

## PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

July 1, 2020



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 8355 Mansion Hill Avenue  
(Previously seen as 3306 CTH M (Pleasant View Road) [58529](#))

**Application Type:** Residential Building Complex – Initial/Final Approval is Requested

**Legistar File ID #** [60816](#)

**Prepared By:** Janine Glaeser, UDC Secretary

### Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Robert McCaigue, Continental 479 Fund, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is seeking initial/final approval for a residential building complex with 300 units within 15 residential buildings, including a clubhouse and pool, car care area, pet wash station and exterior playground amenities.

**Project Schedule:**

- The UDC received informational presentations on December 11, 2019 and April 29, 2020.
- The Plan Commission is scheduled to review this proposal on July 27, 2020.
- The Common Council is scheduled to review this proposal on August 4, 2020.

**Approval Standards:**

The UDC is an **advisory body** on this request. Section 28.151 of the Zoning Code requires that Residential Building Complexes be reviewed by the Urban Design Commission pursuant to the provisions in Section 33.24(4)(c) which states: “The Urban Design Commission shall 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 City Plan Commission.”

### Summary of Design Considerations

The predominant recommended land use within the [High Point Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan](#) Planning Areas remains residential, with the plan specifically recommending “Housing Mix 3” and “Housing Mix 4” for the subject property. The former generally recommends a mix of duplexes through apartment buildings, generally up to three stories in height. The plan recommends that the overall density be approximately 20 dwelling units per acre (du/ac), but individual developments may have higher densities up to 40 du/ac. The latter recommends more intensive development up to four stories with an overall density up to 35 du/ac with individual developments up to 50 du/ac. The surrounding area includes recommendation for parks and open space, employment and mixed-use development.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Planning staff recommends that the UDC review the [High Point Raymond Neighborhood Development Plan](#), and provide comments related to the aforementioned standard that requires the UDC to review the exterior design and appearance of all principal buildings or structures and the landscape plans of all proposed residential building complexes.

Staff also recommends that the Commission provide comments regarding grades and retaining walls proposed, particularly for the portion of the site north of Mansion Hill Avenue and the pedestrian experience along both sides of Mica Road in terms of building orientation, wall heights, and landscaping.

**Planning staff refers the UDC to their comments from the April 29, 2020 meeting:**

- Concerns regarding the substantial grade changes and the solutions (extreme use of retaining walls and water retention ponds) seem really challenging both engineering-wise as well as aesthetically.
- Retaining walls still present huge safety and design issues. How is safety being handled? What are these huge walls (some 20' high and very long) being made of and is there any design, texture or green relief? These are *major* design elements.
- Provide plantings that would break up and soften the retaining walls, more trees along the main roads, and substantial landscaping around the ponds, particularly the two northernmost that are between buildings.
- It seems like this site might be an appropriate site for more natural landscaping – might give the site more of a sense of place. Could there be tall grasses that help cover retaining walls, or a more natural way to screen retaining walls or address slope changes?
- Consider variations in building exterior design between the buildings. Appears to be only one design with two color schemes. That lack of design variation seems destined to degrade quality of whole development quickly over time.
- Concerns regarding lack of variety and interest.
- Consider providing a car care/package delivery buildings on each side of Mansion Hill.
- Consider putting electric vehicle charging ports in these, particularly if the private garages aren't wired for that.
- How will detention ponds be treated? They look engineered, not naturally-shaped. Does water volume meet proposed new storm water standards? Since these ponds are now more numerous, they have become major landscape features so they need to be treated as such.
- Trash location on south side is very visible – how will it be treated architecturally?
- Pedestrian circulation seems limited to unit and club house access. There's no walking paths around ponds or the larger site. Granted, there will eventually be a park across the street, but some site foot circulation might also be nice.
- Regarding vehicles, the steep site grades make it hard to visualize exactly how asphalt-intensive this site will seem. From aerial view, it's still a lot. Are *four* access points to north part of site all necessary? Seems excessive.
- Very auto-centric layout.
- Site Plan appears heavily oriented to parking and cars. Will there be more pedestrian connection within the site to get to the pool and Clubhouse?
- Good vehicle circulation given the constraints of the topography. Some of the sidewalks seem to inexplicably stop on their way to connecting with Mica Rd. sidewalks.
- Design of the buildings doesn't respond to orientation or their relationship to retaining walls/views. Too many materials.
- Amenities are there but aren't thoughtfully located or interconnected.