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To: [Urban Design Comments](#)
Subject: Comments re agenda item #7 for 2.15.23 UDC meeting
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The *UDC Purpose Intent Presentation* document ranks “building mass and scale” and “context” as two of the three least important design elements (by both survey participants and UDC members). These are not the least important design items, particularly when UDC is reviewing a planned development or conditional use.

For PDs, MGO 28.098(2)(b) provides: “The PD District plan shall facilitate the development or redevelopment goals of the Comprehensive Plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.” Many sub-plans address height and/or massing. But, more importantly, the Comprehensive Plan uses “context sensitive design,” or an analogous phrase, 38 times. Context sensitive design is defined in the Comp Plan as: “development that is well integrated into the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and *including considerations such as height and bulk, setback from the street, width along the street frontage, and site infrastructure, among others.*” (emphasis added)

And, for PDs, MGO 28.098(2)(e) provides: “The PD District plan shall coordinate architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with surrounding land uses and create an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose of the PD District.” Although “an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability” can have different interpretations, certainly “context” or, as said in the ordinance, the “character of the area,” is an important factor.

The UDC, when reviewing PDs, is bound by the provisions of Section 28.098(2), including the two discussed above. MGO 33.24(4)(b).

With respect to conditional uses, the Plan Commission may refer a proposal to the UDC in order for the UDC to provide a comment/recommendation as to whether “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.” MGO 28.183(6)9. Context, massing, and scale are thus also important for conditional use recommendations.

MGO 28.183(6)9.’s inclusion of “statement of purpose for the zoning district” is also important. All statements of purpose for non-special district uses address context, and residential statements address scale and massing. For example, all residential districts have a statement of purpose that includes: “Ensure that new buildings and additions to existing buildings are *designed with sensitivity to their context* in terms of building placement, *facade width, height and proportions*, garage and driveway placement, landscaping, and similar design features.” (emphasis added). Mixed-use districts have a statement of purpose that essentially imposes the same requirement used by UDC in reviewing PDs: “Facilitate preservation, development or redevelopment consistent with the adopted goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and of adopted neighborhood, corridor or special area plans.”

The *UDC Purpose Intent Presentation* document also includes views on sustainability measures. One missing sustainability measure is canopy trees. The City has a goal of 40% canopy coverage, and canopy trees are particularly needed in urban heat island areas. UDD #8 has requirements for canopy trees, not only for the planting of canopy trees but also for having a terrace width that supports canopy trees. Hopefully this

requirement won't be removed from UDD #8 and, instead, will be applied more broadly.

Respectfully Submitted,
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