align with UDD #7's guidance? Does it align with the goal of having coordinated design along Park Street?
- It is not clear what the ground floor material will be along both Park and Lakeside.
  - Page 33 depicts the one-story along Park as brick with some sort of stone-like caps.
  - The first rendering on page 34 reflects limited brick with a different, unidentified material. (When enlarged, the brick has the hatch marks to look like bricks while the rest of the ground floor has a flat surface.)
  - The second rendering on page 34 shows the ground floor as all brick, including the area which, on page 33, appeared to have stone-like caps.
  - The renderings on page 34 are repeated on page 35 without the added color which makes the differences a bit more apparent.
  - Then page 36 has some unknown material in place of the brick, but the brick has replaced the stone-like cap material.

The plans say nothing about materials on the northerly side of the building, the side that abuts the 21.42 foot rear yard. With this much of a gap between the property line and the building, the side will be visible. Currently, the abutting property has parking and a drive along the property line, further increasing the visibility of this side of the building. The plans say nothing about materials to be used on the easterly side which abuts the residential area, at least 15' of which will be visible to Lakeside Street.

With three stories being metal siding, how that metal looks is important – particularly for the arched towers. The arched towers use "Steel Master roof + siding." The Steel Master website describes this material: "each arch panel shall be 7.5" or 9.75" deep corrugation with cross corrugations to produce the required curvatures." Which depth is the applicant proposing to use? The depth of that corrugation merits UDC's consideration. (In contrast, other siding uses McElroy Multi-Cor – Galvalume, a product that has a depth of .875 inches and 2.67 inches between each ridge.)

The original staff report for the informational presentation noted that Zoning would need to review the metal. The Zoning Code provides that metal panels "shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge metal, and; shall be non-reflective."

- The only materials to be used above the ground floor are metal with a bit of frosted acrylic panels. Does this constitute a "palette" of materials? (The informational presentation had brick, metal, lapped siding, and stucco above the ground floor.) If Zoning decides it is not a palette, would the project come back to UDC? (In 2023, staff said that a proposed building did not meet the requirement for a palette of materials, UDC referred the matter, the applicant appealed to the ZBA, the ZBA upheld the interpretation, applicant made changes to the building material, UDC approved the project. 139 W Wilson.)

This is not UDC's concern, but has anyone done a snow study? Will snow accumulate on the arches and, if so, is there a risk that snow sliding off the arch will gain enough momentum to crash on the heads of pedestrians (particularly where the arches meet the front facade of the ground floor)?

Respectfully Submitted,  
Linda Lehnertz

**From:** [Jody Clowes](#)  
**To:** [Urban Design Comments](#)  
**Subject:** 999 S. Park St.  
**Date:** Tuesday, February 3, 2026 4:32:59 PM

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Hello,

I urge you to accommodate my neighbors' request to delay consideration of the 999 S. Park St. project. I think their concerns are valid and neighbors deserve some additional time for conversation with the developers.

Jody Clowes  
1017 Colby St 53715

To: Urban Design Commission

From: Omie Baldwin (839 S. Shore) Steve Davis, Julian Davis (813 W Lakeside), Ingrid Dilley (847 South Shore), Lisie Kitchel (225 Potter Street), Janelle Munns, Stephan Westman (818 W Lakeside), Judith Robinson (523 W Olin), Carrie Rothburd, Daniel Thurs (830 W Lakeside)

Re: Item 6, 90961, 999 S. Park St.

Date: February 3, 2026

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An earlier incomplete draft of this letter was inadvertently posted to Legistar yesterday without knowledge of those who signed this, the finished version. While the earlier posted draft does not bear our names, it duplicates part of the attached text, and we request that you read this letter as the final approved submission of 999 S. Park St.'s near neighbors.

We appreciate the careful thought you will put into Threshold's plans for this site from the perspective of the broader community and yet hope that you will grant a special consideration to the perspective of those who will be live next door to 999 S. Park St.

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Our intent with the following comments is to ensure 999 S. Park St. is a good and safe fit for the S. Park St. corridor, our neighborhood, and especially those residents whose properties are immediately adjacent on S. Shore Dr. and W. Lakeside St. We support development at the corner of W. Lakeside St. and S. Park St. However, we believe that Threshold's proposed development for this site will have a negative impact visually, functionally, and economically on adjoining residential uses. It will complicate the dynamics of traffic flow at the already complicated intersection that includes S. Park, W. Lakeside, Parr, and Fish Hatchery St. And it has the potential to negatively affect stormwater drainage onto the residential properties along S. Shore Drive.

As we communicated to the UDC on 12/3/25, we see many ways in which Threshold's proposal for 999 S. Park St. is not in keeping with UDD7, which works to "ensure against fragmented or incompatible development and...prevent the negative visual and functional impacts of uncoordinated design decisions." UDD7 is also focused on "the design and esthetics of public and private structures to promote the welfare of the community and to encourage the protection of economic values and proper use of properties." These are the goals that shape each and every one of UDD7's requirements and guidelines. TOD regulations also require that new development "enhance the economic value around its closest transit station; and promote the livability of the local station area."

We urge UDC to refer its decision on this development by two weeks so that neighbors, city staff, and the developer can discuss a better fit between Threshold's goals, UDD7 requirements and guidance, and the daily life of the surrounding community.

#### **SOME RELEVANT INFO FROM THE COMP PLAN**

The vitality of the S. Park St. corridor, as envisioned by the Comp Plan, is fundamental to the city's vision for the South Madison community's future. But the reverse is also true: The city's vision for the future of the S. Park Corridor is dependent on the health of and character of the adjacent community. This is a truth protected by the most recent Comprehensive Plan, In which the city made the deliberate choice of designating the east (northbound) side of S. Park St., extending from W. Washington Ave. to Cedar St. as "Neighborhood Mixed-Use" to ensure that new development would act as a well-integrated bridge between the corridor and adjacent residential areas one narrow lot to the east of the corridor. In contrast, the west side of S. Park St., is primarily Community Mixed-Use or Regional Mixed-Use. This is where the taller buildings pictured in Threshold's development application are to be found on the west side of S. Park St., which is intended for more intense development.

#### **UDD7 GUIDELINES**

##### **1) Integration with the Existing Block Face**

- "New buildings and additions should complement the character of adjoining buildings in the blockface."

Fit with blockface is one of the most visible aspects of coordinated design which UDD7 seeks. The context for the proposed development—the current S. Park St. east blockface from the 400 block (at West Washington) to the 900 block (at Lakeside) and as far south as Wingra Creek—is an area zoned TSS in Bay Creek. This area is a mere one-lot deep and filled with mostly 1-

and 2-story single-family homes and 1- and 2-unit rentals. The 3-story Emerson is one of only a few taller exceptions in this TSS-zoned district, making Threshold's proposed 4-story development out of character to the blockface.

- "Creative architectural designs and details...so long as designs do not conflict or draw attention away from other buildings in the block."

The design for 999 S. Park St. is out-of-context in concept and materials as well, eliciting a very positive response from some and a very negative response from others. Regardless of personal preference, 999 S. Park St.'s metal towers and modular segments have been recognized as out of character with the established blockface, as noted in the minutes from the last UDC meeting. Commissioners will surely continue to debate whether this is a good or a bad thing, but UDD7 does not: To the extent that materials, height, massing, and modular design conflict with or draw attention away from other buildings in the blockface, UDD7 says this is not to be encouraged.

In addition:

- "New infill buildings should not vary by more than one (1) story from the average building height in the block when that block exhibits a concentration of existing buildings and a well-defined blockface."

New buildings along S. Park St. are supposed to be at least 2 stories tall. Threshold's design is only one story on S. Park St. However, where the proposed building is adjacent to the TR-C2 district on W. Lakeside St. and S. Shore St., the building rises to 4 stories. While issues pertaining to zoning are only indirectly relevant to UDC, it is within the purview of UDC to look at transitions from UDD7 to the rest of the community; once again, blockface is relevant. The purpose of UDD7 is not to increase density, but to have coordinated design decisions, and the abrupt transition from 999 S. Park St. to W. Lakeside St.'s residential 2-story character is abrupt, visually displeasing, and creates an uncoordinated blockface. The front façade of 999 S. Park St, located on W. Lakeside St., is part of the S. Park St./UDD7 corridor. W. Lakeside St. has a well-defined block face of 2-story homes. For 999 S. Park St. to maintain its front blockface, the building should thus be no more than three stories tall.

## 2) Orientation of Development

### Front Façade

UDD7 guidelines support placing the front façade on the urban corridor or as a corner feature close to it:

- The front facade of the building and the primary entrance should face the primary street or may be positioned close to the primary street as a corner feature of the building
- Building entrances should be designed as the focal point of the front façade
- Corner buildings should define the street intersection with distinctive architectural features such as towers, rounded walls, recessed entries or other design features.

This guidance is backed up by TOD regulations, which state that "the principal building entrances on all new buildings are to be oriented to their primary abutting street." The city defines the primary street is determined by "characteristics such as the frequency of transit service, the level of pedestrian activity, building entrance locations, and the street classification.

Placing the building's primary façade on W. Lakeside further puts 999 S. Park St. further at odds with UDD7 guidelines:

- 1) The front façade of the building neither faces the primary street, nor is part of a "corner feature." The entrance on W. Lakeside St. reads as a wrap-around extension of the 1-story façade for shop fronts along S. Park St. and creates visual confusion between the front and the side façades.
- 2) The plain garage door, the largest element of the building's front façade, draws attention away from the "primary" (residential) entrance. The competition between these two openings in the building's front wall results in there being no focal point for the front façade.
- 3) The two barrel-shaped, 4-story (5-story, if you count the extra height for hiding mechanicals) segments are oriented toward the intersection and not either W. Lakeside or S. Park St. and do not visually define either building side as primary. Nor do they define the intersection.

### Setbacks and Proximity to Existing Uses

- "Where new buildings are designed for existing blockfaces," UDD7 requires that "the building setback shall be consistent with adjoining buildings but shall not exceed ten (10) feet."

The staff report says that this requirement applies to the S. Park St. blockface, and that the building will be set back approximately seven feet from the front property line, and also that the "setback preserves the building's contribution to the street wall while creating space for a wider terrace and sidewalk. (This is the same front façade that falls literally "short" by

one story of expectations.) However, to be consistent with adjoining buildings in this blockface, it would need to be roughly flush with the sidewalk, as is the existing building at 961 S. Park St. If this same criteria were applied to W. Lakeside St., the established front setback would need to be 20 feet.

Other setbacks along the side and back of 999 S. Park St. are determined by zoning code. Because 999 S. Park St. has its front façade and front property line along W. Lakeside St., the back of the property aligns with 961 S. Park St. to the north. The west side of the property is along S. Park St. and the east side of the property is adjacent to residential properties, zoned TR-C2. As a result, the development is located only about 6 feet from the back yard of its adjacent one-story residential neighbor at 847 S. Shore (while it is a full 20 feet from its commercial neighbor on S. Park St.), introducing another instance of “fragmented and incompatible development” to the area.

#### Four-Sided Architecture

- UDD7 requires that “all visible sides of the building shall be designed with details that complement the front facade.

Side facades that are visible from the primary street shall receive complementary design attention.” However, the northern or back side of the building adjacent to 961 S. Park St., while visible to the street, isn’t detailed in the plans, and there is no description of the materials to be used to document “complementary design attention.” The eastern side of 999 S. Park St., which abuts its residential neighbors, does not complement the front façade; it is an unrelieved wall, about 11 feet in height, made of some unknown material. The residences will have to look at this blank space, and at least the first 15 feet of blank wall will be visible from W. Lakeside Street to passersby.

#### **3) Community safety concerns**

These deserve mention, as well, though they are outside UDC’s usual purview. Each of the factors listed below bears unique relevance to the overall design of 999 S. Park St. and has the potential of requiring changes to the overall design, which would render any decision on the design before the UDC today irrelevant.

- Traffic: The proposed placement of the building’s garage will interfere with traffic flows and could contribute to increased risks associated with gridlock at the intersection of S. Park St. and W. Lakeside.
- Materials: Galvalume siding has a highly reflective, bright, metallic quality that can glint in the sun. As a shiny material, it can pose visibility problems for drivers turning onto or off of S. Park St. at certain times of day and year.
- Stormwater management: The properties along S. Shore Drive are 4 to 6 feet lower than 999 S. Park St., which is separated from them by an old concrete retaining wall; consisting of landfill, they are subject to sinkholes and flooding. Threshold’s plans indicate that repairs to the wall may be necessary, but no stormwater management plan has yet been shared.

#### **CONCLUSION**

As documented in the minutes from the UDC meeting of 12/4/25, Threshold’s design fails to meet some basic UDD7 requirements and guidelines for development along S. Park St. It is especially important for UDC, as the guardians of good urban design, to look into the ways in which this building should be improved before passing it along to the city as a by-right development. The impact of the proposed building at 999 S. Park St. on the prior uses that surround it—the S. Park St. corridor and the residential community that is located one narrow lot away—will be substantial and thus 999 S. Park St. must be held to the letter of UDD7 criteria.

Elements of this design that we believe remain problematic or out of alignment with UDD7 and need further attention include:

- 1) Location of the primary façade and property line
- 2) Location of the garage entrance, access of the garage access (or whether to eliminate on-site parking)
- 3) Better integration of the building with its two blockfaces—on S. Park St. and on W. Lakeside St.
- 4) Implementation of 360-degree design
- 5) Location of the building’s maximum massing
- 6) Necessity of ground floor commercial space
- 7) Fit of highly reflective Galvalume along a much-traveled transportation corridor.