# PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

**August 28, 2024**

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** **1202 S Park Street**

**Application Type:** New Mixed-Use Building in Urban Design District (UDD) 7
UDC is an Approving Body

**Legistar File ID #:** 81072

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

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Ross Treichel, Sketchworks Architecture

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing a five-story, mixed-use building with 44 residential units, office space and amenity spaces, including fitness room and rooftop patio. The site will be served by 17 tuck-under parking.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The site is located in Urban Design District 7 ("UDD 7"), 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(14).

**Adopted Plans:** The City's adopted Comprehensive Plan recommends the project site for Regional Mixed Use development, which includes existing and planned high-intensity centers supporting a variety of multifamily housing options and commercial activity serving the needs of the region. The Comprehensive Plan includes several design-related considerations, including buildings being placed close the sidewalk or street, providing pedestrian amenities, such as decorative paving, lighting, plazas, benches and landscaping, locating parking behind or under buildings.

The project site is also located within the South Madison Neighborhood Plan (the "Plan") planning area. While the Plan does not include specific recommendations for the project site, its general goals and objectives would apply including those that speak to increasing housing choice, supporting organizations addressing housing issues, and improving pedestrian and bicycle networks.

The project site is also located in the Wingra Creek BUILD planning area. As noted in the BUILD Conceptual Land Use Plan indicates the project site for commercial/mixed-use.

Finally, the project site is located in the Bay Creek Neighborhood Plan planning area. While this plan has not been updated since its adoption in 1991, it does outline six primary recommendations for action, including improving the image and visual quality of the neighborhood by emphasizing landscape amenities, enhance environmental and recreational resources, better meet the needs of the elderly, attract and retain businesses, maintain housing conditions, and improve traffic and safety, including improving pedestrian safety on S Park Street.

**Zoning Related Information:** The project site is zoned Commercial Corridor-Transitional (CC-T). As a reference, the design related zoning standards outlined in the CC-T zone districts 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. Staff notes that, while the UDC generally reviews proposals for consistency with these requirements, ultimately the Zoning Administrator will determine compliance with the zoning requirements.

## Summary of Design Considerations

Staff requests that the UDC review the development proposal, provide feedback and make findings regarding the aforementioned standards related to the items noted below.

- **Building Setbacks and Orientation.** UDD 7 Building Setback and Orientation guidelines and requirements generally speak to encouraging new development to exhibit a positive orientation to the to the street with setbacks ranging from one to ten feet, creating an enhanced pedestrian environment with ample sidewalk width of at least eight feet, incorporating amenities (i.e. landscape, terrace, alternate paving, bike/bus amenities, seating, lighting, primary entrances facing the street, etc.) that will enhance the pedestrian and visual character of the street, etc.

  The project site is a through-lot with frontage on two streets, High and S Park Streets. As such, consideration should be given to the design and detailing of the building entries on both street frontages.

  Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings on the overall building setbacks and orientation on both street frontages.

- **Building Height.** The proposed building is five stories, with a roughly 15-foot stepback at the fifth floor. UDD 7 requires a minimum two-story building height. UDD 7 also includes other height-related guidelines, including generally limiting building height to four stories, with up to two bonus stories being allowed *"…depending on the design and the affect of the development on adjoining neighborhood and contribution of the project to the mix and activity in the vicinity, and the character of the street."* UDD 7 guidelines notes that the bonus stories should be used as an incentive for creativity in design.

  In addition, the guidelines also recommend a 15 foot-stepback at the third floor, though several recent buildings have more commonly had stepbacks at the fourth floor. Staff believes there is flexibility in the application of these recommendations, providing that the resulting design is consistent with the intent of the guidelines, including as it relates to designing with a sensitivity to context and incorporating a higher quality of design.

  Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings on the overall height and massing.

- **Building Design and Composition.** The proposed development will be highly visible; the project site has frontages on two streets in addition to being located along a major transit corridor. The proposed development will be one of the tallest buildings in the area. As such, consideration should be given to the design and detailing of both street frontages, as well as the visible long views within the corridor and integration or screening of rooftop appurtenances into the overall building design.

  UDD 7 building design-related guidelines and requirements generally speak to a providing a consistent level of design on all visible sides of the building, limiting blank walls, especially on highly visible and primary façades, providing richer architectural detailing at the ground floor, designing entrances to be the focal point of the façades, screening mechanical equipment with materials that are complementary to the building design/material palette, incorporating articulation in the use of material and color variations, and creating visual distinction between the upper and lower floors of the building.

  In addition, UDD 7 requirements state that, "*The ground floor of office and other non-retail building shall have at least 40 percent of the street wall devoted to windows.*" As noted in the applicant's Letter of Intent, the ground floor glazing **does not** meet this requirement at 37 percent.

In summary, and generally, the UDC's Informational Presentation building design-related comments were focused on incorporating more dynamic transitions in materials and colors to emphasize articulation, incorporating a richer level of design elements at the pedestrian level, including color and texture, as well as the overall integration of patio doors and railings, as well as the stair tower overruns and the bus shelter into the overall building design and composition.

In addition, given the design changes that have occurred since the Informational Presentation, especially the High Street elevation and the enclosure of the parking, consideration should be given to the design and detailing of this elevation as a secondary front versus a true back door, including as it relates to blank walls, and multiple building entries and garage door.

Staff requests the UDC review and findings on the overall building design and composition.

- **Materials**. As noted on the plans the materials palette is comprised of Nichiha architectural block, masonry and vertical composite siding (NuCedar cellular PVC product). As noted in the UDD 7 Materials and Colors requirements state that, "*Exterior materials shall be durable, high-quality materials and appropriate for external use*." In addition, the guidelines generally speak to brick, stone and terra cotta being the preferred primarily materials, utilizing complementary colors to design style and context.

  Staff requests the UDC's feedback and findings on the building material palette, especially as it relates to the NuCedar cellular PVC product.

- **Wall Packs/HVAC Louvers.** While wall pack units or louvers are not indicated on the elevation drawings, they are commonly associated with residential uses. While it has been the current practice to locate wall packs so that louvers are not on street-facing or highly visible facades, they have been approved in some cases when found to be well integrated into the façade's design, including the use of perforated metal panels to screen louvers or utilizing a louver system that is consistent with the window opening size. Staff requests the UDC's feedback on the use of wall pack systems and potential design-related considerations.

- **Landscaping and Screening.** UDD 7 guidelines and requirements generally speak to screening parking and service uses, providing buffers and separation between uses, as well as providing well-landscaped outdoor spaces, etc. While the site plan only reflects small landscape areas at grade and a rooftop patio area, consideration should be given to the design details of these areas with regard to softening hard surfaces and minimizing blank walls, providing year-round screening and texture, minimizing impervious surfaces, etc.

  In summary, and generally, the UDC's Informational Presentation landscape related comments focused on incorporating upright vertical plantings in certain areas to screen and soften blank walls, including those on the west and north elevations, as well as providing interest along pedestrian pathways.

  Staff notes a few inconsistencies in the plans with regard to landscape and site amenities, including:

  - A wood privacy fence detail is provided in the Site Details, however a fence is not shown on the Annotated Site Plan nor Landscape Plan.
  - As noted in the plans, a retaining wall is proposed on the shared southern property line. The Annotated Site Plan indicates that this wall is a split block wall, however a wall detail was not provided.
  - The Landscape Material Notes indicate that shredded hardwood bark mulch will be planted in those areas labeled as such on the plan, however the only mulch areas labeled are those that will receive decorative stone mulch.

Staff recommends the UDC address these items in their formal motion/conditions.

- **Site Planning Considerations – Multi-Use Path and Above Ground Utilities.** As noted on the site plan there is a five to six-foot multi-use path located on the south side of the project site, intended to provide a public connection between High Street and South Park, near the Olin Avenue Intersection. As proposed, the path primarily runs along a blank wall and is interrupted by an outward swinging door from the stair tower. Consideration should be given to relocating this path to the north side of the site, where there is more than seven feet of clear space, as well as architectural interest that would provide better "eyes on the street." In conferring with Traffic Engineering staff, this seems like a potentially viable option, though several details would need to be confirmed beyond the UDC before such a change occurred.

  In addition, there is an above-ground utility box (MG&E transformer) location in the front yard along S Park Street, which the building appears to have been designed around. Staff notes that the UDC nor the City has the ability to relocate that utility and at the time of report writing, staff is not aware of whether MG&E would support an alternate location. If an alternative location is possible, this could provide opportunities for other improvements.

## Summary of Informational Presentation Comments

As a reference, the Commission's comments from the December 13, 2023, Informational Presentation are provided below.

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

- Could you explain where building articulation occurs?
  - East elevation articulation stays at the fourth floor with a mild stepback to a dark gray vertical element, there is a stepback at the third floor to the white façade. On the back we alternate between 2-15 feet.
- This is Informational, as you progress your design you will need to have renderings. It's hard to understand your ideas in elevations. These are varying concepts? This pitched roof element is not in every concept, correct, but it is basically the same height?
  - We have to study them all, but the pitched one is basically the same height.
- On Park Street, a lot of the architecture is very flat. As you look at long view or context, you see a lot of buildings that are somewhat coplanar with not a lot of articulation or undulation or push 'n pull. That is a missed opportunity for some of these smaller multi-family units. There could be more dynamic material changes, as well as different varying planes to help celebrate the architecture. This could benefit from that, so we don't have planes of single colors that are either coplanar or very close to being coplanar as the design progresses. Years ago we looked at a building further north or east on Park Street that had a pitched roof that did not go over very well. I will rethink the pitched roof concept and probably something a little bit more flat or with a parapet is more appropriate for this level of design. Four different pitches doesn't work at this scale. Look at that.
- Am I reading this right that the balcony doors, the head height on those is not matching window heights, is that on purpose?
  - The doors are a typical 7' and the windows are at 8'6." We were trying to maximum bringing natural light into the rooms as far back as we can without over-enlarging the window itself.
- Some of the moves make sense, where you enter the site with parking from the west side. I would encourage you to go further with color. There are touches of color, but overall the palette, especially at the pedestrian level, is not as exciting as where you have patterns of color. I would encourage you to go stronger on color.

The Commission discussed the following:

- I would agree with the comments on color. I think the introduction of color is fun and I like it, but it would be important to carry it down to the pedestrian level where people by car, waking, or biking will get to experience it more. I kind of like the first concept the best, that datum is kind of held by the windows and doors, the color brings them to the same datum, there was more of a clean organization with this one, plus the colors. If you could pull that color down to the base plinth, even better. There is something kind of funky with a touch of a historical nod in that last one with the pitched roofs. I could maybe get on board with that too. Otherwise, I would say when you come back, I would be looking for what's happening with the street trees on Park Street, that street frontage would be great and it's a common thread with all these Park Street projects, thinking about an improvement to the pedestrian environment and improving that environment, including bike parking, street trees, just adequate space for pedestrians. If there are any other bike parking areas outside of the building, just seeing how that works.
- I'm definitely pro-color, this particular one doesn't really work for me as much as the colors around the windows in the first and second variations that were shown. I agree, pulling those colors down and somehow finding ways to incorporate them on the ground floor would be good. Especially because the applicant alluded to it, but the idea of color going along with the stated purpose of this housing for transitional young adults coming out of foster care, I mean you know you're moving on to bigger and better things in your life hopefully, and you know, living in a place that has some fun exciting color I think is an expression of those goals and ideals and that kind of resonates with me. Don't be shy about the color. As far as landscaping goes, you have tentative plantings in the wider green areas on the west side of the building towards High Street. If those narrow strips along the building allow it and I think they do, you could break up those long views there with some really narrow columnar evergreens, pencil point junipers and the really narrow arborvitaes, not like emerald or techny but north pole or degroot spire, there's even columnar rose of sharons that only get three feet wide if you wanted a flowering shrub, so there's things that could go along there to add greenery and color and also break up those long kind of boring ground level north and south sides of the building. I don't have strong feelings about the gabled roofs, but it seems like if solar panels on the roof are part of that, it seems like that could be worked out with flat roofs as well. I would lean more toward the flat roof expressions.
- I wanted to call out the stair towers, pay some more attention to them. They're kind of facing the street and seem plain, maybe they could be something else. I think Christian's point about the pitched roof for solar is the only reason I can think you would do it. Otherwise, it will just collect snow, it doesn't seem to go with this multi-family more urban style, a pitched roof seems more suburban in a way. Own your urban-ness and consider that.
- I would encourage the applicant to think about what's happening at the pedestrian level. There are quite a few sections that have blank walls in some of these schemes, please take a look at that.
- This also relates to the ground level and what Alder Rummel said about the stair tower, pay close attention to the integration of that bus shelter. That could be a really nice element or it could be just a place to collect used newspapers. Something to really focus on because I think it will be well used. I think the pitched roofs add some visual interest, especially if you're going to start integrating color. Don't be timid if you're going to use color like everybody else. Where you have small modular vertical siding versus big squares, the smaller the module you can break that cement board siding down it will give it a more residential scale. Not that is has to look like board and batten or be oriented a certain way, but the smaller modular really help especially if you're considering the use of those extruded metal reveal joints. Those French balconies can look really cheap and tacked on if they're not done right, we'll be looking at how you integrate the railings with the patio doors there. If you could just have operable windows there it might be a bit cleaner.
- To your point about the pitched cap, I think it looks weird when it's all in the same plane. If they were staggered, color and materials that weren't just a solid white. If there was some interest or more design elements to those, it could be a little bit more successful. When it's all in the same plane it almost looks

fake. The roof is a really thin profile, giving it some more detail could work. It definitely has to contrast what's going on below it.

- If they pushed in and out even a few feet that could be dynamic or if one went out and another went out in a series, it could look really cool as you look down Park Street.

## 28.060 GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR MIXED-USE AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS.

(1) Statement of Purpose .

Mixed-use and commercial districts are established to provide a range of district types, from the small neighborhood center to regional-level retail centers, while fostering high-quality building and site design and pedestrian, bicycle and transit as well as automobile circulation.

(2) Design Standards. The following design standards are applicable after the effective date of this code to all new buildings and major expansions (fifty percent (50%) or more of building floor area). Design standards shall apply only to the portion of the building or site that is undergoing alteration.

Figure D1: Entrance Orientation

(a) Entrance Orientation (See Figure D1). All new buildings shall have a functional entrance oriented to an abutting public street. Additional entrances may be oriented to a private street or parking area. For buildings with multiple non-residential tenants, a minimum of one (1) tenant space shall have a functional entrance oriented towards an abutting public street. Other tenant spaces shall be connected to the public street with a private sidewalk connection. 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. Barrier-free entrances are encouraged. (Am. by ORD-13-00113, 6-26-13)

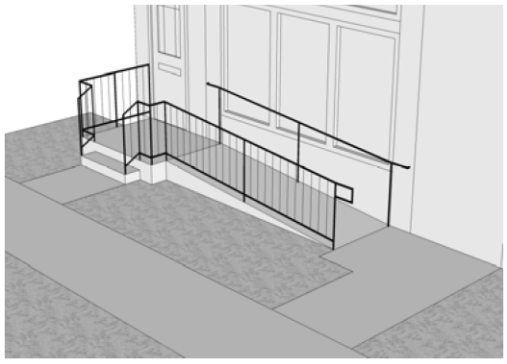

Figure D2: Barrier-Free Entrance Example

(b) Facade Articulation. Consistent with the design of traditional storefront buildings, new buildings of more than forty (40) feet in width shall be divided into smaller increments, through articulation of the facade. This can be achieved through combinations of including but not limited to the following:

1. Facade Modulation (See Figure D3) . Stepping back or extending forward a portion of the facade.
2. Vertical divisions using different textures or materials (although materials shall be drawn from a common palette).
3. Division into storefronts, with separate display windows and entrances.

Figure D3: Facade Modulation

4. Variation in roof lines by alternating dormers, stepped roofs, gables, or other roof elements to reinforce the modulation or articulation interval (See Figure D4).

5. Arcades, awnings, and window bays at intervals equal to the articulation interval.

(c) Design of Street-Facing Facades.

No blank walls shall be permitted to face the public street, sidewalks, or other public spaces such as plazas. Elements such as windows, doors, columns, changes in material, and similar details shall be used to add visual interest.

Figure D4: Variation in Roof Lines

(d) Door and/or Window Openings. For nonresidential uses at ground floor level, windows and doors or other openings shall comprise at least sixty percent (60%) of the length and at least forty percent (40%) of the area of the ground floor of the primary street facade. At least fifty percent (50%) of windows on the primary street facade shall have the lower sill within three (3) feet of grade.

For residential uses at ground level, a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the ground level of residential facades or side and rear facades not fronting a public street shall consist of windows and door openings. On upper stories, window or balcony openings shall occupy a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of the upper-story wall area.

1. Glass on windows and doors shall be clear or slightly tinted, allowing views into and out of the interior. Spandrel glass that mimics the appearance of windows may be used for up to twenty percent (20%) of the required area of the openings. (Am. by ORD-13-00205, 12-10-13)

2. Displays may be placed within windows. Equipment within buildings shall be placed a minimum of five (5) feet behind windows. To preserve views, within three (3) feet of any window, not more than thirty percent (30%) of the view through the windows shall be blocked by merchandise, displays, shelving, or other obstructions.

3. Window shape, size and patterns shall emphasize the intended organization of the facade and the definition of the building.

(e) Equipment and Service Area Screening. If an outdoor storage, service or loading area is visible from adjacent residential uses or an abutting public street or public walkway, it shall be screened by a

decorative fence, wall or screen of plant material at least six (6) feet in height. Fences and walls shall be architecturally compatible with the primary structure.

(f) Screening of Rooftop Equipment. 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.

1. 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.

    a. Screens shall be of durable, permanent materials (not including wood) that are compatible with the primary building materials.

    b. Screening shall be constructed to a height of at least one (1) foot above the height of the equipment.

2. Exterior mechanical equipment such as ductwork shall not be located on primary building facades.

(g) Materials . Nonresidential or mixed-use buildings shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials such as brick, stone, textured cast stone, or tinted masonry units. Table 28D-1 below lists allowable building materials. When applying these requirements, consideration shall be given to the use, amount, placement and relationship of each material as part of a comprehensive palette of building materials. All building facades visible from a public street or public walkway should employ materials and design features similar to or complementary to those of the front facade.

**Table 28D-1.**

| | **Allowable for use as/at:** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **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 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Fiber-Cement Siding/Panels | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Concrete Panels, Tilt-up or Precast | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | B |
| EIFS/Synthetic Stucco | ✓ | ✓ | | | C |
| Stone/Stone Veneer | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Metal Panels | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | D |
| Hand-Laid Stucco | ✓ | ✓ | | | C |
| Vinyl Siding | ✓ | | | | E |
| Glass Curtain Wall System | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Reflective Glass/Spandrel | ✓ | | | | F |
| Glass (Storefront) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

A - Shall be used in conjunction with a palette of materials and shall not comprise more than 33% of any building wall adjacent to a public street or walkway.

B - 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.

C - Shall not be within three feet of the ground or used in heavily trafficked pedestrian areas or where high pedestrian traffic is anticipated.

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

E - Shall be used in limited quantities due to its limited durability.

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

Figure D5: Compatibility with Traditional Buildings

(h) Compatibility with Traditional Buildings . (See Figure D5.) New development shall relate to the design of traditional buildings adjacent to the site, where present, in scale and character. This can be achieved by maintaining similar, facade divisions, roof lines, rhythm and proportions of openings, building materials and colors. Historic architectural styles need not be replicated.

Figure D6: Building Alignment

(i) Building Alignment . (See Figure D6.) Buildings shall be aligned with facades parallel with the street to create a well-defined street edge.

(j) Building Articulation . (See Figure D7.) Buildings shall have horizontal and vertical articulation, which may include dormers, cornice detailing, recesses and projections, stepbacks of upper stories, changes in roof types and planes, building materials, and window patterns. The base of the building shall relate to the human scale, including doors and windows, texture, projections, awnings, canopies, and similar features.

Figure D7: Building Articulation

(k) Ground-Floor Residential Uses . (See Figure D8.) Ground-floor residential uses fronting a public street or walkway, where present, shall be separated from the street by landscaping, steps, porches, grade changes, and low ornamental fences or walls in order to create a private yard area between the sidewalk and the front door.

Figure D8: Ground Floor Residential Uses