



**Agenda Item #:** 3

**Project Title:** 4205 Portage Road - Residential Building Complex. 17th Ald. Dist.

**Legistar File ID #:** 72121

**Members Present:** Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Shane Bernau, Jessica Klehr, Christian Harper, Rafeeq Asad\* and Amanda Arnold

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

\*Asad was recused on this item

## Summary

At its meeting of October 12, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a Residential Building Complex located at 4205 Portage Road. Registered and speaking in support were Joseph Lee, representing T. Wall Enterprises; Nick Patterson, representing Winston at Churchill, LLC; and Sixto O. Villegas, representing JLA Architects + Planners. Registered in support and available to answer questions was Patrick Terry, representing JLA Architects + Planners.

The development team requested the Commission review the design as it stands now, realizing that the site layout and building design will change due to zoning issues. Building locations are driven by a differential in grade to avoid large retaining walls and provide walk-up units where possible. Building A will have a terraced landscape area and retaining wall, and be positioned to face Portage Road and Diloreto Avenue to give an entrance element. The base is exposed, with a proposed masonry material complementary in color to the stone used above. They have used grading in an artistic way to eliminate too many retaining walls or steps. Where they previously had a lot of overhangs and roof styles, they have consolidated them into angled roofs with detailing transitions into the balcony overhangs for a consistent design throughout the development. The exposed timbers on some of those details have been reduced by 20-25% to create lighter elements and not feel so heavy. Building materials include stone, siding and metal in three different colors, and the introduction of a pattern to create a holistic design throughout the entire development as each phase is completed. All the balconies are consistent in design and construction to continue that theme, with the only differentiation between them being the introduction of the wood elements at strategic places to help emphasize and articulate those elevations. Wall packs will be painted a consistent color depending on what is adjacent; the lighter sections will be painted the same as the siding color so they disappear. The stone base has been extended to wrap around the buildings to create a base for what happens on top.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Regarding issues of density and shifting portions of the development, at first glance it's difficult to see where that would happen. Most of the space is already allocated on the eastern side in one way or the other.
- The timber elements have been addressed, it would have been nice to see that in more detail, it is hard to tell on an elevation a decrease of 20-25%. It is the consensus of everyone that those were a bit too sturdy and visually overbearing.
- Glad to see the base addressed, which had looked very much like a miscolored plinth. I am interested in the metal fence around the entire perimeter, and surprised it didn't come up. I am curious if the applicants could speak to their feelings for the need for a perimeter fence, and the nature of the gates at the entranceways.
- The landscaping overall is providing more points than required, that is wonderful to see. I do take issue with some of the plant selections, you have deciduous trees of various types, but the evergreens and perennials are a

very limited palette and really minimalist, I'm not sure why. Use more than just calamagrostis, use more variation in the selections of evergreens and ornamental grasses, it does a disservice to the high quality of the rest of the project. On the far eastern side alongside the Interstate, you show a row of Eastern White Pine evergreens to block noise, which will do the job, but I would suggest Green Giant Arborvitae, you will get a 20-25 foot tall green wall in half the time the Eastern White Pines would take. It is also our preference to have a natural wood mulch for the benefit of the plants, particularly in parking lots that are stressful locations for plants.

- The gates would be all automated by a fob or code. They would all be readily available for emergency services. We have experienced security issues at some of our apartment buildings in the area, break-ins and car thefts, this gives us increased security. Our residents demand more security.
- Presumably the surface parking is for guests and visitors. How does that work?
  - They can be given a code from the resident, there are a variety of systems we could get similar to how a guest would get into a locked apartment building.
- It still feels very vehicle-centric with a lot of parking that bisects everything. The center portion, I want to bring those together for a large open space that helps organize everything around it. Rather we have a parking lot that weaves through everything; it would be much more successful if somehow that central green area could be more connected to the clubhouse and pool area, much better for the project.
- Building A corner and terrace, I like what you have going there, layering the architecture into the landscape is a nice feature.
- Building D and the clubhouse, the bed lines that go in and out in soft little random curves, large sweeping curves could be used at building corners or certain locations, but the beds could be simplified and linear, feel more intentional and less random.
- The improvements made to the architectural timbers (corner of Building A) feels better and more proportional, but I still think it seems busy with this grid like ladder climbing the corner, and an angled roofline above it. Still feels a little busy.
- What is your parking ratio to units?
  - Our ratio is approximately 1.15 parking stalls per unit. We typically target 1.1-1.2 stalls per unit, we would love to have less but we still need parking. We're not quite there with commuters on the east side of Madison.
- That seems reasonable given its location. If we didn't have the Interstate as a boundary it seems you could shift Building D over and create a larger central greenspace. Parking on the Interstate side probably makes sense, but some creativity could be added.
- You need to get some of those site amenities united into a friendlier, more usable area that doesn't have the parking and traffic bisecting everything.
- The timber frame could use a bit more refinement and simplicity. On Building B's west elevation you can see a lot of the timber frame elements, a lot of different angles and proportions, even at balconies with hanging elements, you have a knee brace framed element underneath, but I'm not sure if that's structural or what. Some of those things could be simplified, there's a lot going on here and maybe one or two of them could even be eliminated. I appreciate the simplification of the palette, it is much improved in this submission.
- How do we comment on the one half of the site that is going to be changing if you're making those buildings longer? Has the design team started thinking about strategy for adding density on that part of the site?
  - We would shorten a leg of Building A and B to drop some units, lengthen a couple of the other buildings, and slide Building E down. We might have to relocate the pickle ball court, or lengthen Building C. The character and scale of buildings would remain the same, it's just replacing the units we would lose.
- The surface parking would follow the units?
  - We would have to make sure that all of those ratios are maintained and meet market demands.
- In that light, maybe there's an opportunity to take some of those site amenities and shift them over to the other side where there will be less parking and less building footprint. Make them more cohesive and more of a parklike and friendly area.

- The timber framing elements are highly subjective, the proportions look better than before. It would be interesting to give us renderings that show how shade and shadow will be cast on the elevations from those elements. Without those timber elements the elevations lose detail, and I applaud the detail, particularly on the southwest corner. I would argue that having elements that are a little fussy and detailed is OK because these are pretty long elevations.
- Are the Building C individual entrances coming off a shared walk, and if so, it's hard to understand what is a patio door and what is an entrance to a unit (south). Are you planning on those double glazed sliding patio doors?
  - Those are entrances into the units, with patio doors creating that streetscape but also providing access to indoor/outdoor transition. The main entrances are on the interior of the building. It's to give the impression of a walk-up unit and to provide glazing; that detail will continue down to create a canopy effect at those entrances and highlight them.
- When you come back I would like to see a closer view of the main entrances, where you have a sloped roof at the first level sloping back to a vertical wall with a balcony over it.
- Where there are three posts coming down, are there still balconies at those units?
  - Those are Juliet balconies. When you get down to that level they are eliminated because of the intersection of the roof to the entrance.
- I think the sloped elements and timber framing give it a lot of interest.
- There has been refinement and simplification, both in the amount of the timber framing but also restraint and more rational thought as to how the different materials appear and where they appear on the elevations.
- The wall pack integration into the architecture could still use refinement, they are nothing but painted. Sometimes we see continuous louvers, openings where the head or sill of a window proportions are in harmony with the wall pack grills. Certainly some areas will stand out where you have the arctic white and the lighter colors. That will be much more difficult to disguise.
- There is a cut sheet of the proposed fence, it is alluded to in some of the renderings. This will be fully fenced in.

## Action

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (5-0).

The Commission noted the following considerations as part of the referral motion:

- Rework the site plan and open space; relook at the open space as an organizing element.
- Incorporate additional varieties of planting species in the planting palette, especially evergreens and ornamental grasses.
- Consider revising the planting bed lines around Building D to be more linear.
- Incorporate further refinements to the exposed timber elements and angles.
- Incorporate further refinements to the wall packs, including better integration with architecture, window proportions, continuous louvers, and background materials and colors.