



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1 & 15 Ellis Potter Court
Application Type: Mixed Use Development in Urban Design District (UDD) 2
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [80582](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Scott Kwiecinski, Horizon Development Group, Inc. | Kevin Burow, Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the construction of a two-building development comprised of a three-story mixed-use building comprised of 54 units and a community outreach space, and eleven townhomes. The project will be served by both surface and underground parking.

Approval Standards: UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 2 ("UDD 2"), which requires that the Urban Design Commission review the proposed project using the design standards and guidelines for that district in MGO Section 33.24(9).

Adopted Plans: The City's adopted [Comprehensive Plan](#) recommends that project site for Employment land uses, including corporate and business offices, research facilities, laboratories, hospitals, medical clinics, and other similar uses. The Plan notes that while "...these areas are not generally recommended for residential uses, though such uses may be considered as part of a conditional use under relevant zoning districts."

Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests the UDC review and make findings on the development proposal regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below. As part of this review, staff recommends consideration be given to the following:

- **Building Orientation – Building 1.** As previously noted, staff suggested the development team look for opportunities to further improve this building's street orientation. While there are unit patio/entries located at grade, there is somewhat limited overall building connectivity. As noted by the UDC in their Information Presentation comments, consideration should be given to providing a common building entry oriented toward Ellis Potter Court. In addition, locating the nonresidential amenity uses at the corner of Ellis Potter Court and Schroeder Road could result in a better street activation, as well as an improved transition between the adjacent uses and the proposed multi-family residential units themselves. The UDD 2 Building Design and Building Relationships guidelines and requirements generally speak to designing with a sensitivity to context, providing adequate transitions and buffers between uses, providing an attractive streetscape, etc. Staff requests UDC provide feedback and make findings related to the building orientation and building connectivity to the street.
- **Building Orientation – Building 2.** The orientation of Building 2 was not originally identified as a design-related concern by either the Commission or staff due to its building forward design and siting at the time. As part of the UDC's Informational Presentation comments, the Commission did provide comments related to making site plan adjustments, including shifting the garage to the north and open space to the

east to provide a better transition between the adjacent personal storage use and the proposed residential development.

While the revised site plan reflects a better transition between existing and proposed uses, Building 2 has lost its originally proposed strong orientation towards the street. While it appears the building is sited to limit the disturbance of existing mature trees, this end wall of the building lacks a strong street orientation. Staff recommends consideration be given to reconfiguring the end units so those units are oriented towards Ellis Potter Court versus their proposed internal orientation. Staff requests UDC provide feedback and make findings related to the building orientation and building connectivity to the street.

On balance, while staff believes that building and site details can be improved to enhance the street orientation, staff does not object to the overall site plan concept.

- **Building Design and Materials.** As proposed, the development is comprised of two buildings with a modern design aesthetic that are clad in a masonry veneer and two types of composite siding materials. Staff requests UDC review and make finding on the proposed material palette and building design giving consideration to the UDD 2 Building Design requirements and guidelines, which generally speak to utilizing four-sided architecture, natural materials and colors, design with sensitivity to and compatibility with context, including breaking down mass and scale with varied horizontal and vertical planes and landscape, etc.

As noted by the UDC in their Information Presentation comments, consideration should be given to refining the gable design of Building 2 so that it reads more like individual townhomes versus one larger apartment-style building.

- **Transition and Landscaping Considerations.** Staff requests the UDC provide feedback and making findings on the general site planning considerations noted below.
 - Landscape – Buffers and Screening. As indicated in the context information, land uses in proximity to the project site include personal storage, convenience commercial, office, and residential development in varying levels of intensity.

Staff requests the UDC review and make findings on the proposed landscape plan as it relates to providing year-round color, texture and screening. As noted in the UDD 2 Landscaping requirements and guidelines, landscaping shall be used in a functional as well as a decorative manner, including utilizing native plant species, creating planting patterns that effectively disperse plant variety across the site, framing views, screening unattractive features and views and different uses from each other. More specifically, UDD 2 Screening requirements note that parking areas shall be screened from view from Schroeder Road and abutting properties, minimum plant height at the time of planting shall be 30 inches growing to a height of at least 54 inches.

In addition, staff notes that there are three Black Hills Spruce trees shown to be planted in the middle of the “play area”; consideration should be given to the relocation of these trees to maximize both the play area and property boundary screening.

Staff notes that there are two landscape retaining walls noted on the site plan that are four feet in height, however design details were not provided in the submittal materials related to the wall materials, colors, railings, etc.

- **Lighting.** Staff notes that while a lighting plan was provided, the light levels being reported are seemingly limited to the parking areas when lighting will certainly occur in pedestrian and vehicle use areas based

on the fixtures proposed, including building wall mounted fixtures. As such, revisions to the lighting plan will be required to confirm compliance with MGO 29.36.

In addition, the lighting plan does not include architectural lighting (individual balconies/patios or building entry lighting). The applicant is advised that if architectural lighting is proposed the lighting plan will need to be updated to reflect such lighting.

Staff recommends that the UDC address lighting in the Commission's formal action, including whether the subsequent review of lighting could be completed administratively by staff or by the UDC.

Summary of UDC Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and comments from the November 8, 2023, Informational Presentation comments are provided below.

The Commission discussed the following:

- You mentioned the north end being open space or play space. Could you clarify where that is?
 - Directly off the north end of parking for the townhomes, greenspace will serve as sort of a buffer. The landscape will be extensive and sensitive to screening from the surrounding properties. There is ample greenspace to the east as well.
- In future presentations it would be helpful to see how people safely connect to that from the other building.
- Do you have any tree inventory or any idea of whether you're taking down some large, mature, historic trees for the project development?
 - We are gathering that information now, the property was just surveyed this week. This will be a WHEDA tax credit for next year's cycle, this is due diligence so we haven't gotten to that level of detail yet.
- I don't know specific to this site, but along this corridor there are some nice mature trees, nice Oak trees. If anything like that exists on site it would be helpful to know it and see if you're responding to that in any way. I would certainly advocate for incorporating those into your development if there's an opportunity there.
- To the east of the site is the National Wildlife Health Center, 24 acres of mostly undeveloped laboratory. It's completely fenced off, but is there any way to take the garage building and put that up toward the north part of the site and have the play area border along that big heavily wooded area? To the north is self-storage units and I know the Wildlife Center has that fence, but having those units look out over a play area. Your apartment building too on Schroeder could do that too, you can see how the elbow of it could focus to the northeast. Any way you can use that garage building to your advantage to screen the more industrial parts of the neighborhood and open up to natural landscape, the better off you'd be.
 - We certainly would be willing to look at it and make adjustments. It might end up being a slightly L-shaped configuration.
- That center is basically like a forest and would be a great amenity to look out over.
- With regard to the townhouse building, anything you can do with the gables to make them look more individual and less like an apartment building.
- Connectivity at grade in Building 2, you've done a really nice job with that, but it appears to be limited connection at Building 1 to the exterior. It's very closed, there's access presumably by your car internal but there's no patios, that connection is missing.

- There's an internal corridor for the apartment building and the townhouses are designed to all enter from the outside. We've had projects with those corridors to still make physical connections to the street.
 - This is a senior housing development, I greatly appreciate the comment on having as many direct connections as possible. But security is a concern and numerous access points creates security concerns, as well as trip hazards that need to be maintained for seniors. One centrally maintained point of access is best. While I do appreciate the comment that's typically why you don't see the connections you would typically see in family buildings.
- I appreciate that, that's fair.
- Is there only the one public entrance off the internal portion? No public entrance facing Schroeder Road or Potter court?
 - Correct. We have stair exists to the north but we don't have a corridor access point into the building. We could study it further and see if we could fit that in, either to Schroeder or Ellis Potter.
- I think that might be actually useful. If you're there and you need to get some Geritol or something at the Kwik Trip across the street, you would have an entrance right off of Ellis Potter Court.
- I'm curious with Building 1, across the street, the Kwik Trip might not be there forever but they tend to be lit up at night. Have you considered mirroring Building 1? Right now you have the parking on the east side right up against beautiful trees, some of them would come down for that.
 - We did not give that as much consideration because we've always been directed to engage the building corner and conceal the parking behind the building. I do appreciate the comment though and given the neighbor across the street there is some merit to that. Then our community outreach space would have frontage on Schroeder.