



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

Application Type: New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District 4
UDC is an Approving Body

Legistar File ID #: [88916](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

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

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.

Staff note that a Subdivision Application will be part of a future submittal to create the project site and dedicate right-of-way.

Project Schedule:

- UDC received an Informational Presentation on August 13, 2025.

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 request the UDC's feedback and findings 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 Avenue, 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 design concept considerations 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.

Generally, and in summary, the Commission's Informational Presentation comments focused on exploring ways to break down the perceived mass and scale in the absence of multiple buildings, including:

- Incorporating a higher level of articulation/modulation in the building design and form,
- Providing some level of pedestrian cut-through at the ground level,
- Creating positive termination at the top of the building or incorporating differentiation/undulation in the building roofline to break up the continuous datum line,
- Incorporating more emphasis in the design of the building corners or utilizing a different design for the commercial spaces than the residential, and
- Providing a higher level of design and detailing at the pedestrian level, including articulation in materials transitions.

Staff request the UDC's feedback and findings as it relates to the following design-related considerations:

- Mass and Scale. With over 800 feet in length, staff continue to 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, for example, incorporating stepbacks or additional setbacks in the building massing, concentrating mass in areas of higher intensity (i.e., at building ends or street corners), incorporating some sort of separation between buildings at grade while maintaining connectivity on the upper levels, utilizing design techniques that differentiate

between the commercial and residential building uses, incorporating variation in the roofline or finish at the top of the building, etc.

- Overall Building Composition. Overall, the proposed building walls appear to be lacking in articulation and design detailing commonly associated with a residential building. Staff would also emphasize the importance of the north and south building façades, not only because of their non-residential uses, but also as highly prominent, visible building ends located at intersections. Staff would encourage a higher level of visual interest be incorporated into the building design at these locations.
- 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. This elevation exhibits a different material palette than the rest of the building, including perforated metal panels and precast concrete panels. As a street-facing façade that is part of a larger composition, the parking structure should maintain a similar level of design and detailing as the rest of the building, and reflect a similar or complementary palette of materials. Consideration should be given to the successful screening of parking at the ground level, 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 request the Commission provide feedback and make findings related to the proposed material palette, especially as it relates to the surrounding context, both existing and planned future, providing a consistent level of design detailing across all elevations, and in incorporating visual interest, incorporating articulation/reveals where materials and colors transition, especially at the ground level, incorporating residential-scale detailing, including sills/lintels, etc.

Staff further request the Commission's feedback and findings specifically as it relates to the adequacy of visual interest created by large fiber cement panels that are one of the predominant materials. In looking at ways to provide visual interest, consideration should be given to incorporating design elements in certain places i.e., sills/lintels in masonry-clad areas, banding, caps, coping, etc. that incorporate articulation in the design of windows and where materials transition which 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 and creating a positive termination at the top of the building.

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

- **HVAC Louvers/Wall packs.** While not indicated on the elevation drawings, through-wall HVAC louvers and wall pack units are commonly associated with residential units. Staff note that while it has been the current practice to locate wall pack and HVAC louvers so that they 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 recommend the Commission address the finish design and details of HVAC louvers and wall packs as part of the Commission's motion, including as it pertains to the finish design and detailing to ensure integration 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 length of the proposed building and continuous height, careful consideration should be given to the building's overall design impact relative to the surrounding context and viewsheds. This includes the shorter north and south elevations that will be very prominent. Staff request the Commission's feedback and findings specifically as it relates to creating strong corner elements and gateway into the mixed-use center at Coolidge Street and Packers Avenue, utilizing a richer level of design and detailing along the pedestrian level, as well as creating positive termination at the top of the building.
- **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 request the Commission's feedback and findings on the landscape planting plan and plant selection as it relates to providing year-round color, texture, and screening, breaking down building mass and scale, as well as adding interest at the pedestrian level along all street frontages.
- **Signage.** Staff note and the applicant is advised that while signage is shown on the elevation drawings, signage is not a part of this review nor subsequent approvals. A separate review is required. The applicant is encouraged to work with Zoning staff to confirm whether the proposed signage complies with the [Sign Code](#).
- **Lighting.** While staff believe that the proposed lighting is consistent with the UDD 4 guidelines and requirements that speak to lighting, the applicant is advised that further review of lighting will occur as part of the Site Plan Review process for compliance with [MGO 29.36](#). The applicant is encouraged to work with Building Inspection Division staff to confirm submittal requirements.

Summary of Informational Presentation Discussion & Questions

As a reference, a summary of the Commission's discussion and questions from the August 13, 2025, Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission noted the length of the building. Why is it one continuous building? The applicant responded that the goal is to get as much density and parking as possible and screen the parking, the 'S' shape helps break up the building. The Commission noted the public comment from a group that owns acreage on this site, and asked the applicant if they have had contact or coordination with them. The applicant replied that they have not.

The Commission asked about the number of materials. Why does the base look like it's coming up half way? The building is cut in half horizontally – there is not a consistent base component. Typically, building designs have a base, middle, top – this does not do that. There is no meeting the ground, or meeting the sky. The applicant replied they are emphasizing the corners with the brick to identify community space and commercial spaces.

The Commission noted that the material application/distribution and continuity of the building design, overall mass and length need to be looked at.

The Commission commented that the northwest street view is successful, with a nice relief with the courtyard. This should be replicated throughout, not necessarily with courtyards, but the massing and breaking it apart for air and relief. It seems like the overall consensus is this building is too long. There is push and pull in the façade but on a long view, you'll see a very strong datum line across the top of the building as one long line. The building needs vertical relief, and spatial relief between the massing, highly encourage you to look for some relief in the massing, as well as looking at design options for breaking up the strong horizontal roofline.

The Commission talked about the brick signifying commercial, but that not all corners look commercial. Using that as a certain type of language, is not as strong as it could be. The applicant responded that every corner has three-story high masonry, with brick applied at the corner where there is commercial space on the first floor, and reddish brick to the two building entrances. If it's just residential space we will change to dark gray brick veneer. The Commission noted it might be a stronger statement to have only corners get masonry, and not halfway down the façade; this could use some finesse.

The Commission asked about access from Oscar Avenue, noting this could be pedestrian friendly by having more access from buildings to the street, and a more lively streetscapes, including adding walk-up units.

The Commission talked about the length of the building, and using design to break down mass and scale, or actually creating a separation. The distribution and composition of materials, the idea of a consistent base, middle and top, doesn't come through very strongly in how the materials are distributed across the building. The corner element being half masonry is not a clear yes that this is commercial, a stronger expression would be taking masonry up to the top on commercial or corner spaces. Not turning a back to Oscar Avenue will be important, there will be development in this area, having a positive relationship with the street and possible walk-up units is needed.

The Commission commented that as this gets developed with the rest of this landlocked area, there's a sense of history to this site and hope that as it gets developed, that there's a lot of dialogue about tying it altogether. Some of those Oscar Mayer buildings might be renovated and reused, design and scale wise that would affect this conversation. I hope this is not approached as a single property when it could be a rich part of a larger property within the history of Oscar Mayer.

The Commission recommended the development team look at the Oscar Mayer Special Area Plan and those key principles contained within. There is opportunity to promote pedestrian and community uses, which the current design doesn't do very well. Especially the corner plaza area, it sits at a really important spot in terms of transit, with a lot of action there, wish it could be some sort of privately owned public space that is given back to the community. Turning Commercial Avenue into a walkable district, more could be done to make it more hospitable, and encourage the connection to Eken Park and Sherman. It's basically a gateway to the rest of the Oscar Mayer site, there should be a lot more done to evaluate that relationship.