



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 8102 Watts Rd. (District 9 – Ald. Skidmore)
Application Type: Final Approval
Legistar File ID # [43729](#), [44815](#), and [44733](#)
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The applicant is requesting FINAL APPROVAL of a PD-GDP amendment and a new PD-SIP for the construction of a four-story hotel with 106 guest rooms on a vacant lot in the Ganser Heights Planned Development.

Pursuant to Section 33.24(4)(c), MGO, the Urban Design Commission (UDC) shall review the design of all proposed developments that are considered planned developments, and shall report its findings and recommendations to the Plan Commission and Common Council.

Project Statistics

Site Area: 1.75-acre site
Zoning: Planned Development (PD-GDP)
Comp. Plan: General Commercial (GC)

Development Proposal

-Four-stories, hotel use with 106 rooms
-Surface parking lot (100 spaces total)
-On site amenities include an at-grade patio located on the north side of the site, indoor fitness and lounge areas

Key Issues:

The following design related key issues have been identified. Staff requests that UDC address the following items in their comments and recommendation. As proposed, Planning Division staff does not believe that the development proposal meets Planned Development Standard (e) which requires the PD District plan coordinate architectural styles and building forms to achieve greater compatibility with the existing or intended character of the area, the following key issues need to be addressed.

- **Street Orientation.** The project site, located along Watts Road (public right-of-way), a private internal access drive (Homewood Way), and with visibility from the W Beltline Highway, is highly visible. Consideration should be given to the creating a building design and orientation on the project site that addresses both of the site frontages, especially the Watts Road frontage, that activates the pedestrian environment, and that maintains a positive building relationship with the street.

The Watts Road frontage on the south side of the project site is the primary street frontage and adjacent public right-of-way however the proposed building and site design are internally oriented to the site addressing the parking lot, leaving the street frontage void or building mass and activity. Additional site amenities are located at the northeast corner of the project site along the internal access driveway focusing the activity on the northeastern portion of the project site.

Also, as indicated on the building elevations and site plan, the proposed building elevation along Watts Road would be considered a tertiary building entrance that really serves more as a 'building end' given the lack of activity in the elevation and floor plan, and with the location of the trash enclosure along the street. As indicated on the floor plans currently a stairwell and hotel rooms line this wall.

The Watts Road frontage is the primary frontage and consideration should be given to orienting the building to better address the street and activating the pedestrian environment, including:

- Reorienting the building and/or site amenities to provide a site layout and building that is better oriented towards the street, including locating the building mass closer to the street, providing an at-

grade entry that is more directly accessible from the sidewalk along Watts Road, providing additional glazing on the street facing facades, pulling the site amenities located on the north end of the building, along the internal access drive, through the site to the Watts Road frontage.

- Reconfiguring the floor plans to locate an active entry or uses (fitness center, lobby, dining, lounge areas) along the Watts Road frontage at the first floor.
- Providing of a more commercial corner design with storefront windows to better address the primary street frontage.
- Utilizing a building entry design that clearly emphasizes the building entrance at this location, including awnings, landscaping, amenities, glazing, etc.
- Providing additional glazing in the stairwell, reorienting the hotel room configuration to relocate the bed headboards to another wall, and/or providing windows in the bathrooms.

- **Building Design.**

- As shown on the building elevations EIFS is the more predominant material, the front façade is primarily clad in EIFS, which is typically utilized more as an accent material. In conventional zoning districts EIFS is only allowed as an accent material or located at the top of buildings. Though this site is zoned PD, consideration should be given to creating a more unified building in appearance by applying the building materials more equitably and consistently on all four facades of the building.
- The HVAC utilities for each hotel room are located below the window openings for each room. Consideration should be given to pursuing a design alternative that provides for better integration of the HVAC louvers and grates into the overall building elevation, window openings and with the building materials.

- **Site Landscaping.** Given the highly visible nature of the project site with two frontages, one along Watts Road and one along a private access drive (Homewood Way) and with a streetscape already existing along both frontages, consideration should be given to maintaining consistency with the existing landscape in terms of design and species, and providing additional screening, especially for 'back-of-house' operations located along Watts Road.

- While the project site is currently undeveloped, there is an existing streetscape that is already present along Watts Road on the site adjacent to the east (Princeton Club West). Consideration should be given to providing a streetscape that maintains consistency with the existing plantings and design. This would be consistent with the UDC comments provided at the Informational Presentation, August 17, 2016.
- In addition, as indicated on the site plan the trash enclosure, parking and utility box are all located along the Watts Road frontage. While staff fully supports and encourages the relocation of these amenities away from Watts Road, in the event that they cannot be relocated consideration should be given to providing an enhanced landscape design in this area to provide for additional, all year round screening (Planned Development standard (e) and Section 28.142, MGO).
- Providing interior parking lot landscaping that is consistent with Section 28.142, MGO, which requires that a landscape island be located at least every 12 contiguous stalls.