



**City of Portland, Oregon**  
**Bureau of Development Services**  
**Land Use Services**  
FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** September 19, 2016  
**To:** Kurtis Fusaro, Gerding Edlen Development Co.  
**From:** Benjamin Nielsen, Development Review  
503-823-7812  
**Re:** EA 16-188383 DA – 5 MLK  
Design Advice Request Summary Memo September 8, 2016

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to hold a Design Advice Request regarding your project. I hope you find it informative and valuable as you continue with your project development. Attached is a summary of the comments provided by the Design Commission at the September 8, 2016 Design Advice Request. This summary was generated from notes taken at the public meeting and a subsequent review of the public meeting recordings. To review those recordings, please visit: <http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/9409318/>.

These Design Commission comments are intended to guide you in further design exploration of your project. These comments may also inform City staff when giving guidance over the course of future related land use reviews. It should be understood that these comments address the project as presented on September 8, 2016. As the project design evolves, the comments, too, may evolve or may no longer be pertinent.

Design Advice Requests are not intended to substitute for other Code-required land use or legislative procedures. Please keep in mind that the formal Type III land use review process [which includes a pre-application, a land use review application, public notification, a Staff Report and a public hearing] must be followed once the Design Advice Request meetings are complete, if formal approval for specific elements of your project is desired.

Please continue to coordinate with me as you prepare your formal land use application, or if you desire another Design Advice Request meeting with the Commission.

*Encl:*  
Summary Memo

*Cc:* Design Commission  
Respondents

This memo summarizes **Design Commission** design direction provided on September 8, 2016.

Commissioners in attendance on September 8, 2016: Tad Savinar (vice-chair), Andrew Clarke, Julie Livingston, Jessica Molinar, Don Vallaster, (email comments from David Wark (chair) read into record by Tad Savinar)

### **Large-scale issues with building massing**

- The Design Commissioners did not think that the proposed building massings or designs had responded meaningfully enough to their comments from the first DAR hearing in July.
  - One commissioner lamented the lack of an enthusiastic response to the previous DAR comments, stated that the project is extremely challenged, and said the designs shown require almost a “do-over.” He further suggested that the applicants stop saying that other massing concepts don’t meet the building program, as it does not help make the case for the building.
  - Another commissioner stated that the revised proposals were essentially the same massing with a “few very gentle moves.” She also stated that the building does not read as a full building in the round. Additionally, it needs to read as a gateway and a strong building from the west and not just the east.
  - A third commissioner stated that the building needs to read as more than the sum of its parts.
- How does the building sit within the broader city, and how does it become a gateway building? One commissioner stated that he saw no significant changes or attempts to define that concern since the first DAR hearing. The building seems to form from an internal viewpoint rather than an external viewpoint.
- What does this building want to be in the broader city context? This building is going to characterize this part of the city for years to come. What is it really going to do for the city? How is it going to start to shape the east side and relate to its environment?
  - Commissioners stated that the building should relate to the Yard, but not replicate it. It should also relate to the context of the Burnside Bridge, the Fair-haired Dumbbell, and other nearby development. Regarding the Yard, the good thing about that building is the way that it doesn’t face the city straight on—it cantos as a gesture towards the city and creates an aperture for Burnside.
- The most-important thing is that it becomes a really great building. Right now, it has the curve, the “gardens of Babylon”, the cantilever.... Isn’t there a really solitary move?
- Commissioners reiterated their desire to see the bulk of the building massing shifted to the south.

### **Analysis of proposed massing schemes**

- Commissioners generally agreed that the proposed “pinwheel” massing scheme was the stronger of the two presented. A slim majority of the commissioners indicated that the “graphic” façade concept on that scheme seemed to be the most-workable of the two concepts, though there were dissenting options that favored the “rhythm” concept more. However, all the commissioners stressed that this massing scheme still needed a lot more work before it could be successful, and they requested that the applicants also bring in, at a minimum, a “scheme X” in addition to any further work on the pinwheel scheme.
  - One commissioner stated that the pinwheel scheme has potential to be “massaged.” One specific point he made is that the bridge element could be thinner, more transparent, and better articulated.
  - Another commissioner asked if the applicants had tried reversing the pinwheel scheme, with the proud part of the building on the south end of the block.
  - A third commissioner thought the pinwheel massing was the best gateway form of the options presented. (Other commissioners agreed with her later on.) She stated that it has the best proportions of all the schemes shown. Gives more opportunity to do something great with proportions on the façade and allows the building to have different languages to split the building up but still retain some cohesiveness.
- Commissioners clearly stated that the proposed “west wing” schemes did not respond to their previous comments in terms of shifting the building massing to the south and was not successful.
  - Among other issues, the glass tower on the east-west wing was a sticking point among the commissioners. One said it “makes a gesture towards the west.”

Another said it “communicates well the illustration to the city,” though he had problems with the earth-tone rainscreen on the rest of the building (other commissioners agreed on that latter point). Two others thought that it read more like the back side of the building.

- Commissioners noted a continued struggle to reconcile the base of the building with the tower, including on the pinwheel scheme. The “graphic” façade scheme seemed to do the best job of unifying the two, though much more work remains to make it successful.
  - One commissioner suggested that the tower along MLK could blend down into the base more—there’s more weaving that could take place between the tower and the base.
  - On the “rhythm” façade scheme, the commissioners thought the massing of the tower and its articulation relative to the more-transparent base at the southeast corner of the building was very successful—the glazed podium was stepped back slightly from the mass of the tower. The northwest corner in that scheme, though similar, was less successful since the articulation between the two components was missing and the mass didn’t extend down as far.
  - Commissioners asked if the applicants had looked at wrapping the notch between the base and the tower around the entire building—even along the SE MLK façade.

### Other details

- The commissioners provided guidance on issues other than the building massing articulation, though stressed that massing issues are paramount at this point.
- The proposed earth-tone rainscreen didn’t receive much support as a cladding material for this building.
- Regarding balconies, most commissioners expressed support for providing them.
  - One commissioner stated that “the ability to step outside is valuable,” especially as the city becomes denser.
  - Another commissioner stated that their importance is not that you occupy the space, but that it lets you “open the wall” to get air and light. They dramatically improve the interior of the apartment. She stated that Juliette balconies would be sufficient in that regard.
  - A third stated that they weren’t as important to him, given the amenities provided the nearby urban environment, but that they would be great if they don’t detract from the architecture of the building.
- Regarding ground floor inactive uses, commissioners clarified their position on the garages and service uses along SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave near the bridge, stating that this area needs to have as much active space as possible. One commissioner clearly stated that she would not support a modification to the ground floor windows standard on SE 3<sup>rd</sup>. Another stated that putting an inactive space right next to the bridge is challenging from a safety standpoint. A third stated that building services need to be pushed back if they aren’t required to be on the exterior.
- The commission did not touch on questions that staff had raised about provisions for public art or water features—issues with massing and articulation need to be resolved before those conversations are relevant.

### Closing remarks

- The commissioners ultimately leaned towards the pinwheel scheme, though they stressed that it is not the only solution, and they would like to see at least one other “scheme X” that is completely different.
  - The pinwheel scheme has characteristics that could make it work, but the massing can and should change. It is probably possible to push the pinwheel design quite a bit and get where you need to be. Most of the other commissioners present agreed.
  - One commissioner stated that the pinwheel scheme has lots of possibilities, but what do you see from across the river?
- The materials shown are much too similar to those shown in the first DAR hearing and need improvement.
- Reconsider the proportions of the program as expressed through the massing of the building.
- The commissioners reiterated their discussion of the “notch” and cantilever, stating that it could be a useful element to help articulate the building—the clarity of that section helps to mitigate the bulk at the base of the building.

- A single building articulation is important on MLK and the corner of MLK and Burnside. The building needs to read as an elegant volume, not a base and tower. A compelling design is needed. The schemes that show a base articulated very differently than the tower are not successful on MLK and at the northeast corner. The different parts of the building need to be derived from the same concept.

#### **For the next hearing**

- Show comparative studies of the massing options on the same page. There is no need to spend a lot of time on illustrations. Bring back a revised “pinwheel” scheme and a completely different “scheme X” at a minimum. Include additional comparative pages showing schemes and studies that were rejected.
- Examine other approaches to the program. Is there a way to make a vertical split in the program work, rather than a horizontal split?
- Please include a page number on every sheet and a sheet index at the beginning of the set.

#### **Exhibit List**

- A. Applicant’s Submittals
  1. Original drawing set, dated 06.13.2016
  2. Revised draft drawing set, dated 07.01.2016
  3. Revised drawing set, submitted to the Design Commission, dated 07.07.2016
  4. Project description, dated 07.07.2016
  5. DAR Update Review drawings, dated 08.02.2016
  6. Revised drawing set, submitted to the Design Commission, dated 09.08.2016
- B. Zoning Map
- C. Drawings
  - 1-84. See Exhibit A-6. (Exhibits C-16, C-21, C-26, C-39, C-44, & C-50 attached)
- D. Notification
  1. Posting instructions sent to applicant
  2. Posting notice as sent to applicant
  7. Applicant’s statement certifying posting
  8. General information on DAR process included with e-mailed posting/notice
- E. Service Bureau Comments
  1. Bureau of Environmental Services
- F. Public Testimony
  1. Peter Finley Fry, Central Eastside Industrial Council Land Use and Urban Development Committee, dated 09.06.2016 and received 09.08.2016 – letter in support of proposal
- G. Other
  1. Application form
  2. Staff memo to the Design Commission, dated 07.15.2016
  3. Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines & Special Design Guidelines for the Design Zone of the Central Eastside District of the Central City Plan matrix, dated 07.15.2016
  4. Staff presentation for 07.21.2016
  5. Applicant’s presentation for 07.21.2016
  6. Design Advice Request #1 summary memo, dated 08.01.2016
  7. Staff memo to the Design Commission, dated 09.01.2016
  8. Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines & Special Design Guidelines for the Design Zone of the Central Eastside District of the Central City Plan matrix, 09.01.2016
  9. Staff presentation for 09.08.2016
  10. Applicant’s presentation for 09.08.2016