# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

**December 14, 2022**

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** **6604 Odana Road**

**Application Type:** Planned Multi-Use Site – Advisory Recommendation is Requested

**Legistar File ID #:** 74229

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Randy Christianson, Walter Wayne Development, LLC | Marc Ott, JLA Architects | Market Square Associates

**Project Description:** The applicant is seeking an Advisory Recommendation to the Plan Commission for a six-story mixed-use building containing 2,200 square feet of commercial space and 87 residential units. The proposal includes a rezoning request from Commercial Center (CC) to Commercial Corridor – Transitional (CC-T).

**Project Schedule:**

- The UDC referred this item on November 30, 2022 to the December 14, 2022 meeting.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on January 9, 2023.
- The Common Council is scheduled to review the associated rezoning request on January 17, 2023.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **advisory body** on requests pertaining to Planned Multi-Use Sites. Pursuant to section 28.137, MGO, which states that a Planned Multi-Use Site containing more than forty thousand (40,000) square feet of floor area and where twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet of floor area is designed or intended for retail use or for hotel or motel use, shall require a conditional use approval following a recommendation on the design of any specific proposal by the Urban Design Commission.

As part of the Commission's action, the Commission is requested to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission related to the applicable Conditional Use review and approval criteria pursuant to Section 28.183, MGO, more specifically subsection 28.183(6)(a)(9) and (12), which state:

> Conditional Use Standard #9: "*When applying the above standards to any new construction of a building or an addition to an existing building the Plan Commission shall find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district. In order to find that this standard is met, the Plan Commission may require the applicant to submit plans to the Urban Design Commission for comment and recommendation*."
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> Conditional Use Standard #12: *"When applying the above standards to an application for height in excess of that allowed in the district, the Plan Commission shall consider recommendations in adopted plans; the impact on surrounding properties, including height, mass, orientation, shadows and view; architectural quality and amenities; the relationship of the proposed building(s) with adjoining streets, alleys, and public rights of ways; and the public interest in exceeding the district height limits."*

**Adopted Plans:** The Comprehensive Plan recommends Community Mixed Use (CMU) land uses for the project site. The CMU land use category includes an intensive mix of residential, commercial and civic uses. CMU areas are intended to include buildings two to six stories in height, and development should create a walkable, well

connected environment that is transit oriented with buildings located close to the sidewalk and where parking is screened from view.

The project site is also within the boundaries of the recently adopted the Odana Road Area Plan (2021), which contains the most current and detailed recommendation for the subject property. The project site is recommended for CMU land uses, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan also notes that the site is within a larger area targeted for future City Park development. This recommendation covers a relatively broad target geography and is not limited to this specific site. It therefore, does not preclude UDC from making a recommendation on this proposal.

The Odana Road Area Plan also provides guiding design principles that are intended to be viewed as goals for redevelopment within the planning area. Such principles include, encouraging connectivity and walkability, orienting buildings to front on public streets, focusing density along planned transit corridors, allowing for a range in building scales, providing diversity in housing options, maintaining mixed-use cores, incorporating urban open spaces an orienting feature for both residential and nonresidential uses. The Odana Road Area Plan recommends a maximum building height of five floors.

Finally, the project site is also located within the older Southwest Neighborhood Plan (2008) (the "Plan") planning area. While specific design guidelines for new development are not include in the Plan, it does include land use principles for the northern portion of the southwest study area, which generally speak to incorporating traditional neighborhood design principles, including mixed-use with higher densities, shared parking, orienting buildings towards the street, and incorporating pedestrian and bicycle amenities into site design.

**Zoning District:** As noted in the application materials, a rezoning request from the existing CC zoning district to CC-T is proposed. Within the mixed-use and commercial zoning districts there are general provisions related to building and site design that are intended to foster high-quality building and site design and pedestrian and bicycle transit, as well as automobile circulation. Such standards are outlined in Section 28.060, including those that speak to building and entrance orientation, façade articulation, door and window openings, and building materials.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff notes that this item was referred at the November 30, 2022 meeting. The applicant has provided updated information requested by the Commission, including additional contextual information, a site plan for the overall planned multi-use site, renderings, and shadow study.

Staff requests that the UDC review the proposed development and provide an advisory recommendation to the Plan Commission based on the conditional use review and approval standards related to the items noted below.

- **Building Height.** While both the existing and proposed zoning have a base height limit of five stories, additional height can be approved by the Plan Commission, with conditional use approval. While the underlying Comprehensive Plan recommendation includes heights up to six stories, the Odana Road Area Plan recommends a maximum building height of five stories. Staff requests that UDC provides feedback and provide a recommendation of the appropriateness of proposed height with regard to overall building mass and scale, surrounding context, and relationship of the building to adjacent streets and drives.

- **Building Orientation and Street Activation.** As noted in the adopted plans, maintaining a strong building orientation to the street with pedestrian-scale design elements is desired. While previous iterations of this site plan did not include parking between the building and street, the current plan does. Staff believes the current layout is less preferable from a street orientation standpoint. As proposed, the S Yellowstone

Drive frontage is largely comprised of landscape area and parking. In addition, as reflected on the elevations, two levels of exposed parking garage walls are located along the south elevation, which as proposed results in some relatively blank wall expanses at grade. While the project site is largely surrounded by drive aisles and surface parking today, it is anticipated that there may be further future

redevelopment within the larger planned multi-use site. As such, consideration should be given to how the proposed building will relate to and encourage the redevelopment goals and principles as noted in the adopted plans, including incorporating traditional neighborhood design principles, including establishing active streetscapes, enhanced connectivity, and a building forward design.

Staff requests the Commission make findings and provide a recommendation on the overall building orientation and street level activation along the street facing elevations, and incorporating human-scale design elements in the building design at the street level.

- **Pedestrian Connectivity.** As noted in the adopted plans, encouraging enhanced connectivity and walkability is desired. While pedestrian circulation is provided around the proposed building, there is limited information provided on how the site and pedestrian circulation is connected to the larger surrounding area. A sidewalk or direct pedestrian connection is currently not shown to the main entrance and the abutting street. Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and make a recommendation regarding the overall internal and external pedestrian connectivity giving consideration to Conditional Use Standard No. 5, which states, "*Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, parking supply, internal circulation improvements, including but not limited to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and other necessary site improvements have been or are being provided.*"

- **Building Materials.** While a final materials board was not included in submittal materials, as shown on the elevations, the material palette is comprised of three different types of composite panel siding and a masonry veneer. Staff requests that the UDC make findings and provide a recommendation related to the adequacy and appropriateness of the limited material palette, residential detailing (sills, lintels, entryways, stoops, windows, awnings), etc. to breakdown the overall building mass and scale, as well as large expanses singular materials and blank walls.

- **Landscape and Open Spaces.** As shown on the site and landscape plans, landscape and open spaces are limited primarily comprised of landscape beds and stormwater facilities at grade and raised rooftop terraces. Consideration should be given to the overall landscape design and plant schedule, and amenities/programming in these areas with regard to screening blank walls, providing year-round interest, color and texture, as well as softening hardscape areas.

- **Lighting.** The photometric plan appears to have inconsistencies with the City's Outdoor Lighting requirements (Section 29.36, MGO) for low level activity areas, including light levels in excess of 4.0 footcandles in pedestrian areas and 1.5 footcandles in driveways, as well as uniformity ratios that are in excess of 5:1. As a potential code compliance issue, the applicant is advised that an updated photometric plan and fixture cutsheets, consistent with MGO Section 29.36, will be required to be submitted for review and approval prior to permitting.

- **Signage.** As shown on the proposed building elevations, potential future sign areas are shown, including logos and addressing signage. Staff notes that one wall sign per tenant is permitted per street facing or parking lot facing elevation. As a potential code compliance issue, the applicant is advised that a Comprehensive Design Review would be required for the proposed signage as shown on the elevations.

## Summary of Referral Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the November 30, 2022 referral are below:

- We're at a disadvantage of making any recommendations without any context. Can we ask for more drawings and consider this at the next meeting?
- We can't determine the effects of shading, the difference between a five or six-story building. It's very difficult to recommend a conditional use for an additional floor when we don't have the context nailed down.
- I agree. I had to go to a Bing map, even Google maps didn't show the Normandy Apartments yet. I do recall when we approved that one, I feel like if there was any kind of master planning, there was some kind of intent for what Normandy Square was going to be facing to the south. It would have a significant shading factor because it is facing south. Aside from that, it does seem too tall for the placement of the building on the site. Eventually we do have to look toward a time when the rest of Market Square will be redeveloped, this seems a little foreign to be smack dab in the middle and have six stories. The way it's presented makes it look taller even than the six stories. I don't think it warrants the bonus story if that's what it's asking for, it looks kind of heavy, the base seems to rise up and give it a weight and height that is less desirable in this area.
- This is technically not bonus stories, but a conditional use makes it possible to go to six stories. This is a Planned Multi-Use Site, I don't see the plan. We didn't even get an overall site plan to really understand the full context of circulation. A lot of that comes into play whether we think the building should be closer to the street or have a single row of parking in front of it. We got just a razor thin glimpse of the apartment building next door but can't really judge its context. We're a little handcuffed here, an advisory recommendation might just ask for more information.
- (Secretary) It sounds like the Commission has reservations about making any sort of recommendation based on the level of information provided.
- They're in the queue to go to the Plan Commission, but we would like to make an informed decision. We don't want to penalize either the neighbors or the developer.
- (Firchow) As a practical matter, if you don't make a recommendation, the Plan Commission can't act. Referral to the next UDC meeting, from a timing standpoint it's a more direct route. The code says the Plan Commission cannot act without a recommendation from UDC.
- Any chance they could come back in two weeks with more information vs. waiting for six more weeks?
- If the Commission refers it to the next meeting, and the team can get the context information.