

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

November 30, 2016



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 301 Cross Oak Dr. (District 9 – Ald. Skidmore)

Application Type: Initial/Final Approval

Legistar File ID # [44467](#)

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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 multi-family residential building 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: 0.88-acre site

Zoning: Planned Development (PD-GDP)

Comprehensive Plan: Medium Density Residential

Pioneer Neighborhood Development Plan

Development Proposal

- Nine townhome units

- Garage (18 spaces) and surface parking (15 spaces total)

- Walk-up front porches and balconies for individual units

- Bioretention area

Key Issues:

The following design related key issues have been identified. Staff requests that UDC address the following items in their comments and recommendation.

- **Open Space.** Currently, the at-grade open space shown on the site plan is primarily comprised of the bioretention area located in the southwest corner of the project site. Consideration should be given to the overall integration of the pond area into the site and design in terms of providing a shared, passive at-grade open space amenity.
 - Consideration should be given to decreasing the overall number of visitor parking spaces or providing a mix of compact stalls could result in the creation of additional open space area that would accommodate a passive amenity (Planned Development Standard (f) suitable open space).

Note: On-street parking is available along Silicon Prairie Parkway.

- Consideration should also be given transitioning the surface parking lot as shown on the site plan to more an active shared space that provides an active recreation opportunity on the project site. Utilizing more of an alley to or woonerf-style street section (parallel or angled parking, decorative/demarcated paved areas) to create and encourage activity in the surface parking lot (Planned Development Standard (f) suitable open space).
- **Building Design.** Townhome-style residential development was anticipated in the original PD-GDP zoning text. The PD-GDP described the townhome residential district forms "...as medium density attached housing featuring both alley and street accessed garages." Permitted uses in this district are identified as townhome residential uses, detached, attached and underground parking. A minimum front yard setback is identified as ten feet.

- As shown on the site plan, the building front yard setbacks are in excess of 20 feet, which is more than twice the minimum requirement (ten feet). Coupled with front porches being accessed from multiple steps (at least ten), the unit entries are significantly removed from the street. Consideration should be given to bringing the building footprint closer to the street and altering the grade to provide entries that are closer to the street to maintain a building presence and active streetscape. Bringing the building entries closer to grade will also reduce the overall appearance in terms of mass and scale of the proposed building and reduce the blank wall expanses (Planned Development Standard (e) architectural styles and building forms).

Adjusting the grade will also provide the opportunity to provide underground parking consistent with the PD-GDP.

- Staff encourages and is supportive of regrading the site to bring the building entries closer to grade and reducing blank wall expanses. Recognizing that there will be limitations, consideration should also be given to enhancing the overall landscape treatment of the site both in terms of increasing the overall number plantings and diversification of species, and in softening the remaining blank wall expanses (Planned Development Standard (e) architectural styles and building forms).
- As shown on Sheet A3.2 the building material palette primarily consists of vinyl siding with a stone veneer building base, wood and metal accents. As shown on Sheets A3.2 and A3.1 the proposed building materials are not shown consistently. Consideration should be given to utilizing more authentic material palette or introducing an accent material as well as using materials to differentiate the townhome units and better provide building articulation (Planned Development Standard (e) architectural styles and building forms).
- Consideration should be given to utilizing a window fenestration pattern that is consistent throughout to create uniformity in the building design and maximizing natural light opportunities, especially for internally located units. Of special concern, as shown on the front (north) elevation, there are large blank exterior walls over the front entries within the staircases. Consideration should be given to providing larger or additional windows on the front elevation (Planned Development Standard (e) architectural styles and building forms).
- **Site Design.** The project site is located at the southeast corner of Silicon Prairie Parkway and Cross Oak Drive. As proposed, the project site has two points of access, one from Cross Oak Drive and one from the alley located on the south side of the project site. Given the unit accessibility with on-street parking along Silicon Prairie Parkway and the alley access consideration should be given to eliminating one of the site access points.
- **Staff Recommendation.** Planning Division staff recommends that the Urban Design Commission grant initial approval for mass and scale with the following modifications to be considered at the time of final approval:
 - Reducing the overall on-site parking to create additional open space opportunities;
 - Grading the site to bring the proposed building entries closer to grade and reducing blank wall expanses;
 - Incorporating additional windows on the north façade;
 - Utilizing a more authentic material palette or introducing accent materials to differentiate townhome units; and
 - Eliminating one of the site access points.