

**AGENDA ITEM**

**TO:** Planning and Zoning Commission

**THROUGH:** Brandon Opiela, Planning Manager

**FROM:** Samantha Pickett, Planner II

**SUBJECT:** Conduct a Public Hearing to Consider/Discuss/Act on a Meritorious Exception for The Venue at Craig Ranch, Located Approximately 1,035 Feet North of Stacy Road and on the East Side of Custer Road

**APPROVAL PROCESS:** The Planning and Zoning Commission is the final approval authority for the proposed meritorious exception.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends denial of the proposed meritorious exception request due to the proposed building elevations' inability to ensure that an innovative or exceptional quality building will be constructed.

**APPLICATION SUBMITTAL DATE:** September 15, 2014 (Original Application)  
October 6, 2014 (Revised Submittal)  
October 10, 2014 (Revised Submittal)

**ITEM SUMMARY:** The applicant is requesting a meritorious exception to Section 146-139 (Architectural and site standards) of the Zoning Ordinance for the Venue at Craig Ranch Apartments, a multi-family residential development, located approximately 1,035 feet north of Stacy Road and on the east side of Custer Road. The applicant has indicated that the proposed elevations for the multiple-family residential development utilize varying material heights and a mix of finishing materials, including brick, stone stucco, and cement fiber board and siding to create visual stimulation and provide depth and shadow to the façade.

The meritorious exception is being requested because the proposed architectural elevations:

1. Feature cement fiber board/siding on each elevation of Buildings 1 through 7.
2. Feature wood columns on each elevation of the clubhouse building.
3. Do not meet the required minimum 85 percent masonry for each exterior wall visible from public right-of-way or adjacent properties used or zoned for residential purposes.

4. Do not meet the required minimum 50 percent masonry for each exterior wall located within a courtyard or not visible from public right-of-way or adjacent properties used or zoned for residential purposes.
5. Do not provide the required number of minor architectural and site enhancements.

The applicant has submitted and received approval of an associated site plan (14-022SP) and has a record plat (14-124RP) currently under review by Staff.

**COMPLIANCE WITH ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS:** The purpose of the architectural standards is to set minimum standards for the appearance of multi-family buildings and corresponding site elements, which are recognized as enhancing property values and are in the interest of the general welfare of the City of McKinney. Due to the masonry percentages provided per wall and the proposed prohibited exterior finishing materials (cement fiber board/siding and wood), the Venue at Craig Ranch Apartments do not satisfy the minimum requirements of the architectural standards.

The provisions within the Architectural and site standards section of the Ordinance regarding meritorious exceptions states that “it is not the intent of this ordinance to discourage innovation. An architectural and site design that does not conform with the specific requirements of this ordinance, but which has merit by marking a positive contribution to the visual environment and which is appropriate to the site and use, may be submitted for consideration as a meritorious exception.”

The Architectural and Site Standards section of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to granting a meritorious exception states that the Planning and Zoning Commission shall consider the following factors in determining the extent of any exception to be granted:

1. The extent to which the application meets other specific standards of this ordinance;
2. The extent to which the application meets the spirit and intent of this ordinance through the use of building materials, colors, and façade design to create a building of exceptional quality and appearance;
3. The positive or negative impact of the proposed project on surrounding property use and property values, in comparison to the expected impact of a project which could be built in conformance with the standards of this ordinance; and
4. The extent to which the proposed project accomplishes City goals.

**MERITORIOUS DESIGN:** The intent of the Architectural Standards Ordinance is to set standards for the appearance of multiple family buildings and corresponding site

elements, which are recognized as enhancing property values and are in the interest of the general welfare of the City.

The applicant has described in the letter of intent that “*more material height variation will provide a more interesting look to the façade and improve the overall appearance of the development*” and “*it is preferable to have alternating materials side by side as opposed to similar materials which create monotony.*”

While Staff understands the desire to create variation along the façade and within the projections and recesses, Staff is of the opinion that a similar design can be accomplished through the use of approved finishing materials (and meeting the minimum masonry percentages per wall), and therefore cannot support the request. Additionally, though the minor architectural and site enhancements section allows the applicant to select four enhancements from a list of eleven options, the applicant has requested to only be required to provide three. Staff sees no reason why the applicant cannot comply with this section of the Ordinance.

**IMPACT ON EXISTING DEVELOPMENT:** Staff has concerns that utilizing prohibited secondary finishing materials, reducing the amount of masonry provided on each wall of the buildings, and a reduction in the minor architectural and site enhancements may have a negative impact on future and surrounding developments. Staff feels that the applicant could utilize similar approved exterior finishing materials on the proposed elevations to achieve a similar look, which can promote continuity with future and existing developments surrounding the subject property.

**MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION:** A meritorious exception shall not be granted to serve as a convenience to the applicant or for reasons related to economic hardship. Staff believes that this is not the case with the proposed architectural design and meritorious exception.

**OPPOSITION TO OR SUPPORT OF REQUEST:** Staff has not received any comments either in opposition to or in support of this request.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Location Map and Aerial Exhibit
- Letter of Intent
- Proposed Architectural Elevations
- PowerPoint Presentation