



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 4525 Secret Garden Drive (District 16- Ald. DeMarb)
Application Type: Rezoning and Conditional Use
Legistar File ID # [36751](#), [37226](#), and [39300](#)
Prepared By: Kevin Firchow, AICP, Planning Division
Report Includes Comments from other City Agencies, as noted
Reviewed By: Jay Wendt, Principal Planner
Katherine Cornwell, Planning Division Director

The following summary report has been prepared for the consideration of the Urban Design Commission (UDC) for their meeting of August 12, 2015. This proposal was last at the UDC for an informational presentation on June 10, 2015. A full report will prepared prior to the Plan Commission consideration of this item.

There are two requests included with this proposal. The applicant first requests approval to rezone the subject property from SR-V2 (Suburban Residential-Varied 2 District) to TR-P (Traditional Residential-Planned District). The second request is for a conditional use for a residential building complex. The purpose of this request is to establish a residential building complex with 16-buildings, 113 Units, and 246 bedrooms. The site includes 182 covered parking stalls and 70 surface parking stalls.

While the applicant could develop a more conventional residential building complex under the existing SR-V2 zoning, the Zoning Administrator determined that the proposed development was not consistent with allowable building forms and street-orientation requirements of that district.

Approval Standards

This request is subject to the approval standards for Zoning Map Amendments [MGO 28.182], Conditional Uses [MGO 28.183] and TR-P District Standards [MGO 28.053]. As a residential building complex, review by the Urban Design Commission is also required [MGO 33.24(4)(c)]. That section states that the Urban Design Commission is to review the exterior design and appearance of all principal buildings or structures and the landscape plans of all proposed residential building complexes. It shall report its findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission.

Background

The subject property is a 12.84 acre site. The property includes two significant development constraints. The first is a 50-foot wide underground gas line that runs along Catalina Parkway. The second is a 40-foot wide electrical easement with overhead utility line that runs across the middle-rear section of the property.

The lot was created with the approval of the "Secret Places at Sigglekow Preserve" Plat, in 2004. At that time, the site was zoned R4-General Residence District. That district allowed for multi-family development and residential building complexes. The site was zoned to the SR-V2 (Suburban Residential-Varied 2) district as part of the city-wide re-write process. That district was the most similar zoning district among the new districts to replace the previous R4 district.

Summary of Design-Related Comments

This request is the applicant's second formal land use submittal. The new site plan is largely organized around a central green and includes private driveways that have some street-like characteristics. The following is a summary of **design-related** items for consideration by the Urban Design Commission for the August 12 meeting:

- **Site Plan.** While the organization of the site plan is improved, there is a significant amount of pavement required to serve a 16-building development with individual garages. Most of this pavement takes the form of private drives and parking areas. From a pedestrian circulation standpoint, it is not clear if the applicant intends to install curbs along the private drives, which would be desirable and would greatly enhance the pedestrian realm. Staff questions the desirability of the units near the rear of the site that are within close proximity to the overhead utility line. The applicant should also verify that the depicted encroachments within that easement are permissible.
- **Building Forms.** The applicant seeks to construct nine (9) stacked flat buildings throughout the site. This is an atypical development considering other recent larger apartment complex development in Madison. Typically buildings are of a more urban character. One concern is that with the side-loaded orientation, the buildings don't contain a consistent rhythm of openings and porches, more typical of row house or even typical apartment buildings that front on streets.
- **Parking Courts.** Another concern is that most buildings include one or two-car attached garages accessed by a series of paved parking courts. As proposed, this building form creates the need for a significant amount of paved surface to access individual garages, compared to other more typical multi-family forms. While not designated as parking stalls, Planning and Zoning staff are concerned that automobiles will park in the courts, effectively creating a series of small parking lots throughout the development.
- **Phasing Clarification.** The applicant should clarify the phasing plan.
- **Lack of Amenities.** This item relates both to use and design. While the calculated density is about 9 dwelling units per acre, there are 246 bedrooms. This includes 28 three-bedroom units. This is a large number of units that are typically utilized by families. As proposed, there is no apparent programming or site improvements proposed to support families. The site lacks playground or tot-lot facilities and does not include any shared common amenities such as pools or other shared community rooms or facilities. There are opportunities to introduce this within the existing open space network and possibly a need to create additional open spaces on the site.
- **Landscape Plan.** In addition to lacking some programming, staff believes the landscape plan is insufficient. Most of the stacked flat buildings have no more than a narrow band with a single-row of plantings closest to Catalina Parkway. Other buildings have significantly less planting. Plantings and other amenities such as seating areas should be provided.
- **Exterior Materials.** The Planning Division is concerned with large amount of vinyl siding used on buildings within this development. The UDC previously raised several concerns on its appearance and durability. While there is not a zoning code prohibition on this material for residential uses, the Plan Commission must find that the project creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability. While surrounding single-family homes are largely clad in vinyl, both the stacked flat and townhouse style these buildings are significantly larger structures with large vinyl fields. As proposed, the buildings have only minimal masonry base treatments in addition to large fields of vinyl siding.

Conclusion

Despite an improved site plan, the Planning Division does not support the project in its current form and does not believe it meets all of the applicable review standards. Staff continues to have questions about the development's long-term desirability and believes that significant changes are needed. Several design-related concerns are noted in this report including the site inefficiencies of a 16-building development and the extensive use of the suburban-style stacked flat units. Other significant concerns include the lack of site and building amenities to support the number and types of units proposed. The Planning Division does not believe that the project "creates an environment of sustained aesthetic desirability compatible with the existing or intended character of the area and the statement of purpose for the zoning district." Such a finding is among the required findings that the Plan Commission must make in order to approve the conditional use for this item. While the project can likely meet the more flexible bulk standards allowed for TR-P Districts, the Planning Division also has significant questions on whether the proposed project meets the stated intent and goals of the TR-P District, which is to encourage the development of new traditional neighborhoods that incorporate the characteristics of traditional neighborhoods.

At this time, the Planning Division would recommend the UDC refer this item for the applicant to address the concerns summarized in this report. A motion to refer should specify items the UDC wishes the applicant to address.