



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 4716 Sheboygan Avenue

**Application Type:** Major Amendment to an Existing Planned Development (PD) for a New Hotel in Madison Yards at Hill Farms in Urban Design District (UDD) 6  
**UDC is an Approving and Advisory Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [78595](#)

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Ethan Skeels, Kahler Slater | David Emerich, Madison Yards Lodging Associates, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the construction of a five-story, approx. 102,250+/- GFA, 145-room hotel on Block 4, Madison Yards at Hill Farms.

### Project Background:

- UDC granted Initial Approval and recommended that the Plan Commission approve the proposed Major Amendment to an Existing PD for a new hotel with conditions on October 18, 2023.
- UDC received an Informational Presentation on July 26, 2023, for a hotel building on this site, "Block 4."
- UDC received an Informational Presentation on March 11, 2020, for a residential/commercial mixed-use building on this site, "Block 4." (Legistar File ID [59852](#)).
- The UDC recommended approval of the Madison Yards at Hill Farms Planned Development - General Development Plan (PD-GDP) on July 11, 2018 (Legistar File ID [48873](#)).
- On April 23, 2018, Plan Commission recommended approval, and Common Council subsequently approved the Madison Yards at Hill Farms PD-GDP on May 1, 2018 (Legistar File ID [50130](#)). Common Council approval of the PD-GDP established the zoning text and development standards within the Planned Development.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 6 ("UDD 6"), 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\(13\)](#).

The UDC is also an **advisory body** on the Planned Development request. For Planned Developments the UDC is required to provide a recommendation to the Plan Commission with specific findings on the design objectives listed in Zoning Code sections 28.098(1), Statement of Purpose, and (2), Standards for Approval (PD Standards Attached), including PD Standard (e), which generally speaks to coordinating "...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."

As noted above, at the October 18, 2023, meeting, the Commission granted Initial Approval and recommended that the Plan Commission approve this item with conditions that generally spoke to screening the parking area, general landscape adjustments, as well as minimizing the blank wall on the west elevation and providing additional details related to the amount of relief in the material transition between the fiber cement and metal panel. The Commission's motion also included findings related to the VTAC units and proposed surface parking lot, both as designed were acceptable. The Commission's subsequent review and continued evaluation of this item should focus on whether those conditions have been addressed.

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is located within the Madison Yards at Hill Farms Planned Development District, Block 4. As noted in the Madison Yards at Hill Farms PD Zoning Text, hotel uses are considered permitted uses, and in Block 4 building heights are required to be between two and eight stories (20-95 feet), with gross floor area ranging from 30,000-160,000 square-feet. In addition, the text also include guidelines related to the building location, orientation, massing and articulation, materials, and landscaping and open space design, among other design-related considerations.

The project site is also located within the recently adopted TOD Overlay zone. The TOD Overlay requires that 30 percent of the building shall be within 20 feet of the primary and secondary streets, which in this case is Sheboygan Avenue and Gardener Road, respectively. As proposed, the building appears to meet this standard as setbacks along Sheboygan Avenue are a maximum of 18'-6" and 12' along Gardener Road.

## Summary of Design Considerations

As noted above, it is the role of the UDC to review the revised drawings for consistency with the conditions of approval as outlined below. Please note that as conditions of approval, they are required to be met. The UDC's role is to ensure these previously established conditions are met, however they cannot waive or change these requirements. Staff requests the UDC's continued evaluation and findings related to the following:

- The screen wall shall be at lower in height and the materiality needs to be modified to be more open/permeable. The wall shall be designed with materials consistent with the building materials, including burnished block and faux wood fins. The wall location shall align with the building in plan view and datum.

*Originally, the screen wall was proposed to serve to purposes, retainage of soil, but also screening of the surface parking lot. As part of the UDC's review, careful consideration was given to the design of the proposed screen wall, but also the potential screening of the screen itself given its height. Staff notes that discussions with the applicant indicated that there was a desire to create a more open and permeable site, as well as organic open space which resulted in adjustments to site grading and design, which ultimately resulted in the removal of the screen wall.*

*As noted in the applicant's Letter of Intent the screen has been removed from the plans which results in a more open, permeable site, and any necessary retainage will be able to be accommodate with a natural boulder outcropping. Staff believes the removal of the wall is positive, although consideration should be given to maintaining a year-round landscape screen/buffer along the edge of the parking lot to limit visibility from the street. As such, a more robust landscape buffer has been provided.*

- The sun-loving, prairie style plants on the north side of the building shall be replaced with a more shade tolerant selection.

Staff believes this condition has been met. As noted in the Letter of Intent, the landscape plan has been updated to address this comment. Plantings along the north side of the building include Vision in White Chinese Astilbe and Green Velvet Boxwood.

- On the west elevation, northwest corner, the Sea Green Juniper, should be replaced with something more vertical.

*Although the Letter of Intent indicates that the landscape plan has been updated to address this comment, the previous landscape plan, as well as the current plan shows an Iowa Juniper is proposed in the northwest corner of the site, which staff believes addresses the condition.*

- Tree plantings located at the screen wall and between the loading area and the public lawn shall be at least a 2.5" caliper.

*Staff believe this condition has been met. As noted in the Letter of Intent, the landscape plan has been updated to address this comment. The Comprehensive Plan Schedule notes that overstory deciduous streets will be planted at 2.5" caliper and that upright evergreen shrubs will be a minimum of six feet in height.*

- Provide details on material transitions between the metal panel and fiber cement. Consideration should be given to incorporating treatments that provide more relief between the fiber cement and metal panel, including providing a wide trim piece around the window surround to break-up the transition.

*Staff believes this condition has been met. As noted in the Letter of Intent and reflected on the elevation drawings, a trim detail ("Alum Batten") will be incorporated into the window opening design to provide a shadow line/transition between the metal panel and fiber cement materials.*

- Lighting shall be revised to be consistent with MGO 29.36.

*While staff believes this condition has been met and that the proposed lighting is generally consistent with UDD 6 guidelines and requirements, staff notes that ultimately review and evaluation of the lighting plan and light fixtures for compliance with MGO 29.36 will be part of the Site Plan Review process.*

- Revise the west elevation to incorporate design details or material textures that break-up/minimize the blank expanses on the elevation.

*Staff believes this condition has been met. The Letter of Intent indicates floor plan adjustments have been made to accommodate additional windows in the end units located along the west elevation.*

## Summary of UDC Initial Approval Discussion and Action

As a reference, the Commission's discussion and comments from the October 18, 2023, Initial Approval are provided below.

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

- Could you please speak to materials for the screen wall?
  - It will be built out of burnished block that matches the building, polished and filled, the base course will match for a nice contrast during the day, and potentially lit at night.
- Those two materials are the same as on the building itself?
  - Yes, that's correct.
- What is the wall height?
  - Six-feet at the top of the retainage. Six in the middle and 7 ½ at the corner. We would not want to go any taller than that, and would be open to taking it down further.
- Where does the screening wall datum align with a building datum?
  - It does not align with the roof, it's below the canopy at this intermediate mullion line.

- Could you speak to what caliper of trees you're intending to plant on some of those important edges – at the screening wall and between the loading area and the public lawn.
  - Deciduous trees have a caliper of 2 ½ inch, some are 1 inch caliper. We are looking for immediate establishment that is also reflective of what has been planted at Madison Yards to this point.
- Could you please point out the locations of the wall packs?
  - They are a vertical individual unit within each room that gets its outside air and ventilation from louvers located on each side of the window. The actual vent for the mechanical unit will be behind the wall. It's meant to feel and look like part of the window system.
- The staff memo mentioned the wall packs. Wall packs are not allowed on street facing façades. Is there a way you can provide more clarity as to how those are integrated?
  - We have to recess it within the wall, waterproof it and put the window system in front. The mullion will frame the entire opening, infilled with glazing, light and the louver. It will be the same color aluminum louver as the window frame and mullion.
- Because this is in the TOD, even though you screened the parking, how does that fit into what is allowed?
  - One thing that would be allowed is, if we pulled the building back along Hill Farms Place, the parking where it is; we don't feel that is a good urban design for the development. We rotated the parking, cut it in half, and provided the architectural element between the street and the building as a way of providing that architectural façade. That's what we were able to do with that. If we were able to pull the building back we'd have to add two floors to the building, which would change the construction type and economics. We didn't feel the solution was appropriate for the rest of the site.
- (Secretary) The TOD overlay says vehicle use areas like parking lots and garages, driveways, and loading areas are not allowed to be located between the primary street and the building frontage. Because the building is setback and oriented towards Hill Farms Place, that creates the current situation. This is a major alteration to a PD; they can ask for a modification to that TOD Overlay requirement, provided the UDC and Plan Commission can find that the standards for the PD are met. Our purview is UDD 6, with guidelines that generally speak to the location of parking facilities, they want those located at the side or rear of buildings. All four sides of this are bound by some sort of right-of-way; for the design in front of us tonight, the question is can we find this consistent with our guidelines relative to location of parking, designing with sensitivity to context, and the Urban Design District guidelines. Requirements shall be met, and guidelines shall be adhered to as closely as possible.
- It looks like from the floor plan that the front door might be the other street. How did Sheboygan get determined as the primary entrance?
  - (Secretary) Sheboygan is a higher street classification. Gardner was secondary. Their desire is to orient towards the open space. There is a secondary entrance oriented toward Sheboygan is designed similarly to the main entry of the building and is accessed the same way. The Zoning Administrator has determined that this could also be considered a primary entrance as well.
- Keeping on the zoning classifications, is this the right size for the parking lot? Can you help me understand what the parking for this use, but the whole general parking in the new development area, how that works together?
  - It does work together. As part of the GDP there is a detailed parking study and shared use study for the entire site. There have been tweaks along the way. The adjacent structure is about 600 parking stalls, with 500 additional stalls for Whole Foods and Block 2 residential. There is a shared parking agreement for guests, which is primarily in the evening.
  - We need the surface parking for employees. They don't have any extra daytime parking because of the office and residential. There's no extra parking with the Whole Foods and residential portion of the development.
- The TOD came after the GDP?

- Yes.
- We have to find appropriateness of the site plan with UDD 6, appropriateness of the screening and landscaping. The Plan Commission is looking for an advisory recommendation if an exception to the overlay should be granted specifically for this development. We also need to make appropriateness findings for building design, wall packs, the lighting, the landscaping/screening and the materials.
- Our concern with the fiber cement panel, so often we see that flush with windows. I don't see any detailed information on how that will be handled.
  - We are wood framed above a concrete podium. This does result in a pretty flat exterior relief to the fiber cement. We haven't detailed the window jambs at this point. There are things we could do with how we attach it, I was thinking about the detailing of the joints within the field. We have a color match extrusion that captures all four sides. We would be looking at getting fasteners as well, that would create a higher look to those fiber cement panels.
- I would suggest incorporating the use of a wide trim piece around the window surrounds to break up that transition and give the illusion of depth and shadow line, if it doesn't exist in reality.
- On the presentation you had a material sheet that did not have the burnished block. This is brick #2 on the elevations, and that matches the screen wall?
  - Correct and it's meant to blend with the metal panel. We do use burnished block as a base material for more durability. Anywhere it goes vertical above that one-foot grade is only used at the dark panel. We do use some as the base course below materials on the street side, underneath the metal panel it is only a base course of 12-inches.
- What will the wall look like from the parking lot side?
  - It will be double sided burnished.
- On the west side of the building; in the black metal panel there is variation there, is something else is going on or is that the PDF?
  - There is not, that is a result of reducing the PDF.
- I think this is your toughest façade.

A motion was made by Von Below, seconded by Klehr, for Referral.

Discussion on the motion:

- We've seen this before, this isn't the first time. Why referral when it looks like, based on the list, a lot of the things have been addressed. It's difficult to have a backside of the building with parking, it's difficult to have a hotel when you can't have blank façades. It seems like an attempt was made. Is referral the answer or are some conditions appropriate?
- Maybe. I made a motion so we could have a conversation. I do find the west façade troubling, that is a lot of blank wall both in the dark metal panel, although texture could make it more promising. I also feel like the parking is better, I appreciate the screen wall. The design of the wall doesn't feel finalized yet, it is resulting from where your parking stalls lay out, it doesn't align with anything in plan of the building, and I'm not sure about the height. I'm okay with the wall packs after hearing the detailing of that. Lighting levels should be addressed. Overall it's a good mix of materials that read really gray.
- With regard to the west elevation, the Commission should know that the two planes of that west elevation are not aligned. This is what we're going to see versus a flat elevation with a lot of blank wall space on it. Referral without initial approval would preclude them from moving on to the Plan Commission. It usually means there are significant problems with the building massing, height, etc.
- The corner screen wall around the parking is too tall, it needs to be at least two-feet lower, or the material has to be different so that you can see through it.
- There's a handful of sun loving prairie type plants on the north side of the building that should be revisited.

- On the west elevation in the northwest corner against the darker burnished block there's a wider landscape space with sea green juniper, those don't get that large, you could pick something more vertical. Otherwise I commend you for taking advantage of the shared use parking agreement, that's great urban design. You're in a tricky spot trying to find some employee parking stalls.
- I am appreciating the comments about materials and the wall datum. The louvers were explained, I agree it's very gray. I feel pretty strongly that this project's front faces not the major street as determined by the Zoning Administrator, but this lovely greenspace. Sheboygan is in some ways arbitrary. When I look at the UDD guidelines, parking areas shall be located to the rear or the side rather than the front. This isn't the front of the building. I think we need to acknowledge and make a finding that even though it is in the TOD, it's not the front of the building.
- To further your argument, I think the parking on Sheboygan is off to the side of it. There's a significant amount of greenspace where they could have tried to cram in more parking. To have 12 screened stalls incorporated into the loading area I think is a fairly responsible and restrained request for the site.

The motion failed on a roll call vote of (0-5-1-1) with Rummel, Asad, Harper, Bernau, and Klehr voting no; Von Below abstaining; and Goodhart non-voting.

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Rummel, for Initial Approval with findings and conditions.

Discussion on the motion:

- Does the wording for approving and advisory need to be rolled into this?
- The Plan Commission is looking for a motion on the TOD overlay.
- We all understand the idea of not wanting parking lots to be between the building and major streets, but we can all see this is not that. It's more to the side, they've downsized it and screened it. Nobody has mentioned the large greenspace next to it; how often do you see sweeping lawn in front of a hotel? From an urban design aesthetic this is a nice outcome. There could be some tweaks but to me the parking lot is not on the street.
- Staff recommended we include lighting as part of the formal action.

## UDC Initial Approval Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Rummel, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED INITIAL APPROVAL** with the following conditions and finding:

- The request return to the UDC for Final Approval.
- The UDC finds that the VTAC units as described/designed are acceptable.
- The UDC finds that the proposed surface parking lot as designed and screened is appropriate.
- The screen wall shall be at lower in height and the materiality needs to be modified to be more open/permeable. The wall shall be designed with materials consistent with the building materials, including burnished block and faux wood fins. The wall location shall align with the building in plan view and datum.
- The sun-loving, prairie style plants on the north side of the building shall be replaced with a more shade tolerant selection.
- On the west elevation, northwest corner, the sea green juniper, should be replaced with something more vertical.
- Tree plantings located at the screen wall and between the loading area and the public lawn shall be at least a 2.5" caliper.

- Provide details on material transitions between the metal panel and fiber cement. Consideration should be given to incorporating treatments that provide more relief between the fiber cement and metal panel, including providing a wide trim piece around the window surround to break-up the transition.
- Lighting shall be revised to be consistent with MGO 29.36.
- Revise the west elevation to incorporate design details or material textures that break-up/minimize the blank expanses on the elevation.

The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).