



701 East Broadway, Columbia, Missouri 65201

Council Memo

Department Source: Community Development

To: City Council

From: City Manager & Staff

Council Meeting Date: July 20, 2026

Re: PD Plan Theory Sterling Mizzou – Rezoning, PD Plan (Case #162-2026)

Impacted Ward: Ward 1

Executive Summary

Approval of this request would rezone 2.91-acres from R-MF (Multiple Family Dwelling) to PD (Planned Development), and would approve a site-specific Statement of Intent (SOI) enabling the acreage to be redeveloped with 305 multifamily dwelling units for purpose-built students housing. The Development Plan has design exceptions related to setbacks, height, parking, and landscaping. The proposed development plan is to be known as “Theory Sterling Mizzou” and would require demolition of the existing structures on the site before redevelopment could occur. The subject site is directly northwest of the intersection of College Avenue and University Avenue and includes the address 1205 University Avenue.

Discussion

Crockett Engineering (agent), on behalf of James & Leah Beth Johnson, LTS-1 LLC, East Meets West LLC, Momentum Builders, LLC, and BVSHSSF Columbia, LLC, (owners) and Theory Sterling Mizzou (Developer), seeks approval of a rezoning from R-MF to PD, and adoption of a development plan to be known as “Theory Sterling Mizzou”, also serving as a new preliminary plat for the 2.91-acre subject site, and site-specific Statement of Intent (SOI) that adds multiple family dwellings (inclusive of customary accessory uses and related structures), and a limited amount of personal services as uses for the site. The subject site will be accessed from College Avenue and Matthews Street. Approval of this PD plan would subsequently require final platting before development could be pursued.

This case was heard at the June 11, 2026 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. The PD Plan, serving as a preliminary plat, illustrates the site as being one lot 2.91 acres in size. The site is accessed from Matthews Street (to the west) and College Avenue (to the east). Access would be permitted on College Avenue as there are existing points of access for the site off College Avenue, but such points of ingress/egress are being consolidated from four to one. Access to College Avenue is controlled by MODOT. Additional right-of-way dedications would be necessary for both Paquin Street (to the north) and College Avenue upon final platting. The site is around one block away from M-DT zoned property, but is currently surrounded by only R-MF zoning.

A traffic study was performed for this proposal which did not identify any necessary off-site improvements due to the redevelopment. The study considered the following four intersections: University and College, University and Matthews, Matthews and Paquin, and Paquin and College. The applicant utilized land use code 226, mid-rise off-campus student apartments (adjacent to campus), and modeled traffic generation for 970 beds. The

weekday midday peak and weekday PM peak yielded 215 and 205 total trips, respectively. The majority of traffic is anticipated to head directly south or north on College Avenue from the private driveway accessing College Avenue. Northbound and southbound traffic on Matthews Street will be impacted the most, but with fewer than 5 seconds of additional delay. Overall, all approaches are believed to operate at acceptable levels of service at peak hours.

The structure will be separated into two buildings, with the “north” building being seven stories nearest Paquin and Matthews, and the “south” building being eight stories along University Avenue. This one-story reduction, per the applicant, is intended to provide a more natural transition to the properties to the north of Paquin. The dwelling units of the site will be more along the perimeter of the structure, while the interior will include the structured parking, in addition to court yard amenities. The applicant has provided architectural renderings (attached) for the proposed development. If the PD plan is approved and development is pursued, future construction must be substantially in conformance to the provided renderings.

The site is bounded by Matthews Street, Paquin Street, College Avenue and University Avenue to the west, north, east, and south, respectively. To the west and south, property is owned by the University of Missouri and developed with a parking garage and institutional uses, respectively. The properties to the north are developed with dwelling units, a religious institution, and Paquin Tower. Paquin Tower is an approximately 162-foot-tall structure which is of note with respect to requested height of the subject building. Properties to the east of the site are developed with dwelling units and a fraternity.

There are four design exceptions being requested with this planned development. They seek relief from standard setbacks, maximum building height, parking, and landscaping.

Note 12 on the PD Plan states that setbacks from the perimeter of the property shall be established at 10 feet. If the property were developed under its current R-MF zoning, it would be required to provide a 25-foot front yard setback, a 25-foot rear yard setback, and 15-foot side yard setbacks, as the property has street frontage along all sides. Therefore, the requested 10-foot setback represents a deviation from the dimensional standards of the R-MF zoning district.

The requested setbacks are more comparable to those found in the M-DT district than in other zoning districts. However, M-DT generally requires buildings to be constructed at the required building line, which is located at or near the property line. The proposed 10-foot setbacks allow for the dedication of standard 10-foot utility easements along all street frontages, which is generally required in most zoning districts, but not always necessary in M-DT. Compared to M-DT standards, the proposed setbacks also provide space for landscaping buffers, although the site would still not achieve full compliance with the typical 15 percent landscaping requirement applicable to redevelopment.

While the property is not zoned M-DT, a reduction in setbacks relative to those found in conventional zoning districts is reasonable given its proximity to the downtown area. The site

is not located within the downtown core, but exhibits a more urban development pattern than is typical of multifamily development in the City. The R-MF district does not distinguish between more urban or suburban development contexts. Reduced setbacks, in this scenario, may help create a more pedestrian-oriented development pattern by bringing buildings closer to the street, reinforcing an urban form that is more consistent with areas transitioning toward the downtown core, despite not being zoned in the M-DT district.

The applicant notes the maximum height of their structure would be 85 feet, per the PD plan and the SOI. A structure height of 85 feet would only be permissible in M-DT district if it were also in the CH-O (Core Max Height Overlay, permits 10 stories), or in the IG zoning district (but multi-family dwellings are not a permissible use in IG). So, a design exception must be sought for a structure of this height.

In the former R-4 zoning district, which is how this site was zoned prior to UDC adoption, there was no height restriction provided minimum dimensional requirements for dwellings were met and a passenger elevator was provided. Now maximum height is 45 feet in R-MF provided side yard setbacks are increased to 15-feet. The proposed 85-foot-tall structure would be approximately 20 feet taller than the existing University Place Apartments, developed under R-4 regulations, but not taller than Paquin Towers, which neighbors this property on the north side of Paquin Street. Paquin Towers stands around 162 feet tall.

The applicant provided a shadow study (attached) to illustrate how this height of structure would affect neighboring properties during summer and winter periods, at noon, 2 PM, and 4 PM. During the winter months, the north side of Paquin would be in the shadows of this development during these time periods, and the structure on the east side of College Avenue would be in the shadows during the later portions of the day. Elevations around this site slope down as one heads more downtown, and rise as you cross College, albeit slightly (by around 10 feet).

The requested increase in height is consistent with the site's urban context and proximity to downtown, and with its pre-UDC zoning designation. An increase in height allows increased residential density in a walkable part of town, in proximity to the University of Missouri, a major generator of pedestrian activity. While there are concerns regarding the height of the structure casting shadows on the north side of Paquin, it appears to be minimally invasive, only affecting around seven structures in total, and only for portions of the day depending on the time of year. Ultimately, allowing increased height at this site concentrates additional housing in an area already served by public infrastructure and municipal services, thereby reducing pressure for outward expansion of development, especially for students who desire proximity to the University for housing.

The applicant is providing 570 parking spaces. If the proposed development were subject to typical multifamily parking standards, the applicant would be required to provide 718 parking spaces when accounting for the reduction in required parking due to provision of required bicycle parking. If the 1,300 square feet for personal services are pursued, the required parking would be 719 spaces, per the applicant's provided alternative scenario. Therefore, the site would provide 148 parking spaces (or around 20 percent) less than typical

multifamily development. Overall, with 957 total bedrooms, the development has a parking ratio of around 0.60 parking spaces per bedroom.

However, if the site were located within the M-DT zoning district it would be required provide parking at a ratio of 0.50 spaces/bedroom. If 957 bedrooms are provided, this would result in 479 parking spaces being required. So, if this proposed development were developed to M-DT standards, there would be no need for a design exception and it would be considered overparked by 92 spaces, or around 20 percent in excess of M-DT requirements.

To justify the desired parking reductions, the applicant has provided a table that illustrates parking utilization and ratios for select comparable properties within Columbia. Notably, parking structures providing fewer than 0.50 parking spaces per bed are 100% occupied for the analyzed developments. The U Center on Turner, which has a parking ratio of 0.76 spaces/bed, is only 63% utilized, with around 200 unsold parking spaces despite having 100% of its units pre-leased for fall 2026, according to the documentation provided to the City. For this development, the provided parking would be in excess of the realized occupied parking ratio for U Centre on Turner, which is around 63%, or 0.48 occupied spaces/bed.

The applicant also provided parking counts for their developments in other cities and towns with universities. Notably, both Syracuse, NY and Gainesville, FL, have comparable populations to the City of Columbia, and are relatively distanced from major metros. In Gainesville, the development was built with a 0.65 space/bed ratio. The utilization rate of the parking is around 85%. In Syracuse, the development was built with a 0.43 space/bed ratio. The utilization rate of the parking is around 95%.

For this development, a ratio of around 0.60 spaces/bed is being provided. This is slightly less than Gainesville, and slightly more than Syracuse. Therefore, if this development is to act similarly to comparable developments provided by the applicant (i.e Gainesville and Syracuse), staff would expect comparable utilization rates for provided parking.

While there is still concern of overflow parking being redirected to the east campus area particularly, the provided comparisons for developments in the City and developments in comparable cities indicate parking at a 0.60 space/bed ratio will accommodate the needs of tenants. Staff also believes that the site's proximity to the University of Missouri campus and downtown commercial services reduces the necessity for vehicle ownership among residents relative to typical multifamily developments elsewhere in the city. As a result, application of standard multifamily parking ratios may overestimate actual parking demand at this location, resulting in underutilization.

Landscaping for the development is proposed at 10% of the total site. Typically, 15% landscaping is required. The requested reduction in landscaping is reasonable given the site's more 'urban' context, proximity to downtown, and redevelopment characteristics. While the proposal does not achieve the landscaping levels typically required of conventional multifamily development, the property is located in an area containing higher-intensity development, inclusive of reduced setbacks, more structured parking, and greater pedestrian activity than is typical elsewhere in the city.

Strict compliance with landscaping requirements would reduce the developable area of the site and potentially limit the ability to provide additional housing in close proximity to the University of Missouri and downtown without increasing height more than what is already being requested. While landscaping remains an important site-design element, the requested reduction is not out of character with surrounding development on the periphery of the M-DT and would support the applicant's desired density in a university-adjacent environment without further increasing height.

The comprehensive plan has identified this area within the "neighborhood" district per the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The neighborhood district is intended to accommodate a broad mix of residential uses and a limited number of nonresidential uses the provide services to neighborhood residents. The proposed development is believed to be consistent with this classification. The site lies within a tier I infill area, the urban service area, and is aligned with policy 3 of the comprehensive plan, prioritizing infill development.

This development is also believed to be aligned with goal 3 of Land Use and Growth Management strategies of the Comprehensive Plan, encouraging density in the city's core. While incentives aren't being provided by the City for this development, it is promoting living near downtown, notably for students, who can utilize commercial services downtown without needing to drive/ride in a vehicle or take a shuttle or transit, and are in close proximity to the University of Missouri. Utilizing PD zoning to allow for flexibility of multifamily development in an area where density is identified as necessary helps accomplish this goal in a greater capacity than it could in R-MF.

Typically, adequacy of infrastructure is a criterion by which rezoning requests are analyzed. While sewer utility upgrades will be necessary to support this level of density, such improvements must be approved prior to approval of a final plat, and building permits would not be issued until infrastructure improvements are made. Since this property would need to be final platted if this PD plan is approved prior to issuance of building permits, staff has assurances that infrastructure improvements will be made, even if existing infrastructure is inadequate. This is a different scenario from a legal lot requesting open zoning, where there is less oversight and fewer procedural steps involving the public before permits could be issued.

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on this request at their June 11, 2026 meeting. Staff provided its report, and the Commission posed questions. Notably, the Commission asked the process by which necessary sewer improvements would be made, the nature of the required improvements, existing nonconformances in the area, the purpose of the provided shadow study, and the parking utilization comparisons.

The applicant and representatives of the developer then spoke on the proposed development. The traffic engineer that assisted with the TIS also spoke regarding the findings of the TIS. Commissioners asked multiple questions of the developer related to the request. Notably, the Commission questioned how the proposed parking count was devised, and whether more parking could be provided. The developer noted that the structure would have to go higher to accommodate more parking if the same number of dwelling units were

proposed. The Commission also asked questions of the architect and how the design of the development was informed.

The Commission asked about the plan for potential eviction of current tenants if this development were to move forward. The developer noted that leases can currently be renewed, and residency will continue for students until Spring 2027 semester end, then a week could pass before the tenants would be required to vacate to begin development, if this planned development is approved. The developer noted their intent would be to inform residents in early 2027, and residents have not yet been informed as the proposed development is speculative at this time.

Multiple members of the public then spoke in regards to this request. Principal concerns were off-site parking occurring in the East Campus and Benton Stephen's neighborhoods, as well as existing safety conditions for pedestrians and active transportation users at the intersection of University Avenue and College Avenue, sight-line concerns due to the reduced setbacks, and concerns of idling vehicles blocking the streets on which this development fronts. One member of the public stated that off-site parking concerns due to the requested reduction could be addressed in means other than requiring more on-site parking.

The Commission had additional discussion related to this proposal. Notably, the Commission suggested looking closer at safety concerns at the intersection of College and University. Parking adequacy and loading/idling concerns were also discussed, as well as whether or not purpose-built student housing would be ideal in this location, and whether or not the right-of-way dedications would accommodate future turn lanes at the intersection of College and University. The Commission then made a motion to approve the proposed rezoning and development plan, inclusive of the requested design exceptions, serving as a preliminary plat, pursuant to technical corrections. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

The staff report to the Planning and Zoning Commission, locator maps, the PD plan, site-specific statement of intent, tree preservation plan, Traffic Impact Study, parking analysis document, shadow study, architectural renderings, and meeting excerpts are attached for reference.

Fiscal Impact

Short-Term Impact: None anticipated. Any extension of services to serve the property would be at the applicant's expense.

Long-Term Impact: Limited expenses anticipated, outside of maintenance for extended utility facilities. Possible impact would be increased traffic on nearby roads and solid waste collection costs. Such cost would be off-set by increased tax collection and user fees.

Strategic & Comprehensive Plan Impact

Strategic Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Inclusive and Equitable Community, Secondary Impact: Not Applicable, Tertiary Impact: Not Applicable

Comprehensive Plan Impacts:

Primary Impact: Land Use & Growth Management, Secondary Impact: Economic Development, Tertiary Impact: Livable & Sustainable Communities

Legislative History

Date	Action
NA	NA

Suggested Council Action

Approve the Proposed PD Plan of Theory Sterling Mizzou, serving as a preliminary plat, and associated statement of intent, inclusive of design exceptions as recommended by the Planning and Zoning Commission.