

STAFF ANALYSIS

PROPOSAL

A Major Alternate Standard, for development standards different from those of Article XX Transit Center of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

The subject property is located in the (TC) Transit Center District, Urban Core Sub-District. Article XX Transit Center District, Section H Administration, Item 2 Alternate Standards contains the following provisions:

- i. For the purposes of this Code, there shall be two types of Alternate Standards — Minor and Major.
- ii. Minor Alternate Standards are considered relatively minor changes to the strict adherence to the standards in this Code, and may be approved administratively by the City Manager or his designee as part of a Development Plan. However, all Minor Alternate Standards must meet the full intent of this Code as stated herein.
- iii. Major Alternate Standards are considered relatively major changes to both the standards and stated intent of this Code. Major Alternate Standards may only be approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council.
- iv. The ability to approve Alternative Standards shall also apply Section 151.93 of the Carrollton Code of Ordinances (Sign code) regarding sign regulations.
- v. The City may impose conditions on granting any Alternate Standards in order to minimize any potential negative impact on the district, neighboring properties or public streets or open space. This may include screening, a time limit or other requirement.

The applicant is requesting the following alternate standards to the development regulations, which staff interprets as rising to the level of “Major Alternate Standards,” thus requiring consideration & recommendation by the Planning & Zoning Commission and approval by City Council:

1. Four-story minimum height requirement: Although part of the project will be four stories, part will only be three stories. This is due to the inability to provide parking for more units.
2. Build-to line of three feet from Broadway and College, and six feet from IH-35E frontage road: Although the buildings will be placed relatively close to Broadway and College, they will not meet this standard. Additionally, they will be in excess of 60 feet from IH-35E.
3. Buildings designed to accommodate retail uses along Broadway; specifically with the ground floor having a minimum 14-foot interior ceiling height and no less than 60% of

the façade being windows: The applicant is requesting 12-foot minimum interior ceiling height.

4. Continuous block face along street frontages, with maximum 24-foot wide “openings” for auto access and additional width for pedestrian access: The proposal will not meet this along IH-35E, and the northeast corner along Broadway.
5. All off-street parking being behind the building: Some parking (northeast corner of the project, along Broadway) will not meet this requirement.
6. On-site surface parking only allowed as a temporary use (intent is to require parking garages): Applicant intends permanent surface parking.

Justification for these requests is that the current market cannot support rents high enough to pay for a parking garage. The western half of the relatively large site faces IH-35E, which is not a suitable environment for truly pedestrian-oriented development. Additionally the intersection of IH-35E and Belt Line Road is being redesigned to increase the height of IH-35E so that Belt Line Road can be elevated over - rather than lowered below – the “Cotton Belt” Railroad as was the original plan. Thus, IH-35E will be even higher over the property than now, and even the frontage road will be elevated slightly (approximately 25 feet high at the southerly property line of the subject tract, dropping to about five feet high at the northern property line).

GENERAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- The west side of the site abuts the northbound IH-35E frontage road, which will be elevated above the subject tract as part of the improvement project currently under way.
- The use of on-street spaces as part of the required parking calculation is allowed by provisions in Article XX Transit Center District. It is important to note that, based on the number of dwelling units proposed; zoning requires only 215 parking spaces. The developer’s provision for 274 parking spaces represents a 27% increase over the required parking. This excess parking reduces the amount of amenity space provided to future residents. It is also important to note that developers and lenders banks frequently require parking in excess of what is actually necessary in a TOD environment. Nearby, The Union at Carrollton Square is an example of a residential complex with significantly underutilized parking spaces.
- The request to eliminate garage parking is in contrast to a project which the Commission recently considered (RP on Park, Midway Road at Hebron Parkway), currently in the planning stages. This project will have a variety of buildings, with one up to five stories tall, and includes a parking garage in order to serve the number of dwellings.
- The City of Carrollton is currently spending several million dollars to improve the immediate market, in an attempt to realize the city’s vision of a walkable, high-density,

high-quality urban form area. The proposed project may be better suited elsewhere along the IH-35E corridor.

- Careful consideration should be given as to whether the proposed layout will be the best and allow for the maximization of development on this site. It may be better to redesign to have a single, taller building (perhaps “L-shaped”) with surface parking which allows for a future parking garage and additional buildings.

SITE PLAN ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER

- At a little over three acres, the site is much larger than the average lot contemplated for “urban” development. It would actually be more like an entire block elsewhere in the Downtown Carrollton area.

The standard “urban” streetscape elements (street trees, formal sidewalk paving, on-street parking, and streetlights) would be installed along Broadway Street and College Avenue.

These design elements conform to the current requirements of Article XX Transit Center District from the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. The intent is to create an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment along Broadway and College, since those streets are used by relatively low-speed and low volume traffic.

REVISIONS TO THE EXHIBITS AND NEW INFORMATION SINCE 05/07/15

The following changes have been made to the plans and exhibits in response to discussion at the May 7, 2015 meeting of the Planning & Zoning Commisison:

1. The arrangement of buildings has been changed such that the entire Broadway Street frontage is lined with a four-story building. The other building, closer to IH-35E, is now entirely a three-story building.

The arrangement of buildings is now similar to that previously approved in 2013 (Case No. 09-13MD1). In both cases, the building along Broadway Street is tall and close to the street, forming a strong “street presence,” while the building closer to IH-35E is set back further, creating a more “suburban” buffer. The approved conceptual site plan for that case is included in this report as “supplementary information.”

Note also that the approved site plan from 2013 also showed angled head-in parking along Broadway Street and 90-degree head-in parking along College Avenue.

2. The number of dwellings has been increased from approximately 172 to approximately 208 (about a 21% increase).
3. The number of on-site parking spaces is roughly the same, at about 200 on-site (including 44 individual garages). Because of the increase in dwellings, the parking ratio has been reduced from about 1.17 spaces per dwelling to about 0.96 per dwelling (roughly a 20%

decrease).

4. The Union at Carrollton Square presently has 311 dwellings and 592 parking spaces, resulting in a ratio of 1.9 spaces per dwelling. This reflects the predicted parking need as required by the developer and financing entities at the time of development. Staff estimates that The Union is 'over-parked' by about 20%. Staff will be asking the apartment management to make the unused/unneeded spaces available to the public in the near future.

Previously the applicants included approximately 110 on-street parking spaces in their parking calculations. Because these parking spaces would not be reserved for the development however (e.g., would be available to the public), they should not have been included. The revised exhibit corrects this in its parking calculation table. The number of parking spaces shown on the street is the same as previously.

5. The proposed design of "head-in" on-street parking as shown in the Conceptual Site Plan is not included in the General Design Standards of the City of Carrollton. They have been used adjacent to The Union at Carrollton Square. As always, the design and construction of any improvements in the public right-of-way will be reviewed, inspected, approved and ultimately accepted by the City of Carrollton in accordance with good engineering practice.

Note that head-in parking (as opposed to parallel parking) does have a more restrictive effect on through traffic, as cars leaving the parking spaces have a tendency to back into two lanes of a four-lane road blocking them both, whereas parallel parked cars only block one lane. Since the head-in on-street parking spaces will be in the public right-of-way and controlled by the City, they could be converted to parallel in the future if congestion warrants. Per an e-mail from Tom Hammons, City Transportation Engineering Manager:

The issue is that head-in parking will block both lanes of Broadway during ingress and egress, while parallel parking will only block one lane. We might be willing to live with the additional congestion associated with head-in parking based on the expected benefits of the proposed development. But we need to be aware of what we are granting the developer, as congestion in one area may make development less desirable in another area, and weigh that against the improvements we are getting with this particular development.

6. The proposed colors of the brick on the façade have been reversed, with a greater proportion of the building being a darker, more traditional “brick red” (although the image prints as a brown color). This makes the corners of the building better “frame” the length of the façade. Additionally, the light cast stone lintels over the windows and other detailing and trim work “pop out” better.
7. The applicant is investigating the possibility of participating with the City in the improvement of Broadway Street and College Avenue abutting the subject property. However, that is a separate issue that will be discussed between the applicant and City Council.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED
BY THE APPLICANT ON 06/29/15**

On June 29, 2015 the applicant provided an additional image showing a possible design with a parking deck/garage, along with the following narrative:

We had our architect create an alternate site plan with a 4-story parking deck. We wanted to see how much of a difference the parking structure really made, and as you can see, the difference is minimal.

The parking deck allowed us to have only 26 additional units than what we have currently (234 to 208). Essentially, the parking deck removes all of our surface parking and pushes our buildings closer to IH-35, which makes that side of the building less attractive to a renter (noise). It is important to note that our rendering looks exactly the same at the College/Broadway corner with or without the garage. We feel like these are key components to our argument and confirms that a parking garage in place of surface parking is really not a big difference.

We feel confident that the cost of a parking garage could not be justified until rents come up, which would likely be at least 5 years away. Until then, the site would likely sit vacant until the market could justify the construction of a garage that ultimately increases the unit count by about 26 units.

Alex and I have spent a fair amount of time in the business community. The response from business owners has been extremely positive across the board. We have met with countless business owners, citizens and even gave a presentation at the Old Downtown Carrollton Association Board Meeting about our project. I have attached letters of support that we have collected so far. We will have more as we continue to meet with business owners. Also attached a picture of the type of support this project has generated.

Support Letter Stats:

- 32 petition signatures from customers of downtown businesses. These represent a healthy cross-section of customers, mostly from Carrollton, who have reviewed our project, read the attached letter, and signed their support. Please note these signatures were obtained from customers who shopped at these respective businesses, and the business owners agreed to set up our exhibits at their check-out lines.
- 10 letters signed directly from business owners in downtown Carrollton. We project to have many more in the coming week.

As you can see, our efforts to get our plan out into the community have been met with great support. Business owners want this project and would hate to miss an opportunity to bring a more people to their businesses.

The new image is at the end of the previous images, immediately before the minutes from the Planning & Zoning Commisison.

CONCLUSION

~~While the project as presented would likely be a good addition elsewhere in the IH-35E corridor, it may not be the highest and best use of this site.~~

The revised plan much better meets the vision of the (TC) Transit Center District.