



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 437-445 W Johnson Street, 215-221 N Bassett Street, and 430-440 W Dayton Street

Application Type: New Residential Building in UMX Zoning
UDC is an Advisory Body

Legistar File ID # [75228](#)

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Chad Matesi, Core Madison Bassett, LLC | Brian Munson, Vandewalle & Associates

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a student housing project comprised of two residential towers, one 12 stories, located along W Johnson Street and one six stories, located along W Dayton Street. The proposal includes 254 housing units ranging in size from studios to five bedroom apartments and including some first floor townhome units with individual entrances. As part of the development proposal, the applicant is proposing to rezone the property entirely to the Urban Mixed Use (UMX) district.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (UDC) is an **advisory** body on this request. Section [28.076\(b\)](#) includes the related design review requirements which state that: *"All new buildings that are greater than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet or that have more than four stories shall obtain Conditional Use approval. In addition, the UDC shall review such projects for conformity to the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#) and the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#) and shall report its findings to the Plan Commission."*

Related Zoning Information: The property is currently zoned a combination of Urban Mixed-Use (UMX) and Planned Development (PD). With this proposal, the applicant would rezone the entire property to the UMX district, as noted above. The Planning Division understands that the proposed development is considered a conditional use under the Zoning Code. In addition, the Capital View Preservation Limit will also apply to the proposed development. As noted in the Zoning Code, the minimum ground story height is 12 feet, and from ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area. As noted in the Downtown Height Map, the maximum recommended height is 12 stories along W Johnson Street and six along W Dayton.

The UMX zone district also outlines design standards that are applicable to all new buildings. As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the UMX zone district are included as an attachment to this report, including, but not limited to those related to building entrance orientation, façade articulation, height, fenestration, and materials.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) (the "Plan") planning area within the Johnson Bend district, which is an area recommended for higher intensity residential development. As noted in the Plan, this area is characterized by its high-density apartment building, however is *"...contains a variety of building types, styles and character that do not relate well to one another."*

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff recommends that the UDC review the development proposal and make findings regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below.

- **Building Materials and Composition.** Staff requests that the Commission provides feedback on the overall building material palette and its detailing giving consideration to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, which generally speak to utilizing high quality, durable building materials and appropriate scale, color, texture, architectural detailing to create an enhanced pedestrian environment, as well as providing continuity in the finish and detailing of all four sides of each of the building components.

The proposed building material palette of the W Johnson tower primarily consists of masonry base with metal and composite wood panels on the upper stories, including the “the grid” detailing. The material palette of the W Dayton Street tower is comprised of fiber cement and metal panel, as well as “the grid” although it is not clear what the materiality of that element is. Staff also has questions related to possible lighting of those elements.

As proposed there are significant blank wall expanses along pedestrian pathways, some of which will be visible from the street and which are not screened with landscape, and upper stories that are void of detail, including the north and south elevations.

Staff also has concerns regarding the inset panels on the second floor level of the W Johnson Street tower’s east elevation. On other facades this is vision glass, though here, darker metal panels are interspersed into a façade that is much less transparent. An initial consideration is that such elements should be vision glass, matching other building sides. Secondly, staff notes discrepancies in the labeling. While the panels, labelled as “metal panel 03” and appear medium grey on the east elevation, they are rendered as light grey in the Bassett Street perspective rendering. The applicant should clarify which is correct and why a similar design approach was not considered along this façade. In addition, as noted by the Commission in their second Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the color, texture and detailing for the masonry material at the ground floor.

- **Adequacy of Front Façade Detailing.** Staff again wishes to emphasize that both the Johnson and Dayton facades should be designed as prominent front facades. As noted by the Commission in their initial Informational Presentation comments, differentiating the design between the two towers would be acceptable given the context and intensity between W Johnson Street and W Dayton Street. Those comments focused on utilizing the “grid” as an organizing element and creating strong horizontal and vertical elements. While staff does not object to differentiation of the facades, both need to be of a comparable design quality. With the current design, staff believes there is still be considerably more architectural detailing on the W Johnson tower than the W Dayton tower, including clear building entries, materials/colors, residential balconies, railings, etc.

While many of these elements have been incorporated into the W Johnson tower, staff believes the same design consideration should be given to the W Dayton tower, especially given the intended ‘townhome-esque’ design and residential character of the street. In addition, as noted in the UDC’s second Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to eliminating the protruding frame around the windows.

- **Longviews and Sensitivity to Context.** Due to location of this site within a major transit and W Johnson view corridor, consideration should be given to the composition of the overall building design and materials as part of the overall cityscape, as well as how the proposed building relates to the immediately surrounding context and transitions to scale of development along W Dayton Street, which is significantly different than the W Johnson Street frontage. As noted in the Downtown Plan and Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, consideration should be given to how buildings and their architectural design, not only relate to each other in the immediate context and scale, but also within the larger cityscape.

- **Unit Entry Orientation.** Staff continues to have significant design concerns related to how the at-grade individual unit entries relate to the surrounding development, both existing and future, and whether the individual unit entries are appropriate in these locations. As previously noted, should abutting properties develop to their allowable setbacks, the pathways to these buildings will be far less open and visible. Staff are also concerned about the depth that these unit entry doors are recessed, given the potential security concerns due to the inability of the residents to view the entirety of those recessed spaces when approaching.

As designed, these are not supported by staff. As noted by the Commission in their initial Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to the design, lighting, security of these unit entries. Staff requests the Commission's feedback on the building design along the internal pedestrian pathways, including limiting blank wall expanses, providing an adequate landscape buffer, lighting, etc.

- **Landscape.** As part of the Commission's review, consideration should be given to the location of landscape in relationship to blank wall expanses, screening, providing year-round color and texture, and programming details of the proposed rooftop amenities. Staff requests the UDC make findings related to the proposed landscape plan, giving consideration the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines which generally speak to enhancing the public realm, contextual and architectural compatibility, providing year-round screening, color and texture, softening hardscape, and providing shade.
- **Lighting.** The lighting plan appears to have inconsistencies with the MGO 29.36, including maximum permitted light levels and uniformity ratios for Medium Level Activity areas. In addition, staff has concerns regarding the light levels being reported on the rooftop patio areas, which in some areas are in excess of 51 footcandles, as well as the architectural lighting proposed in the building reveals, for which additional information will be needed to fully evaluate, including but not limited to mounting details, night rendering, and light levels. Staff requests the UDC review the proposed lighting plan for consistency with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that generally speak to limiting glare, maintaining light levels that are not excessive and limiting impacts on adjacent residential units.

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.

Summary of UDC Second Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the March 1, 2023, second Informational Presentation are provided below:

- This is much improved from last time and blends in with its context more. I can't not remember that initial inspiration but this is more successful. I don't think the brick goes with what's above it, the massing is fine, maybe the brick color but it doesn't support what's going on above it. Should change planes where the materials change, proud of the brick.
- When you get to the six-story one, you don't need those window surrounds, it's not doing anything for the project. It's more successful on the other side, they detract from the design.
- I really agree, love the original feel from what we've been seeing a lot of in student and multi-family housing. Agree that the brick feels foreign to what we're seeing above. Red brick with gray mortar is like all the other campus buildings, maybe a different tone or more modern form of brick. Wondering if all those little brick walls around should just be cast concrete. The fencing along the side looks like wood picket, it could be perforated corten. The details need to translate down to that first level. Johnson is

successful above, but the scale and color of the brick, down at the base, how it's stacked, needs more finesse in order to correlate with what's above it.

- I commend you on the improvements made. The massing seems appropriate. For a luxury high rise development it should look and feel that way and I think you accomplished that. It adds value to this area, especially when Gorham and Johnson are becoming a vertical column. I wonder if the massing can be broken up more to not contribute to that.
- The plinth doesn't really match the upper part of the building. The first floor is what excites me most, nice job creating this "wrap around porch." I like the relief of that to the pedestrian realm. You have landscaping working with architectural materials to create a nice in-between public/private zone that will be successful. I like the scale and warmth to the brick. You're doing a lot within your property with the raised planters, trees to activate that space, I appreciate the detail to those courtyard alley edges. For the roof terrace or green roof, let's make sure it's at least semi-intensive for rooting depth and volume that could include native perennials and pollinators.
- The brick at a scale you can touch is always a nice thing. It comes down to the color of brick and mortar and the proportion of the brick to be complementary to this modern structure.
- I would suggest you make the garage opening as low as you can to the garage door on the Dayton Street side. Make the head of that opening as short as you can. You've created a really nice promenade around the block and the detailing and use of materials are much improved from last time.
- This is a huge improvement. I like the brick on the first floor, there is room for discussion on color and sizing and patterning of that brick, but it feels warm and inviting, especially with the planters. Those wood uprights add warmth and appeal of the building; it makes a nice transition from the brick to the white grid pattern above. As far as the shorter building on Dayton Street, I like the funky different looking aspect. It's attached but straddling and it's fine to treat it differently than the twelve-story building on Johnson. The protrusions around the windows, I kind of like them as a nice counterpoint to the indentations, but from a practical standpoint they look like something birds will nest on. Overall the change from version 1 to version 2 is nicely done, I appreciate the attention to the entrance treatments around the sides and areas between adjacent buildings.
- The opening between the two, four-story massing, is that a green roof?
 - It is an occupiable roof, we are determining how much of that can be green or otherwise.
- This happens at four different places?
 - Correct.
- The fact that you have the inset grid and the proud window frames with taught skin, that detail is what makes it. If that gets value engineered to be an orange stripe with punched openings it will not be as effective on the street. Where you see the side elevation where there is limited detail, I am not sure you would get as positive of feedback from the Commission. Do whatever you can to hang on to those subtle details; that is what is really making it, particularly on the upper stories of both buildings.

**ATTACHMENT:
28.071 (3) DESIGN STANDARDS FROM ZONING CODE**

(3) Design Standards.

The following standards are applicable to all new buildings and additions, within any ten- (10) year period, exceeding fifty percent (50%) of existing building's floor area for non-residential buildings, mixed-use buildings, lodging houses, and residential buildings with 8 or more dwelling units.

(a) Parking.

1. Parking shall be located in parking structures, underground, or in surface parking lots behind principal buildings. Parking structures shall be designed with liner buildings or with ground floor office or retail uses along all street-facing facades.
2. For corner lots or through lots, rear yard surface parking areas abutting any street frontage are limited to fifty percent (50%) of that frontage, and shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the street property line.
3. Parking garage openings visible from the sidewalk shall have a clear maximum height of sixteen (16) feet and a maximum width of twenty-two (22) feet. Garage doors or gates shall be located a minimum of ten (10) feet from the front property line. Doors to freight loading bays are exempt from this requirement.
4. No doors or building openings providing motor vehicle access to structured parking or loading facilities shall face State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

(b) Entrance Orientation.

1. Primary building entrances on all new buildings shall be oriented to the primary abutting public street and have a functional door.
2. Additional secondary entrances may be oriented to a secondary street or parking area.
3. Entries shall be clearly visible and identifiable from the street, and delineated with elements such as roof overhangs, recessed entries, landscaping, or similar design features.
4. Within ten (10) feet of a block corner, the facade may be set back to form a corner entry.

(c) Facade Articulation.

1. The facades of new buildings more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller vertical intervals through techniques including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Facade modulation, step backs, or extending forward of a portion of the facade.
 - b. Vertical divisions using different textures, materials, or colors of materials.
 - c. Division into multiple storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.
 - d. Variation in roof lines to reinforce the modulation or vertical intervals.
 - e. Arcades, awnings, window bays, arched windows, and balconies to reinforce the vertical intervals.

(d) Story Heights and Treatment.

1. For all buildings, the maximum ground story height is eighteen (18) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor. An atrium that exceeds eighteen (18) feet will be considered more than one (1) story.
2. Upper stories shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet floor to floor.
3. For all buildings, the minimum ground story height is twelve (12) feet, measured from the sidewalk to the second story floor.

4. For non-residential uses, the average ground story floor elevation shall not be lower than the front sidewalk elevation nor higher than eighteen (18) inches above the sidewalk elevation.
5. For ground-story residential uses, landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls or similar treatments shall be located between the sidewalk and the front door to create a private yard area.

(e) Door and Window Openings.

1. For street-facing facades with ground story non-residential uses, the ground story door and window openings shall comprise a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the facade area.
2. For street-facing facades with ground story residential uses, ground story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area.
3. For all buildings, upper story openings shall comprise a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the facade area per story.
4. Garage doors and opaque service doors shall not count toward the above requirements.
5. Glass on all windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass may be used on service areas on the building.

(f) Building Materials.

1. Buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials. Table 28 E-1 below lists allowable building materials.
2. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway shall use materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

Table 28E-1: Building Materials in Downtown and Urban Districts.

Building Materials	Trim/Accent Material	Top of Building	Middle of Building	Base/Bottom of Building	Standards (see footnotes)
Brick (Face/Veneer)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Smooth-Face/Split-Face Block	✓	✓	✓	✓	A
Wood/Wood Composite	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	B
Concrete Panels (Tilt-up or Precast)	✓	✓	✓	✓	C
EIFS/Synthetic Stucco	✓	✓			D
Stone/Stone Veneer	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Metal Panels	✓	✓	✓	✓	E
Hand-Laid Stucco	✓	✓			D
Reflective Glass/Spandrel	✓				F
Glass (Transparent)	✓	✓	✓	✓	

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than thirty-three percent (33%) of any building.

B - Wood and fiber cement panels shall not be used on the ground story except between the sidewalk and the bottom of storefront windows or as an accent material.

C - Shall incorporate horizontal and vertical articulation and modulation, including but not limited to changes in color and texture, or as part of a palette of materials.

D - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used on building facades facing State Street, King Street, or the Capitol Square.

E - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials; shall be a heavy gauge, non-reflective metal

F - Shall be used in limited quantities as an accent material.

(g) Equipment and Service Area Screening.

1. Outdoor loading areas or mechanical equipment are not permitted in the front yard. When visible from an abutting public street or walkway, they shall be screened by a decorative fence, wall, or screen of plant material.
2. No doors or openings providing access to parking or loading facilities shall about the Capitol Square, State Street or King Street.
3. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the principal structure.

(h) Screening of Rooftop Equipment.

1. All rooftop equipment, with the exception of solar and wind equipment, shall be screened from view from adjacent streets and public rights-of-way. Rooftop equipment shall be screened from view from adjacent buildings to the extent possible.
2. The equipment shall be within an enclosure. This structure shall be set back a distance of one and one-half (1½) times its height from any primary facade fronting a public street. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials. (Am. by ORD-15-00104, 10-15-15)