



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 402 W Gorham Street
Application Type: Building Addition in the Urban Mixed Use (UMX) District
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [79237](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Marc Schellpfeffer, CaS4 Architecture, LLC | Riley’s Property, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing a third floor addition of roughly 2,900 square feet of office space on an existing commercial building.

Project Schedule:

- UDC received and Informational Presentation on August 16, 2023.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (“UDC”) is an **approving body** on this development request. Pursuant to Section 28.076(4)(b): All new buildings and additions that are less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in [Sec. 28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

Related Zoning Information: The project is zoned Urban Mixed Use zone. Staff notes that the proposed development **does not** trigger compliance with the design standards, including those related to window and door openings and materials because the building addition is less than 50 percent of the existing building’s floor area.

In addition, in working with the Zoning Administrator, it is staff’s understanding that this use is a nonconforming use. As such, pursuant to MGO 28.191, any structural repairs or alterations to the building shall not exceed a cumulative value of fifty percent of the total assessed value. The proposed addition, as well as any improvements that have occurred since 2014, in cost, are limited to fifty percent of the total assessed value. The applicant is advised that additional information will be required to be submitted in order for Zoning Administrator to confirm that the proposed expansion is consistent with requirements for expanding nonconforming uses pursuant to MGO 28.191.

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area, within the State Street neighborhood. As such, development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). The Plan recommendations for development in this neighborhood generally speak to maintaining and enhancing the district as a premier designation for a variety of commercial and civic uses, the unique sense of place, the diverse and vibrant mix of uses, encouraging human-scale developments that actively engage the street, and creating pedestrian oriented streetscapes.

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the revised development and make findings regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below and giving consideration to Commission’s Informational Presentation comments.

- **Building Design and Composition.** Staff believes that while positive changes in the location of the proposed third floor have resulted the building having a stronger street presence in some regards, the loss of windows on the ground floor adversely impacts the building's overall orientation to the street and results in additional blank walls at the ground level. The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, window and door openings, as well as an enhanced level of design are encouraged across the majority of the ground floor, especially along street facing façades. Staff also has questions regarding how closely the ground level block will match the existing material where windows are being infilled. Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings related to the building orientation.

Staff further requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the overall building composition as it relates to the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those related to the overall massing and proportions of architectural components (top, middle, base), the appropriateness of the use of stepback/setbacks, balancing vertical/horizontal lines and datum, size and rhythm of windows and doors, simplifying roof forms/transitions, creating positive termination at the top of the building, etc.

As noted by the Commission in their Informational Presentation comments, consideration should be given to removal of the shed roofs, proportions and sizes of windows, and maintaining consistent datum between existing and proposed.

- **Building Materials.** The building material palette, both existing and proposed, appears to be comprised of multiple types/colors of masonry, metal panels, and EIFS. The Downtown Urban Design Guidelines generally speak to utilizing high quality materials and four-sided architecture, as well as using a palette that is simple. Staff requests that the Commission's feedback and findings on the proposed material palette and composition, especially as it relates to materials transitions and detailing.

As noted on the plans, several windows are being filled in with masonry. Staff notes that a masonry material was not included in the materials board. As noted above, staff have concerns on how closely the ground level block will match the existing material where windows are being infilled.

- **Lighting.** As shown in the application materials, exterior lighting is proposed. While the average light levels appear to be consistent with MGO 29.36 (maximum 2.5 footcandles) they are taken from across the entire site versus the area of change, which is the area of focus with regard to lighting. As shown on the lighting plan, there are significant hotspots near the building's entries in excess of 19 footcandles where averages of 2.5 footcandles are permitted. As such, the applicant is advised that changes will likely need to be made to the lighting plan, number of fixtures, or fixture selection in this area to meet the outdoor lighting ordinance. Staff recommends that the Commission address lighting in their action.
- **Landscape.** Staff notes that the proposed addition trigger compliance with the landscape requirements pursuant to MGO 28.142. As such, the applicant is advised that a full landscape plan will be required to be submitted for review and approval.
- **Signage.** Staff notes that while signage is shown on the building elevation, a separate review and approval is required for signage.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the August 16, 2023, Informational Presentation are provided below.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- What is the functional purpose of those roof sheds?
 - They serve no purpose, there is nothing behind them. I don't know what the intention was for the original addition. Taking some of that down helps to calm the building a little bit. Those sheds drop snow and ice onto Broom Street.
- I'll lodge my reaction early but I really didn't mind them. The ice and snow makes sense.
- Are you significantly increasing the amount of air conditioning? That's a lot of south-facing glass.
 - It's more of a function of providing a space for those utilizing the office. It's all additional space so from an a/c standpoint there will be a mechanical upgrade component to this. With that amount of glazing there will be a frit on it. There are opportunities to address that issue.
- Can you walk me through the materials again - You have split face block at the base, then two colors of metal panel?
 - No. There are currently three types of block on the building, two burnished and one split face block, EIFS and glazing. We're proposing a lighter weight metal panel to complement the lighter color burnished block. There won't be a lot of texture to it. The metal panel on the third level is the same color as the composite panel but with texture. Under the signage is glazing.
- So it's a different proportions of window - What was constraining you to not make them harmonious?
 - We can look at this proportion and align a datum, something we can consider.
- Did you look at those towers, adding some articulation or change to them – those two tall white elements?
 - We need to balance a budget here as well. The composition of the building is subjective. Taking the sheds down was getting the issue with snow and ice and the second was to bring the activity down a little. Those elements are EIFS and burnished block. One tower is a stair tower, so there are considerations related to fire, and the other tower makes sense as you consider how it is used.
- What happens to all the vending machines sitting in the parking lot?
 - (Inaudible) People don't carry cash anymore or drink soda, so during construction we will be removing some of those vending machines.
- I would encourage you to somehow incorporate them into the elevation, whether it's an open faced enclosure. Right now they're just plugged into the wall in the parking lot. I would encourage you to use a more durable material where you're showing the white metal panel – whether you stain the existing masonry – bringing new metal panel down to that environment it would suffer. I'd rather see you paint or stain what's there right now.
 - We can look at that.