



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 4205 Portage Road

Application Type: Residential Building Complex – Final Approval is Requested

Legistar File ID #: [72121](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Nick Patterson, T. Wall Enterprises Development, LLC | Interstate Overlook, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Final Approval for a proposed Residential Building Complex consisting of five buildings containing approximately 484 residential units.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational Presentation on June 29, 2022.
- The Plan Commission was originally scheduled to review this proposal on October 24, 2022.

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.”*

UPDATE - Review Status: As part of their formal review of this application, Zoning staff commented that the proposed lot on the west side of the site (west of the proposed “North Creekwood Lane”) exceeded the maximum number of allowable units. Specifically, UDC staff understands that the submittal includes 38 more units than allowed by the Zoning Code on this proposed lot. This zoning standard cannot be waived by the UDC, Plan Commission, or Common Council. Staff further understands that the applicant is currently considering redesign options for portions of the site to shift housing units to the east of North Creekwood Lane in order to meet the Zoning Code requirements.

At the time of report writing, new plans have not been submitted. Among possible options, staff understands that the applicant is considering removing “stacks” of units from both Buildings “A” and “B” (on the west), while maintaining those buildings at their respective five and four story heights and decreasing overall building size. The units that are removed may be shifted to the east side of the project site, through elongating Buildings “E” and “C.” Based on this concept, staff understands that no additional height would be added east of North Creekwood Lane.

Adopted Plans: The project site is located in the [Hanson Road Neighborhood Development Plan](#) (the “Plan”) planning area, which was amended in 2021. The Plan recommends the project site for multi-family residential development, including Housing Mix 3 (3-story height limit) for the eastern side of the project site and the more intensive Housing Mix 4 (five-story height limit) on the west. Subsequent to the Plan amendment, the project site was rezoned to the TR-U1 zoning district. As part of the rezoning approval an advisory comment was included that stated *“Future development of the site will be expected to reflect the character recommended in the amended [Hanson Neighborhood Development Plan](#), including higher density west of the future north-south street consistent with the Housing Mix 4 recommendation, and reduced scale and density between that street and Interstate 39/90/94 consistent with the Housing Mix 3 recommendation.”* Staff notes that the submitted concept includes

taller buildings on the west side of the project site and the buildings on the east had less units than those on the west. Finally, staff notes that the TR-U1 zoning allows buildings of up to five stories in height.

The Plan also provides recommendations related to noise mitigation and future transportation connectivity. With regard to noise mitigation, the Plan notes that the applicable sound mitigation requirements will need to be met for residential development adjacent to Interstate 90/94. Finally, with regard to future transportation connectivity, this proposal depicts the planned extension of North Creekwood Lane, though an additional east-west connection to Portage Road as recommended in the Plan is not reflected on the applicant's proposal.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff understands that the applicant is exploring modifications to revise the plans so they can conform to the property's TR-U1 zoning requirements. This includes the shifting of 38 units from west of North Creekwood Lane to the east, which would result in different building, landscape, and site design from what is before the UDC at the time of report writing. Updated plans have not been provided to City agencies for revised technical comments.

Procedurally, it is common for an applicant to request or agree to referral in order to update materials. This allows agencies the opportunity review for code compliance and for the UDC to have materials in advance of their meeting. The applicant has requested that this item remain on the October 12 agenda for consideration. While staff believes that a referral would be consistent with past UDC practice and appropriate given the likelihood of updated materials being submitted, staff believes that there may be value in providing feedback to the applicant team to consider as they continue to work on possible revisions.

Staff recommends that after the development team's presentation and any comments from any subsequent public speakers, the UDC should discuss the proposal and provide feedback based on the aforementioned standards and design considerations noted below. Such considerations include discussion points previously raised by the UDC at their Informational review on June 29, 2022. Following the UDC's review, the item could then be referred to an upcoming meeting when revised plans are available. Alternatively, should the UDC believe that there is adequate information to make a formal recommendation, staff requests that the UDC make findings based on the aforementioned standards and design considerations noted below, which should be structured as an advisory recommendation of the body, which may include conditions.

- **Building Design and Orientation.** As noted in the June 29, 2022, staff report, staff requested comments regarding the overall building orientation to the surrounding streets. Staff noted that common building entries and individual unit entries appear to be set back from the street and connectivity to the street is relatively limited, both internally and externally to the abutting public streets. In addition, external connectivity appears to also be limited by perimeter fencing and security gates.

Staff also previously raised a comment regarding the amount of ground level exposure of certain buildings, including Building "A." While staff would expect a residential building to have some vertical separation from grade, the finished floor of Building "A" sits approximately nine feet above the sidewalk level near the western edge of the Diloreto Avenue frontage. This exposure is reduced moving east. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback related to the ground level exposure of Building "A" and the treatment of the exposed concrete walls along with any other feedback related to orientation and design.

- **Building Design and Proportions.** As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to creating more cohesiveness in the architectural style and detailing by simplifying forms and details, including:
 - Mass and scale of the angled roof lines and overhangs,

- Scale of exposed timbers and hardware details relative to structural requirements,
- Minimizing colors and/or materials within material palette, composition and transitions, and utilizing consistent ornamentation and detailing, including fence, gates, railing, and lighting, etc.,
- Utilizing consistent balcony types and details, including canopies, recesses, cantilevers, knee braces, etc., and
- Screening of blank walls at the top of the building in the sky deck areas.

Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on the overall building design, specifically as it relates to the rhythm and articulation (vertical and horizontal building elements), architectural details, including balcony types and details, the building tower elements, and materials palette and transitions.

- **Wall Packs.** As noted in the June 2022 staff report, wall pack/HVAC louvers are proposed on street-facing elevations. It has been a common recommendation of the UDC to not locate such louvers on street facing facades, though they have been approved in some situations when found to be well-integrated into the design of the façade, located around patio/porch corners, or integrated into the window frame versus being located flat next to a window. Staff requests UDC provide feedback and recommendations related to wall packs.
- **Building Design and Future Signage.** While signage is not part of this application, staff believes that considerations on how a building’s exterior design is intended to accommodate signage is a pertinent consideration. Please note that the proposed signage does not appear to be consistent with the Sign Code due to size and mounting height on the building. The signage, as reflected on the building elevations would require special approval through the Comprehensive Design Review process. Going forward, staff would encourage the applicant to consider signage designs that comply with the code and do not require subsequent special approvals.
- **Landscaping Considerations.** Staff requests the UDC provide feedback on various landscaping considerations, including:
 - Building “A” Grade Transitions. In concert with any architectural considerations, staff requests feedback on the planting, grading, and extent of the terraced areas where lower levels are exposed. While the areas immediately adjacent to the southwest corner include a terraced feature, other portions of that building include a sloping grade with varying ground-level exposures.
 - Open Space Organization and Design. Staff requests feedback regarding the comments raised at the Informational Presentation, including providing larger, more centrally located landscape and open space amenities and areas.
 - Interstate Frontage Landscaping. As noted in the adopted neighborhood plan given the location of the project site, staff requests any feedback regarding the adequacy of the proposed landscaping along the I-90/94 corridor, including incorporating foliage layers within the buffer, providing adequate height at the time of planting and maturity, as well as including a variety of plant species within the buffer and fencing opacity.
 - Foundation Plantings. Consideration should be given generally to screening of blank wall expanses, as well as individual unit patios and individual unit patios and windows from headlight glare.
 - Perimeter Fencing. Finally, staff requests feedback related to the design and placement of the perimeter security fencing.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the June 29, 2022, Informational Presentation are provided below:

- In terms of the site plan, consider moving the pickle ball courts closer to the clubhouse area for better shading opportunities and for better proximity. If you make the pool area one with a larger greenspace, you'll have more opportunity for landscaping rather than just a ring to protect it from parking.
- I found my eye bouncing around to all these different elements, there's a lot going on and I don't think it all gels. There's some nice elements but they're complicated by a change of color or change of material, or those timber elements, it's distracting. The overhangs are treated differently, the balconies are different depending on which one you're looking at, it is too much.
- The landscape wall with "The Winston" could be at any building and should tie in more. It needs cohesiveness of a theme which I'm not seeing yet.
- We've seen sloped roofs for many years. If they were flat and some of the other projecting elements were more uniform it might be more palatable than these enormous overhangs and sloped roofs being supported by these large diagonals.
- Consider a foot bridge or pedestrian bridge for better connectivity between building 1 and building 3, an element that would bring a human scale to that retention pond in addition to however it's landscaped.
- The parking and vehicles really separate everything so much, grouping some of those things back together would be really beneficial. Try to get more cohesive larger greenspaces by merging some together.
- I definitely think the heavy timber and amount of structure is way too busy. You have these two angled roofs that your eye bounces between, shooting out energy in perpendicular directions. Maybe they're oriented more in the same plane or direction to help calm things down and simplify where your eye is going to, where you feel that movement is happening. Because there is flat roof between them it feels very busy.
- I was suggesting they both just be flat.
- I appreciate you representing thru-wall HVAC units at this stage. We would look for them to be more integrated into the architecture, having them flat next to a window is something we typically discourage.
- The sloped roofs are a confident move and I applaud that. Go big or go home, it gives a real taste to these buildings that people will remember and makes it a landmark of their home. It will get more detailed but the size is on the right track actually. It's not just anonymous architecture.
- We comment that we want to see different, here we go, this does not look like any other apartment buildings we see, and I applaud that, but maybe there is too much going on. I would say in this case there are too many materials. The corner elements are striking looking, I like them but they're too heavy looking and too much like medieval catapults, maybe it's the metal bracket appearing over powering. The dynamic look of the slope is preferable to a flat roof. I like the echoing of beams halfway down the building, but the hardware involved seems overpowering.
- The base is too light colored, not cohesive with the rest of the materials and looks like it's on a coaster. I would recommend changing that or adding more landscaping to hide that, it just looks like an exposed foundation and takes away from the rest of it. Good job with the amenities. The parking lot could use more islands with trees, but I question some of the angles involved with Fire Department access. It will be very important to have serious evergreen shielding along the Interstate, even if it doesn't cut down the noise from the Interstate, there's a lot to be said for not seeing semis blowing past your residence.
- Striking corner move, very interesting. I agree with a lot of the comments about some refinements that might be nice, and I wonder whether those timbers being reduced to what is structurally required would still achieve what you're trying to. I like the expression of bolt heads coming through without the plates and wonder if plate jointing is needed, that could be a nice simplification. To me the angled roof is in address of the southern exposure. You're getting less depth of projection, I would tend to recommend a

flat canopy is still a striking structural reinforcement there, and question the angle necessary to make the move. Excited to see this come back.

- The ground floor units, are you proposing any kind of porches with steps going down to the site? It looks like they're all suspended balconies.
 - It depends on the grade and what side of the building you're on. The ground floor units on Diloreto and Creekwood will have direct entrances. On the Portage Road building it is set so far back and grade is such that there would be no direct entries.
- Signage would have to come back for a CDR, but the Commission could touch on location and size.
- I don't think you need the vertical wall sign, you've got the nice site wall with landscaping. It's not a hotel. The building will have plenty of character without needing a nametag.
- Maybe just on one face of the wall but I don't like the big vertical on the building. Maybe just one spot on the wall for this type of project seems sufficient.
- I wonder if there's a way to simplify that structure near the top with a single curved structure that reaches out toward the projecting canopy, that might eliminate some of those verticals on the interior.
- A graceful curve out toward the edge of the roof could be nice vs. it looking like scaffolding.
- I applaud the renderings, there's a lot to look at and a lot to talk about.
- I concur with the signage comments.