



## CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

**TO:** REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**FROM:** TIM ACKLIN, PLANNING ADMINISTRATOR  
ANDREA TRANE, DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT:** DESIGN REVIEW FOR RIVER POINT DISTRICT  
RED EARTH DEVELOPMENT

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The following comments/feedback are provided for the following proposed developments in accordance with the design guidelines for River Point District:

- 1) 5-story building with 11,876sqft of commercial space, upper floor residential apartments, 35 enclosed parking stalls, an adjacent outdoor seating area, public restrooms, and 78 adjacent surface parking stalls
- 2) Townhomes. 18 townhomes.

#### **Compliance with General Development Plan:**

The proposed 5-story building is located in an area indicated as the Entertainment, Public Amenity, & Civic Zone and more specifically, K1 in the general development plan. It calls for approximately 13,000sqft of commercial space and a minimum requirement of 52 parking spaces. This zone is intended to consist of a series of areas that include public park areas for picnics, trails, wetlands, wildlife habitat, forested areas, and related natural features. Portions of the private land for entertainment & hospitality development also include natural features which blend and extend the visual impact of the public park promenade. A few key sites have been identified for retailers, restaurants, breweries, open-air pavilions, and public buildings for exhibits and events. The proposed commercial space is consistent with the development plan. The proposed residential is not.

The proposed townhomes are located in Zone E, which is indicated as Lower Mixed Density. This area has been identified for residential uses that supplement the housing core of the development while maintaining an urban feel. Housing proposed in this zone should consist of a mix of lower-density urban typologies including single-family townhomes and multi-tenant flats with some larger multi-family buildings to the east. The proposed townhomes are consistent with the development plan.

#### **Overall Analysis:**

##### **Townhomes:**

More detailed plans are needed to confirm building materials, setbacks, and other design elements but the overall architecture appears to meet the requirements of Zone E and design guidelines in the development plan.

## **5-Story Building**

Staff has the following comments:

- 1) Overall the design appears to meet the design guidelines in the development plan with the exception of height. Maximum height is three stories. This building is proposed at five.
- 2) Need a landscaping plan to show proposed landscaping and screening of the site. Staff recommends more screening around the surface parking lot.
- 3) Need final architectural plans to provide final determination on materials and architectural elements.

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**Additionally, more in-depth review is below. Keep in mind this is a preliminary review and not to be considered a final design review.**

## **General Guidelines for Building Design and Construction**

Buildings should identify with a cohesive and complimentary architectural character. A timeless design language that elevates the pedestrian, resident, and visitor experience is essential.

### **Building Facade**

#### ***Building Base***

*The base of a building facade anchors it to the ground and is the closest interface between the pedestrian and the building. The base elements of proposed buildings should be highly articulated, scaled to relate to the pedestrian experience, utilize high quality materials, and be transparent through the use of glazing wherever possible.*

### **5-Story Building**

The base on all four facades consists mainly of windows/glazing that is scaled, articulated, and designed for the pedestrian as they serve the storefronts and retail spaces of the commercial spaces. Elevations are needed for final review.

#### **Townhomes**

The base element of the townhomes meets this requirement with glazing and landscaping. A site plan and elevations are needed for final review.

#### ***Rhythm***

*Rhythm refers to a repetitive pattern or recurrence of building elements along the facade. These patterns are often linked to structural bays or reflect programmatic elements with end conditions given special treatment. Rhythmic elements can provide the backbone for architectural expression or identity: the repetition providing a unifying feature for the facade. These elements also helps visually break down the scale of the facade into smaller, constituent parts.*

### **5-Story Building**

The building expresses extensive use of rhythm through its repetitive use of columns of windows, balconies, building form, materials, and color on all facades thereby meeting this requirement.

#### **Townhomes**

The larger townhome structures do utilize rhythm through the use of windows, materials, balconies and color. Though present in its design, the use of rhythm in the smaller, 2-unit structures is not required.

#### ***Scale***

*Buildings are experienced from a variety of distances and thus the compositional building elements (entries, windows, structural bays, roof elements, etc.) should use sizes and shapes that are distinguishable from both near and far. Overall building height and massing should fit with the scale and*

*character of the development as a whole. In keeping with its goal of facilitating a walkable, urban development, a pedestrian scale experience is of particular importance to River Point District. Special care should be taken to the scale, massing and height of street level building elements to emphasize pedestrian comfort.*

### **5-Story Building,**

There are no other surrounding buildings to compare its scale. The proposed setback from River Bend Dr does indicate that the scale contributes to a walkable area, especially with the public plaza and outdoor dining area.

### **Townhomes**

The scale of the proposed townhomes meets the parameters for scale in the zone it is located in. Entrances open out onto sidewalks indicating the desire for walkability and creating a pedestrian-friendly experience.

### ***Height***

*The height of buildings within the River Point District development should follow the guidelines. This development is intended to have a dense, urban character and thus building towards the maximum height allowed per building type is encouraged. Though more height and density may result in higher parking requirements, taller buildings may not build large, open parking fields that result in disconnected, suburban building patterns. Buildings should abide by building height minimums.*

### **5-Story Building,**

This building is proposed in the area designated as “Entertainment, Public Amenity, & Civic Zone” which has a minimum height of one story and a maximum building height of three stories. The proposed height is five stories which does not meet this requirement. The RDA would need to evaluate whether the proposed height of this building would interfere with future development to the east.

### **Townhomes**

The proposed townhomes are proposed in the area designated as the “Lower Mixed Density Zone, which has a minimum height of two stories and a maximum height of four stories. It would appear from the renderings that the proposed townhomes are two to three stories in height and would meet this requirement.

### ***Massing***

*Building massing should provide visual richness and a pleasant, human scale. Large buildings should consider a hierarchy of masses and forms that break down the building scale rather than a single mass. Techniques for accomplishing these goals include the use of distinct building components, variation of roof form, or intentional placement of projections or recesses. Massing should consider the principles of rhythm and scale to avoid excessive changes in form or disharmonious street facades.*

### ***Layering***

*Building facades with layering and depth are important for creating the visual scales and pedestrian experiences intended in the River Point District development. Techniques for avoiding “flat” facades include the following: the setting back of windows behind the plane of the main facade; the use of window sills, awnings, canopies; the extension of roof eaves; the expression of columns through arcades or changes in plane.*

### **5-Story Building**

Overall the design does attempt to break up the square shape of the building and utilize the concept of layering through recessed balconies, projecting overhang of the flat roof, slightly recessed windows,

awnings over the storefronts, and the use of rhythm in the columns of windows, building materials and color. The appearance of mass is substantially reduced on the west and south facades due to the upper floor outdoor patio.

### **Townhomes**

The sense of mass is reduced through the shifts in height of the roof, the use of dormers, the use of color in the building materials, and the use of projecting awnings and balconies.

### ***Proportion***

*Proportional harmonies in building massing and building elements should be considered in order to produce visual harmony throughout the building facade. It should be noted that street front building elements have typically used vertical, as opposed to horizontal, proportions as it has traditionally seemed to offer a more pedestrian-friendly experience.*

### **5-Story Building**

Vertical elements are clearly visible through the use of materials, color, vertical columns of windows on the storefronts as well as through windows & balconies on the upper floors.

### **Townhomes**

The building design clearly proportions each unit through its architectural features, building materials, and color.

### ***Freestanding Commercial, Office, and other unique buildings***

*Buildings shall be designed as four-sided architecture with recommended high quality and finish-grade materials used consistently on all facades. Other materials such as precast concrete, decorative concrete block or decorative facade panels may be appropriate if properly detailed and integrated with the architecture. Metal and finished wood may be used as accents, but should not be the primary material for any facade.*

### **Materials**

*Varied materiality should be incorporated within the architectural styles in River Point District. Materials (and their colors) should possess a timeless aesthetic. They should be complementary to downtown La Crosse and the city as a whole. Materials should be considered for their high quality and sustainable attributes.*

### ***Quality***

*It is required to select high quality materials of enduring quality as much as possible. The following guidelines describe levels of quality and locations of appropriate building materials. The use of environmentally friendly sustainable building materials are strongly encouraged.*

### ***Examples of High Quality Materials***

*(Brick, Stone, Wood, Fiber Cement, High Quality Commercial Grade Metal Panel Systems, Rainscreen Systems, Innovative Recycled Materials and Technologies, Terracotta, Photovoltaic Integrated Systems)*

### ***Examples of Low Quality Materials***

*(Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems-EIFS, Utility Grade Materials, Low Quality Corrugated Metals, Low Quality Lumber, Low Quality Glazing, Vinyl or Aluminum Lap Siding)*

### **5-Story Building, TH- Kraft Street, Milwaukee St, Site Interior**

All four facades of the building would be considered a high level of architecture due to its form, use of materials, and architectural features. Enough has been incorporated into the design to breakup its mass. The proposed building materials fall into the high-quality materials category but staff would like to have architectural elevations submitted for final determination.

### **Townhomes**

No information on the proposed building materials was provided. The rendering does seem to indicate that the buildings are primarily masonry with metal trim around the windows and doors. Also, based on

the rendering, staff would consider this design a high level of four-sided architecture but would require formal elevations for final determination.

### **Location**

*Materials are encouraged to be creatively integrated into building facades. The PDD does not place outright restrictions of particular materials, but does provide guidelines for targeted use locations of higher and lower quality materials. Proposed buildings will be critically reviewed for material uses and composition. High quality materials should take precedence along main roadways, public access routes, and any other frontages that will be in direct contact with the public realm. Low Quality materials should not be used on the building at street level. Certain decorative materials may be integrated along the base of the building as accents but they are not recommended as the dominant façade material on the entire building. Utility- grade materials should only be used on facades of the building not visible from publicly-accessible areas.*

Only high-grade materials are proposed on all of the buildings. No low or utility grade materials are proposed. Masonry materials are proposed along the base of each building.

### **5-Story Building**

A mix of materials and colors are used on all facades of the 4-story building providing visual appeal on both a private and public level.

### **Townhomes**

No list of exterior materials were provided but the submitted renderings do indicate an adequate mix of materials and color for the proposed size of the buildings.

### **Glazing Guidelines**

#### **Usage**

*Glazing is an important component of a building's design. Buildings along Copeland Ave. and other primary roadways within River Point District are recommended to meet the following glazing standards. Adequate glazing along pedestrian corridors promotes retail engagement and activates the street edge. It also provides safety, allowing unobstructed views into and out of buildings.*

#### **Glazing amounts**

*While visual interaction by means of clear, non-tinted windows (glazing) with all stories of the building is encouraged, visual interaction is required along the street frontages of a building. The area where clear, non-tinted glazing should be maximized is 2 to 8 feet above grade. Lower glazing (such as glazing extending to the floor) and/or higher-level glazing (such as transoms and clerestories) are encouraged. Fritted glazing is allowed. Tinted glazing and opaque glass panes are prohibited except as accents or when used to screen parking or back of house areas. The clear glazing zone is measured along the street frontage of the building and does not include service entries. The percentage of the glazing zone that shall include clear glazing at first floor building uses (these standards are flexible depending on site, overall design, and use).*

- Commercial – at least 40%
- Large-Format retail - at least 15%
- Civic/Institutional - at least 40%
- Residential - at least 25%

*Where possible, glazing should be maximized along facades adjacent to publicly accessible areas that are away from street frontages, such as private drives, rear or side parking areas.*

### **Alternatives to Street Level Glazing**

*Several alternate facade and/or building features can be substituted to fulfill up to half of the glazing requirements along the street frontages of a building. These features may include the following items: awnings, canopies, lighting fixtures, banners, projecting signs, hanging planters, landscaped planter beds, free-standing moveable planters, benches, and landscaped seating.*

### **Special Conditions**

*Any facade along a main entry point, key intersection, or riverfront location in River Point District is a special condition. Special condition facades must be treated as a primary facade, regardless of whether the facade has any entry points*

*All structures within the River Point District Development should be designed as four-sided architecture with finish grade materials used consistently on all facades.*

### **5-Story Building**

Glazing is heavily used on all four facades of the building and very likely meet this requirement. A calculation from the applicant is needed on the final plans.

### **Townhomes**

Based on the renderings the required 25% appears to have been met but staff requests that a calculation from the applicant is needed to confirm.

### **Screening Guidelines**

N/A- No formal plans for screening have been provided for either development. What is shown for landscaping in the site plan and what is shown in the renderings are not consistent on the façade that faces River Bend Dr. Based solely on the amount and location of plantings that are indicated in the renderings staff's only concern is on what is proposed around the surface parking lot. Staff would recommend that more screening is provided to screen vehicles from the street to the north and east.

### **Outdoor Lighting**

N/A- No plans for outdoor lighting have been provided.

### **Signage Guidelines**

N/A- No plans for signage have been provided.

### **Regulations for Building Types - Descriptions**

*Regulations, including dimensional constraints for different building types are shown in the next page. The following building type descriptions offer a general understanding of different building types listed in this document. All building types are to comply with International Building Code requirements. Developers are encouraged to develop building sites with enhanced sustainable features and/or meet existing recognized sustainability certifications such as LEED. Incentives may be available for sustainable site and building design above and beyond code minimums.*

#### **Residential Townhomes**

*Townhomes are attached single-family units with an urban rowhouse format. The units share a common "party-wall" which is typically required to be a fire barrier and insulated for sound attenuation. Each residence is required to have a private entry on the public street/easement, usually with a small front yard, porch, or landscape planter. Typically, these buildings are three to four stories and could contain a second dwelling unit, depending on the design and configuration. Parking is accommodated in attached garages at the rear of the buildings, sometimes with an auto court shared by the buildings within the block. Overflow parking may be accommodated by street parking or small surface lots located out of the general public circulation pathways. Residential units are separated with property lines centered on the common party walls (or equivalent agreement in a private property association). In many cases these are for sale residential properties.*

#### **Townhomes**

All of the units will have a private entry to the public street. More detail may be needed to determine that the required porch, planter, or yard is being provided. It also appears that each unit also has an attached garage to meet the parking requirement. The building design is 2 stories in height. A final site plan is required to determine that the proper setbacks are met.

### **Mixed-Use Buildings**

Mixed-use buildings are multi-story buildings that typically contain a combination of commercial and residential uses. These buildings usually have commercial uses on the ground floor (retail or commercial office) with residential uses above. The residential uses can be blended with a hospitality type function, such as a hotel, which could allow residents access to the enhanced hotel amenities. Creative mixed-use configurations are strongly encouraged. Parking for these buildings should be provided behind the buildings and hidden from public view. With use such as retail on the first floor, the first floor height is higher (16 to 20 feet in height) which can allow for two levels of parking deck behind. Lot sizes vary depending on the building size.

### **5-Story Building**

This building does have a corner entrance and lobby off of River Bend Dr for the upper floor residential component. There are multiple entrances around the building to access the ground floor commercial spaces. There are 35 parking stalls enclosed within the building and an adjacent surface parking lot with 78 spaces that is intended to serve the commercial spaces and the adjacent public waterfront area. The height of the first floor appears to meet the required 16-20ft but final elevations are need to confirm.