

September 20th, 2022

City of Aurora
Stephen Rodriguez
Planning Department
15151 E. Alameda Parkway, Suite 2000
Aurora, Colorado 80012

**Re: Abilene Station, Parcels A1, A2, 3, 4, and 5 #1598693
Site Plan & Master Plan Amendment
Letter of Intent**

Dear Mr. Rodriguez:

Enclosed are the application materials for the Abilene Station Parcels A1, A2, 3, 4, and 5; Site Plan and overall Abilene Station Master Plan Amendment. We look forward to working with the City, your time and effort is greatly appreciated for the time and assistance. We look forward to continuing to work with you and the City of Aurora staff through the approval process. This application has been prepared by and for the following parties to the benefit of the residents of Aurora:

Developer

Cortland
3424 Peachtree Road NE Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 965-3988
Contact: Sophie Macicek

Planning / Landscape Architecture

Norris Design
1101 Bannock St.
Denver, Colorado 80204
(303) 892-1166
Contact: Eva Mather / John Norris

Civil Engineer

Roth Lang Engineering Group LLC
6855 S. Havana Street
Suite 600
(303) 921-4217
Contact: Kurt Lang

Architect

Niles Bolton Associates
3060 Peachtree Rd NW Suite 600
Atlanta, GA 30305
(404) 365-7600
Contact: Katherine Uhrin

The following items are including in this submittal package:

- Letter of Introduction
- Response to Review Comments
- Site Plan
- Colored Elevations & Material Samples
- Traffic Conformance Letter
- Master Plan Amendment
- Master Sewer Update Letter

INTRODUCTION

Site Plan Overview

Cortland at Abilene Station will be located within the overall Abilene Station General Development Plan located in planning areas 3, 4, 5 and parks A1 and A2. It is designed to follow the Abilene General Development Plan requirements for parks, pedestrian connections, architectural features, building placement, and parking. The Abilene Station GDP was originally approved in 2007. An Amendment to this document will be identified moving forward as a Master Plan Amendment. The Master Plan Amendment is intended to generally follow the intent set forth in 2007, but allow for more current amenities and acceptance of current codes. A Site Plan, Plat, and a Master Plan Amendment are enclosed within this submission package.

The community provides pedestrian connectivity to the Abilene Light Rail station, the High Line Canal, a public plaza, and multiple commercial and residential destinations. Intentional place-making throughout the community will enhance the pedestrian experience and create an integrated fabric of buildings and streetscapes and open areas. With the addition of hundreds of residents and employees in this space, users of the site will support the Transit Oriented Design vision of high intensity uses in close proximity to the rail station.

The community consists of 10,000 sf of commercial space and 289 residential units in the mixed-use building 500, 235 units in building 300, and 50 units in building 400 for a total of 574 multifamily units. The project consists of a combination of structured parking and minimal surface parking to meet parking needs determined by the UDO, and builder-projects. Parking provision within the site is as follows:

	Parking Required	Parking Provided	Parking Mix Required:	Parking Mix Provided
Building 300	247 – Total 200 – Resident 47 – Guest (6 ADA / 1 Van ADA)	314 Total 67 – Compact - Garage 239 – Standard - Garage 7 Standard ADA – Garage 1 Van ADA - Garage	Min. 40% Covered Min. 50% of Covered Spaces must be Attached	93% Garage Spaces (673) 7% Surface Spaces (43)
Building 400	54 – Total 45 – Resident 9 – Guest (2 ADA / 1 Van ADA)	53 – Total 7 – Standard – Garage 46 – Standard – Surface 2 Standard ADA – Garage 1 Van ADA– Garage		
Building 500	329 – Total 246 – Resident 25 – Commercial Spaces 58 – Guest (5 ADA + 2 Van ADA)	349 – Total 127 – Compact– Garage 211 – Standard– Garage 9 – Standard ADA – Garage 2 – Van ADA – Garage		
Totals	630	716		

About Cortland:

Cortland was founded in 2005, with a focus on multifamily development in Atlanta – all with a vision to challenge the conventions of the traditional multifamily industry, through better living spaces and experiences. By 2011, we owned and managed 5,000 apartment homes and meaningfully accelerated our plans to build a company that could deliver unique value to both our residents and partners.

Since then, we've become an integrated, product-to-people, multifamily development company that owns the core aspects of its business, including construction, design, and property management. We've continued to grow and are now one of the largest multifamily companies in the US with over 65,000 units in 20 core markets. Our development team consists of 10 industry professionals with extensive experience in multifamily, mixed-use, and master-planned communities. We're highly focused on the resident experience in our communities and are excited for the opportunity to expand our presence in the metro area with a mixed-use project in Aurora. We see Abilene Station as an ideal first project in Aurora, with an opportunity to connect local residents to their community. With connectivity from the light rail, High Line Canal Trail, and I-225, we hope to create a space for both the community and our residents to connect in a growing city.

Park and Amenity Spaces:

Careful planning and consideration was put into the design and layout of the park and amenity spaces for the Abilene Station Project. The overarching idea is "Connection and bringing people together". Our goal is to develop a strong network of pathways that connect public amenity spaces, retail, and the residential community to existing trails, the Abilene Station Light Rail, and the RTD Park and Ride.

As part of the vision, we developed a creative solution for an outdoor plaza that includes moveable stage/flex space as well as curb appeal. There will be abundant seating areas to accommodate large and small groups, interesting public art, café seating, and music to encourage social interaction in this space for a careful selection of materials will be chosen that are both inviting and complimentary of the surrounding architecture, accessibility, circulations, safety, accessibility and mobility. We anticipate users inbound and outbound from RTD Light Rail Station will utilize various forms of transportation including ride share vehicles and scooters, bicycles, park and ride, etc. Accounting for a variety of users will be part of the successful integration of the plaza, RTD station and the retail program. In order to create a clear visual corridor and physical connection between park and ride, plaza, and RTD station, a pedestrian paseo was created through the residential building to easily connect and enhance the pedestrian experience for all users. This paseo utilizes plantings, creative use of materials and paving to make the space usable for connection and point of destination.

Private amenities for the residents are spread throughout the buildings and will be accessible to all Cortland at Abilene Station residents. Amenities will include an in-ground swimming pool and pool deck with outdoor kitchen, private sky lounge, and fitness center in Building 300. Private amenities in Building 500 will include a private sky lounge, fitness center, leasing/lobby area, and podium-level swimming pool and pool deck with outdoor kitchen.

Along the south and eastern portions of the site is the High Line linear park. It is important that this park is universally accessible to both the public and the residents. As such, the placement of the linear park adjacent to the High Line Canal considers accessibility, visibility, and pedestrian connections to the canal trail. The program elements of the park include, a dog park, multi-use open space lawn, large shelter that integrates a placemaking "tower" element, room for seating, bicycle racks and perennial gardens.

Civil Engineering:

The utilities for the Abilene Station development will conform to the City of Aurora criteria. The infrastructure sanitary sewer and waterlines were constructed in the streets and easements in anticipation of a development of this size. The water and sanitary services will be extended into each of the lots along with storm drainage.

The storm drainage for Abilene Station flows north to a detention pond located on the north side of 4th Avenue. The detention pond was constructed in anticipation of the densities for this project, so no additional work is needed for the detention pond.

Architecture:

The architectural design intent for Abilene Station is to create a mixed-use community of contemporary midrise buildings that reinforce the best aspects of transit-oriented design: 1) connectivity and inclusivity for the residents and visitors; 2) architecture that contributes to a sense of place and wayfinding; and 3) a cohesive design that is both lively and avoids homogeneity.

By extending the Abilene Station guideline's color palette throughout the neighborhood at Building 300 and introducing a contemporary approach at Building 400 and 500, each building acquires its own personality, with unique varied fenestrations, roof details, ground floor programming, and accent colors as required by the guidelines; collectively, the design will work to establish a coherent vision of a vibrant, walkable neighborhood. Accent colors highlight landmark elements such as tower massing in the High Line Canal Park.

Adjustments

4.6.5.D.6. Required Off-Street Parking - Stall Size and Drive Aisle Dimensions

There is no allowance for compact parking spaces in the UDO.

Proposed Compact Parking Spaces (8' wide by 19' deep)

- Building 300 – 67 compact spaces out of 314 total provided spaces are proposed.
 - 247 parking spaces are required for this building, meaning that the 67 compact spaces are all in excess of the minimum parking requirement.
- Building 500 – 127 compact spaces out of 349 total provided spaces are proposed.
 - 329 parking spaces are required for this building, meaning that the compact spaces only amount to 38% of required spaces and 36% of total provided spaces.

Justification

An adjustment to allow compact parking spaces to be included within the UDO required number of spaces is requested for Buildings 300 and 500 to provide additional parking spaces beyond the minimum required by the UDO . Compact spaces will be labeled with a "COMPACT" title and will be in the residential gated zones. The compact space width is proposed to be 8' wide in lieu of 9' wide, so that be additional spaces accommodated width-wise. The drive aisle width will be greater than or equal to the required 23' minimum. The depth of the compact and the standard spaces are the same, so the depth of the car is not a concern.

4.8.7 Four-Sided Building Design

Four-sided building standards are provided to eliminate the common treatment of “backs” of buildings.

Proposed Building Design

To permit the parking garage elevations on Building 300, which are considered Minor Building Facades per UDO Table 4.8.7., to provide less façade articulation than required by Table 4.8-8.

Justification

The parking garage facades face the northern and eastern property boundaries, with land immediately north of the site used for surface parking and a drive aisle, and the land to the east, currently vacant. With these

facades facing “land-locked property boundaries, they are considered Minor Building Facades. While the building façades do not provide a Massing Character Element (as required by Table 4.8-8.), they provide a total of four (4) character elements, one more than the total required. The facades provide three (3) Material Character Elements, with:

1. Change in Material, through use of the landscape green screen wall.
2. Change in Texture, through use of the landscape green screen wall.
3. Transparency and Glazing, through use of window-like openings in the wall that comply with UDO Section 4.6.5.E.I.f.

They also provide one (1) Human Scale Character Element with:

1. Landscape wall / decorative screen for vines, through use of the landscape green screen wall.

In addition, the landscaping along these property boundaries will provide a buffer with trees and plantings between the abutting lots.

Approval Criteria:

- A. The application complies with the applicable standards in this UDO, other adopted City regulations, any approved Master Plan that includes the property, and any conditions specifically applied to development of the property by the Planning and Zoning Commission or City Council in a prior decision affecting the property.

The proposed Site Plan application retains compliance with the UDO, the approved Master Plan, the Abilene Station Area Plan, as well as the City’s Comprehensive Plan, Aurora Places. The Urban District Place type calls for a mix of uses in an urban fabric which has a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment. Primary land uses include multi-family residential development, restaurants, commercial retail, commercial service, office, and entertainment and arts districts. Urban Districts are critical to the economic and fiscal health of the city because it is a center of employment, culture, and activity. Through the City’s Aurora Places adoption, it was clearly determined by the community that the Metro Center site should serve as the key location within Aurora’s Downtown with Transit Oriented Development (TOD). The Comprehensive plan calls for TODs to “Ensure an appropriate mix of housing, employment, entertainment and services focused around gathering places, such as a central plaza or main street” and are described as a “key entry point to the city with quality urban design, public art, and innovative businesses”. The Abilene Station TOD Master Plan is a mixed-use, urban, walkable TOD community that will be a hub for entertainment, retail, multi-family housing, hospitality, and commercial uses. The Abilene Station TOD Master Plan is consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

- B. The City’s existing infrastructure and public improvements, including but not limited to its water, wastewater, street, trail, and sidewalk systems, have adequate capacity to serve the proposed development, and any burdens on those systems have been mitigated to the degree practicable.

A Public Improvements Phasing Plan was approved with the Master Plan and sized the streets and associated infrastructure. The site plans proposed with this application are consistent with planned densities/land uses and will include and sustain the improvements as provided in the approved Public Improvement Plan and Master Utility Study. Please refer to the phasing plan as apart of the site plan submission.

The Abilene General Development Plan provides a cohesive, well-connected system of pedestrian and vehicular connectivity. Integrating with the surrounding areas. Urban street sections and enhanced pedestrian areas create a walkable community with vibrant energy.

- C. Major Site Plans shall be designed to preserve and protect natural areas, ridgelines, swales, natural landforms, water quality and wildlife habitat of riparian corridors, wetlands, and floodplains affected by the proposed development and to integrate those areas into site design where practicable.

The proposed design of the site will take into consideration any type of natural features to preserve and protect the natural beauty of the area. Additionally, the site will include lush vegetation to complement the existing conditions of the site as well as its proximity to the High Line Canal Trail.

- D. The application will improve or expand multi-modal connections with adjacent sites, neighborhoods, and urban centers.

The proposed design of the site will vastly expand connectivity between multi-modal forms of connections through strategic location of communal areas adjacent to the light rail station as well as regional trails as a way to promote public transit options as well as outdoor activities. The site will consist of a communal gathering area next to the light rail station, a second communal area will be placed south of the property next to the High Line Canal Trail to encourage social interaction and outdoor activities.

- E. The application is compatible with surrounding uses in terms of size, scale and building façade materials.

The proposed Mixed-Use TOD designation this project is compatible, as well as with the surrounding properties as they are also compatible with the Mixed-Use designation providing a variety of uses from schools, hotels, and multi-family. The future development of the site will complement what is currently in the area, while also expanding trail connections and pedestrian corridors to other areas such as the Abilene light rail station.

- F. The application mitigates any adverse impacts on the surrounding area to the degree practicable.

There are no anticipated adverse impacts associated with the proposed Master Plan Amendment application.

Comprehensive Plan

In addition to meeting the approval criteria, the proposed site plan and Master Plan Amendment also meets the intent of the Aurora Comprehensive Plan through the following items:

- A. Establish and maintain an integrated, multimodal transportation system.

The proposed Site Plan and Master Plan Amendment meets the goal of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) by creating a mix of uses and pedestrian oriented development that is compact, walkable and bikeable to remove the need of POV's in the area. As part of this project one of the main goals is to focus on creating communal areas that helps facilitate resident interaction and connectivity of multimodal forms of transportation throughout the site.

- B. Make active transportation, such as walking and biking, a viable alternative to driving.

In addition to creating connections to multimodal forms of transportation, the proximity of the site to the High Line Canal Trail also improves bicycle and pedestrian access to the site via connecting trails that will serve all residents of the area. By prioritizing bike and pedestrian travel, residents of the area will have an additional access point to the site without the need of a personal vehicle.



- C. Use high-quality community design to create vibrant and active places where people choose to live and work.

The proposed project and Master Plan amendment of the site will assist in the creation of an active destination that is properly enhanced via connections to trails and communal areas. Proximity to the light rail station will also offer the opportunity to create unique character for the neighborhood via public art, communal areas, and pedestrian access that will enhance quality of life, leading to a healthier community.

- D. Require that new development or redevelopment provides and maintains attractive, healthy, and water-efficient landscaping.

The proposed landscape for the site will serve as an extension of the communal areas throughout the site and will act as a buffer from other projects around the area in order to properly define the site and encourage walking and biking throughout the site. All landscape will meet city standards for location, irrigation and type.

We look forward to working with the City of Aurora on the review and approval of this first community improvement at Abilene Station. Feel free to contact me directly should you have any comments, questions, and/or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

Eva Mather
Principal
Applicant's Representative



NORRIS DESIGN

Planning | Landscape Architecture | Branding