



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

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MEMORANDUM

Date: May 4, 2017
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Benjamin Nielsen, Development Review, 503-823-7812
Re: EA 17-117402 DA – U-Store Self-Storage
Design Advice Request Staff Memo May 11, 2017

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request for a proposed self-service storage building in the River District Subdistrict of the Central City Plan District. The proposal is on a 42,494 square foot, roughly-triangular site bound by NW 14th Ave on the west, NW Savier St on the south, and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to the northeast. The site also lies at the terminus of an extension of NW 13th Ave.

Development Team:

Architects: Jeff Wright, Jack Miller, and Sugandha Pai - MCA Architects, PC
Owner: Tiffany Sweitzer - Hoyt Street Properties
Project Valuation: \$8,000,000

Project Summary

- **Zoning.** EXd – Central Employment with Design Overlay.
- **FAR.** Maximum base FAR = 4:1. FAR bonuses may be earned to increase total maximum FAR to 9:1 since the site is located in the North Pearl Subarea. Proposed FAR is approx. 2.13:1 at 90,572 SF proposed floor area.
- **Height.** Max height allowed = 100'-0". Currently proposed at 83'-0" to top of parapet. Additional height may be earned through provisions in the North Pearl Subarea development standards.
- **Central City Master Plan.** The site is one of the last remaining parcels in the Glacier Park (aka Hoyt Street Properties) CCMP area. The original master plan was approved in 1989 and amended in 1992 and 1999. Conditions of approval from the CCMP still apply to the remaining undeveloped parcels. Of particular relevance to this case:
 - Condition of approval E.2 requires dedication of a pedestrian easement running north from NW 13th Ave, then turning northwest at the railroad tracks and extending to NW 15th Ave. This easement was to be dedicated as part of either "Phase 5" or the "final phase" plat of the 1999 subdivision approval, but this was never done. The primary purpose of this condition is to ensure the provision of a "useful and pleasant pedestrian circulation system and for adequate open space within the plan boundaries" pursuant to approval criterion 3 for the Central City Master Plan.
 - The 1999 plan did not anticipate that NW 13th Ave or NW Savier St would be extended to intersect as they are now proposed to do. Thus, staff believes that portion of the condition could be easily revised through a Central City Master Plan amendment. However, it would still be important to ensure that there is "adequate open space" provided in the area, which staff believes may be best accomplished with a pedestrian plaza located at the end of NW 13th Ave.

- Condition of approval G.2 also speaks to the provision of “landscaping, seating with backs, and lighting” that must be provided in the required pedestrian tracts and easements.
- **Additional Standards in the North Pearl Subarea (33.510.251).** Since the site is more than 40,000 SF in area, a minimum of 30% of the area over 40,000 SF (the calculation results in approx. 750 SF of required open area) must be devoted to open area, per 33.510.251.B.2.a.
 - This open area may include parks, plazas, covered or uncovered walkways, public fountains, and landscaped features or areas, per 33.510.251.B.2.c.
 - Parking areas and landscaping within parking areas are not included.
 - At least 50% of required open area must be in the form of parks or plazas. Limitations on the amount of walkway, shadow standards, tree standards, and other standards may be found in paragraph C of this section.
- **Ground Floor.** The ground floor includes 6 tall retail/office spaces oriented towards NW Savier St (about 8,600 SF total) and accessed from a new raised dock (on the site itself) that runs along NW Savier and NW 14th Ave.
 - The main entrance to the storage facility is located at the northwest corner of the building facing NW 14th Ave and accessed off a separate raised entry plaza.
- **Upper Floors** are devoted to storage.

DAR Discussion Items

Staff believes the major issues for this DAR revolve around **context**: How well does the proposal respond to the neighborhood context in terms of its urban design/pedestrian environment response, ground floor uses and design, massing, and proposed façade articulation and materials? The immediate context includes low-scale warehouse buildings, newly proposed/constructed residential/retail mixed-use buildings, the towering freeway ramps leading to and from the Fremont Bridge, and the railroad.

1. Urban Design/Pedestrian Environment/Ground Floor.

- a. The proposed building includes a raised dock along NW Savier St and NW 14th Ave. This could be successful, and the active ground floor uses along both streets should help develop the ped environment. All retail entries face NW Savier, however; at least one should be provided facing NW 14th and another towards the proposed plaza.
- b. The arcade condition (all on private property) is unique in this part of the district, though the tall ground floor helps it to feel very open.
- c. Plaza at the north end of NW 13th Ave is too large. Staff has concerns with how this space be programmed and used. Staff recommended a plaza at this location to meet guidelines, the North Pearl Subarea standards, and respond to CCMP conditions of approval, but its scope and size should be focused on providing a successful transition between the end of NW 13th and the railroad. Connections to the courtyard at The Abigail may also help this space. The majority should likely be for passive use or landscaping.
- d. An open loading area sits under the northernmost step in the massing. A more integrated solution, i.e., with parking and/or loading within the building, should be explored.

2. Massing.

- a. The building is massed up to the southwest corner of the site and steps back from the east and west edges of the building towards the railroad. Additional massing should be placed along NW 14th could create a better edge to that street. Please note the easement that crosses the northwest corner of the site, however.

3. Façade articulation and materials.

- a. The façade is proposed to be clad entirely in metal panels, painted with a single field of color surrounded by a darker-toned border.

- b. Window slits are scattered around the facades, but many of these windows open into storage units. The patterning appears random. Staff believes that corridors should be located around the edges of the building, with a more regular or ordered pattern of windows opening onto areas used by people.
- c. The material response and articulation seem weak relative to the context; tall warehouse buildings in the Pearl usually incorporate finer detailing to add human scale. A nearby self-service storage facility in the Northwest Plan District incorporates a very-patterned façade to provide this interest. Most residential buildings in the vicinity incorporate brick.
- d. The signage is large and out of character with other signs in the area.

4. Gateway.

- a. The site also lies at an identified gateway location, which is shown at NW 14th Ave and the freeway overpass on the Central City Plan Map. While the Fremont Bridge itself helps to identify this gateway, the proposed building should play a supporting role.

No modifications or adjustments have yet been identified, although the proposed sign area likely far exceeds allowable maximums.

Approval Criteria

The Design Review approval criteria for this site are the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines, the River District Design Guidelines, and the Self-Service Storage Design Guidelines in zoning code section 33.284.050.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Attachments: Drawing Package, dated April 18, 2017

Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines/River District Guidelines Matrix

Links: Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines
(<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/34250>)

River District Design Guidelines
(<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/58869>)

Self-Service Storage Design Guidelines
(<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/53327>)