



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 302 Chaska Drive
Application Type: Residential Building Complex – Initial/Final Approval is Requested
Legistar File ID # [72249](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC | Ryan McMurtrie, United Financial Group, Inc.

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Initial/Final Approval for the development of four townhouse buildings with a total of 20 units.

Project Schedule:

- The UDC received an Informational presentation on April 13, 2022.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on August 29, 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.”*

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 and provide findings and recommendations based on the aforementioned standards including comments related to the items noted below.

- **Building Setbacks and Open Space.** Staff commends the applicant for updating the site plan to remove the “future parking areas” to create a central green space amenity. As suggested by the UDC at the informational presentation, it was recommended that consideration be given to reducing the street setbacks to further increase the size of the central green space, as well as yard space between buildings. Procedurally, this could potentially be accomplished modifying the yard designations (i.e. designating Lakota Way as the front yard versus Spirit Street), or decreasing the setbacks. As noted in Section 20.151, MGO, *“setback requirements may be reduced as part of a conditional use approval provided that equivalent open space areas are provided.”* Staff requests UDC’s findings and recommendation on the central green space as it relates to size and building placement, as well as programming as an open space amenity.
- **Landscape Plan.** Staff requests UDC’s findings and recommendations on the overall landscape planting plan, especially as it relates to providing a variety of plant materials to create year-round color and texture, the use of stone mulch, and screening blank walls.

UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the April 13, 2022, Informational Presentation are provided below:

- Each unit has a two car garage and yet there's a parking zone behind with a peninsula strip of green, you know that's going to end up being gravel and not a fully developed landscape feature. I'm wondering if the drive aisle for those parking lots could get closer to the garage and eliminate this future parking, and really expand on those middle islands. Or if you need that extra parking maybe a little bit of parallel around the island, get the drive aisles closer to the buildings and expand those landscape islands to be a lot more green to support larger trees and vegetation than those little strips.
- Ditto, you hit it. Two cars per unit seems pretty good, let that space really support stormwater or mature trees, not more parking. If you could somehow pair driveway entries to expand the greenspace between them.
- You may have an opportunity to decrease the street setback a little bit which could also help. That little courtyard needs more green.
- That central green is a tough space to use. If it's not a human space maybe it's at least a space for ecology, pollinators, let it be something more than a slice of grass that dogs use.
- A lot of people may not park in their garages. These are family units so I could see that happening, leaving a spot for parking outside of garages is necessary. Without those greenspaces it would be very stark and asphalt with cars, maybe be more intentional to what those greenspaces are. Even small little trellises or specific plantings to those spaces could add a buffer to an otherwise asphalt expanse.
- With a pitched roof, where is the water going, particularly in the back of this pitch? I'm not seeing any greenspace for that water to go, maybe a nice infiltration area in that middle parking area? Next time show us the downspouts and how the water will be managed on the site. Applaud the restraint with materials.
- Agree the buildings are pretty well done in terms of materials, seems well balanced. Building design and form and use of the pitched roofs work pretty well, particularly with the surrounding large buildings around there.
- On the street elevation, why are there no standing seam projections over the middle band of windows? Just curious.
 - Just to provide a variety of style for the building so it wasn't completely repetitive.
- Good looking buildings. Happy to see anything that has you not looking at garage doors from the street. As to the strips separating the entrances to garages, if those are as skinny as they look they can be problematic from a maintenance standpoint. They read ugly and people don't respect the boundaries of them, end up overlapping into others' space.
- The center islands that say future parking, big thumbs down on that. Prefer to see that as green.
- Look for opportunities to make the entry stairs more inviting, expanding to cover the full width of the porch.
- People may want to sit on the steps, combining them where you can, might even save you some money.