



**Project Address:** 2150 Commercial Avenue and 2231-2235 Myrtle Street

**Application Type:** Informational Presentation for a New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District 4  
**UDC will be an Approving Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [88916](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Jennifer Camp, JLA Architects | Rachel Kriech, The Annex Group

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a five-story, 241-unit multi-family residential building with 6,000 square feet of commercial space, wrapping a five-story parking structure.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 4 ("UDD 4"), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section 33.24(11).

**Adopted Plans:** The project site is located in the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan (the "Plan") planning area. As noted in the Plan, the project site is recommended for Community Mixed Use land uses with activated first floors at the corner of Commercial Avenue and Oscar Avenue, as well as along Coolidge Street. Generally, Community Mixed Use development is a *"...high-intensity Activity Center that integrates residential, retail, office, institutional and civic uses to serve the larger community."* Development in this area should create a walkable node or corridor and be located near transit.

In addition, the Plan goals also speak to creating mixed-use, transit-oriented development, including high-density residential and employment uses; create walkable, urban streets, including along Commercial Avenue; and carefully select and design uses at the intersection of Coolidge Street and Packers Avenue to serve as a highly visible entry to the mixed-use center.

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Regional Mixed Use (RMX). The Zoning Code outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings the mixed-use and commercial zoning districts ([MGO 28.060](#)), including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, design of street-facing facades, door and window openings, and materials.

In addition, the project site is in the Transit Oriented Development Overlay (TOD) zone. New development within the TOD Overlay is subject to the requirements as outlined in [MGO 28.104](#), including those that speak to:

- Maximum principal building setbacks – At least 30% of the primary street facing façade (Packers Avenue) shall be setback no more than 20 feet,
- Entrance orientation – Principal building entrances shall be orientated towards the primary abutting street (Packers Avenue) and be located within the maximum setback (20 feet),
- Minimum number of stories – A minimum of two stories is required for a minimum of 75% of the building footprint, and
- Site standards for automobile infrastructure.

Staff note that ultimately, the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with Zoning Code requirements, which, as a permitted use project, will occur as part of the Site Plan Review process.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommend that the UDC provide feedback on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards as it relates to the design considerations noted below.

- **Massing, Building Design, and Composition.** The project site is located at the intersection of Commercial Avenue and Packers Avenue, and will have multiple fronts, including along Packers, a major thoroughfare, Commercial Avenue, and also along Oscar Avenue, each having a different level of intensity. The UDD 4 Building Design guidelines and requirements generally speak to designing buildings with a sensitivity to context, avoiding large unbroken facades, utilizing four-sided architecture, etc.

In addition, as noted in the adopted plan, walkability, design, and visibility are identified as key concepts that speak to redevelopment in this area. Consideration should be given to exploring ways to incorporate these concepts into the design and composition of the proposed building.

Related to both the key concepts noted in the adopted Plan and UDD 4 guidelines and requirements, staff request the UDC's feedback as it relates to the following design-related considerations:

- Mass and Scale. With over 800 feet in length, staff have significant concerns related to the overall mass and scale of the proposed building especially as it relates to context, both existing and planned future, and in maintaining walkability in this area. Careful consideration should be given to some of the other larger-scale buildings that have been reviewed by UDC in the recent past, which have utilized design strategies to create the appearance of multiple buildings versus one large building, such considerations could include incorporating stepbacks or setbacks in the building massing, concentrating mass in areas of higher intensity, or incorporating some sort of separation between buildings above grade, for example.
- Building Orientation. Recognizing that the project site has frontage on multiple streets, each with a differing level of intensity, consideration should be given to maintaining an active orientation toward the street that is suitable for each (i.e., walk-up units, active building entries, location of common areas, nonresidential uses, etc.), as well as utilizing a richer level of design and detailing along the pedestrian level.
- Overall Building Design. Overall, the proposed building walls appear to be lacking in articulation and design detailing commonly associated with a residential building. In addition, the balance between wall to opening ratio appears to be disproportionate, being more heavily weighted toward voids. As such, consideration should be given to incorporating design elements, i.e., sills/lintels, banding, caps, coping, etc. that incorporate articulation in the design of windows and where materials transition and that will help to better balance the voids and openings, as well as result in an overall design and composition that is more reflective of a residential building.
- Parking Structure Design. While the parking structure is primarily screened with residential units that wrap the structure, the structure does have frontage on Oscar Avenue. As such, consideration should be given to the design and detailing of the parking structure not only as part of the larger overall building design and composition, but also the design resulting in successful screening of

parking at the ground level, and minimizing blank walls, and maintaining an enhanced level of design at the pedestrian level along Oscar Avenue.

- **Materials.** The exterior material palette is comprised of various colors of fiber cement panels and siding and a masonry base comprised of two colors. UDD 4 Building Design guidelines and requirements state that exterior materials shall be low maintenance and harmonious with those used on other buildings in the area.

In concert with the above comments on composition, staff requests the Commission provide feedback related to the proposed material palette, especially as it relates to the surrounding context, both existing and planned future, utilizing a consistent level of design detailing across all elevations, incorporating articulation/reveals where materials and colors transition, especially at the ground level where there appears to be a consistent application of smooth EIFS, incorporating residential-scale detailing, including sills/lintels, etc.

In addition, as it relates to the parking structure, there is a perforated metal panel that is unique to the parking structure. Staff requests the Commission's feedback related to the overall integration of the panel into the building wall versus a fixture applied to the exterior of the building, as well as how it relates to screening.

- **Wall packs.** While not indicated on the elevation drawings, through-wall HVAC units are commonly associated with residential units. Staff note that while it has been the current practice to locate wall pack HVAC units so that louvers are not on street-facing or otherwise highly visible facades, they have been approved in some situations when found to be well integrated into the façade's design. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the integration of the wall packs with the overall building design and materials.
- **Long Views.** The project site is located at a highly visible location adjacent to multiple street frontages and will be the tallest building in the area. Given the overall scale of the proposed building, careful consideration should be given to the building's overall design impact relative to the surrounding context and viewsheds, especially as it relates to creating a strong corner elements and gateway into the mixed-use center at Coolidge Street and Packers Avenue, the design and articulation of the parking structure walls on the Oscar Avenue side of the building, and utilizing a richer level of design and detailing.
- **Site Amenities and Landscape.** As noted in UDD 4 guidelines and requirements, "*Landscaping shall be used for functional as well as decorative purposes, including...screening unattractive features and views along roadways...and complementing the architecture of the building.*" Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the overall Proposed Site Plan as it relates to the location and design of the proposed at-grade open spaces, as well as potential landscape design within these areas, and along street frontages. Consideration should be given to encouraging plantings that provide year-round color, texture, and screening, help break-up mass and scale, as well as add interest at the pedestrian level.