



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

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MEMORANDUM

Date: November 3, 2015
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Jeff Mitchem, Development Review
503.823.7011
Re: 15-224975 DA – N. Fargo & Williams – The Strata Mixed Use
Design Advice Request Commission Memo – November 12, 2015 Hearing

Overview

Attached, please find a drawing set for the “Strata” and a Community Design Guidelines Cheat Sheet for the Design Advice Request for a new 6-story mixed-use building with the following key components of the project:

- *Zoning.* RXd, Central Residential with a Design Overlay
- *Height.* 71’ proposed, 100’ allowed.
- *FAR.* 3:1 proposed, 4:1 allowed.
- *Retail.* A total of approximately 3,000-4,000 square feet of retail oriented to eastward to N. Williams Ave,
- *Auto Parking.* 44 below-grade parking spaces (33 required),
- *Bike Parking.* 144 residential long-term bike parking spaces (110 required) and 5 short-term spaces (5 required.)
- *Loading.* One (1) Std B proposed. Two (2) Std B or one (1) Std A required. Adjustment required.
- *Materials* include cast-in-place concrete on the ground floor and fiber cement (Silbonit) panel on upper floors. Metal canopies, aluminum storefront, VPI vinyl windows, metal railings.
- *Upper Floors.* 5 levels of apartments in two masses separated by a central courtyard fronted by at-grade live-work units.
- *Amenity Spaces.* Eco-roof decks, lounge, bike/dog wash and bike repair stations.

Context

The property lies within the Eliot Pedestrian District. N Williams is designated a Transit Access Street, City Bikeway, and Community Corridor in the City’s Transportation System Plan.

Directly north of the property across N Fargo St is the recently approved (Appeal of a Type II Denial) “Woods” by the same architect. The north half of the site is a surface parking lot, while the remainder is vacant. To the west is a mixed-use building currently under construction and across N Vancouver Avenue is a large Red Cross office and facility. Further to the north, across N Cook is a large mixed-use building under construction and recently constructed grocery store with surface parking. Across N Williams are 1-story commercial buildings built in 1986 and 1958. Beyond the 100-foot deep strip of commercial properties fronting N Williams, and to the southeast across Williams, is the Eliot Conservation District, primarily comprised of single-dwelling residences built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. To the south of the property and across N Monroe Street is a surface parking lot serving the 1909 Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church.

Modifications/Adjustments/Design Exceptions (Based on Preliminary Drawing Set)

- MOD 1** **Ground Floor Windows** (33.140.230) on north and south elevations.
Required: 50% wall length, 25% wall area. Proposed: Estimated to be approximately 25% length and 15% wall area on the N Fargo and N Monroe frontages.
- Design Exception** **Garage Door Setback** to reduce garage door setback from 20' to 2'.

Design Advice Topics

Below, staff has identified topics for inclusion in the DAR discussion. Please refer to the Community Design Guidelines (below) for a preliminary guidelines assessment.

General Comments

1. **Design Parti.** The applicant has noted that the intent behind the design is to evoke stratified bedrock and express water and vegetation. Staff believes that this concept could meet the *Interest, Quality, and Composition* guideline, potentially with a bit more regularization; however, there is a concern that the concept of the building suggesting a full display of its stormwater management function will necessitate a fully resolved and thoroughly detailed drawing set describe the means by which the green walls and the cistern at Williams Avenue serve to successfully convey the overall design intent.
2. **Massing, Scale and Form.** The building's bulk is massed in two primary volumes separated by a sunken (approximately 3') courtyard fronted by four live-work units and the residential lobby. Staff questions the logic behind a two-volume massing expression with north-south orientation considering solar exposure and street activation (N. Williams.)
3. **Exterior Material Quality.** Exterior material quality and detailing are of concern – quality/amount of the proposed materials (fiber cement panels) and compatibility with the wood and masonry context.
4. **Ground Level.** Design, detail, quality and vibrancy of the ground level at all four frontages are critical – no frontage should be discounted as “back-of-house”. Staff is concerned with the lack of entries oriented to the N Williams elevation – totaling four (including the courtyard) in 200' of frontage.
5. **Exposed Pedestrian Bridges.** The project's single elevator core is in the southern of the two building masses and access to the northern building mass is via an exterior pedestrian bridge at each level. Staff has concerns about exposure of residents to the elements.
6. **Interior Courtyard Space.** At approximately 34' wide by 60' deep, the courtyard will be shaded by the southerly building most of the day throughout all seasons (drawing set sheet C.56). While physically separated from the public realm with a 3' grade drop, this area has the potential to impact the public realm, depending on the level of activity generated by the outdoor spaces at upper levels and the viability of the proposed green walls (Vera Wall). Staff notes that the width of the courtyard and walkways, limited connect to N. Williams, as well as the program for the amenity spaces and balcony locations at each level will have an impact of the vitality of the space.
7. **Vents and Louvers.** Though preliminary drawings do not depict, integration with building skin/window systems will be required.
8. **Mechanical.** Though preliminary drawings do not depict, design integration with building facades and/or rooftop treatment.

Community Design Guidelines. This proposal must adequately address the Community Design Guidelines. Please see the following preliminary guidelines consistency analysis for the project as currently proposed.

| GUIDELINE | MEETS | COULD DO BETTER | DOES NOT MEET |
|--|-------|---|---------------|
| <p>P1. Community Plan Area Character. Enhance the sense of place and identity of community plan areas by incorporating site and building design features that respond to the area's unique characteristics and neighborhood traditions.</p> | | <p>Unclear in submittal. Describe how project implements St Albina Community Plan.</p> | |
| <p>P2. Historic and Conservation Districts. Enhance the identity of historic and conservation districts by incorporating site and building design features that reinforce the area's historic significance. Near historic and conservation districts, use such features to reinforce and complement the historic areas.</p> | | <p>NA</p> | |
| <p>P3. Gateways. Develop or strengthen the transitional role of gateways identified in adopted community and neighborhood plans.</p> | | <p>NA</p> | |
| <p>E2. Stopping Places. New large-scale projects should provide comfortable places along pedestrian circulation routes where people may stop, visit, meet, and rest.</p> | | <p>Ground-floor live/work are recessed within courtyard – not visible from St. More resolution of seating and gathering potential given small size of courtyard.</p> | |
| <p>E3. The Sidewalk Level of Buildings. Create a sense of enclosure and visual interest to buildings along sidewalks and pedestrian areas by incorporating small scale building design features, creating effective gathering places, and differentiating street level facades.</p> | | <p>Canopies and expressed floor slabs at level 2+ and balconies help serve to reinforce ground level. More balconies on N Williams.</p> | |
| <p>E4. Corners that Build Active</p> | | | |

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| <p>Intersections. Create intersections that are active, unified, and have a clear identity through careful scaling detail and location of buildings, outdoor areas, and entrances.</p> | <p>Informal spill-out seating/cover opportunities at NE corner.</p> | <p>Oriel Windows appear to be proposed. Clarification needed.</p> | |
| <p>E5. Light, Wind, and Rain. Enhance the comfort of pedestrians by locating and designing buildings and outdoor areas to control the adverse effects of sun, shadow, glare, reflection, wind, and rain.</p> | <p>Projecting window bays + balconies.</p> | | |
| <p>D1. Outdoor Areas. When sites are not fully built on, place buildings to create sizable, usable outdoor areas. Design these areas to be accessible, pleasant, and safe. Connect outdoor areas to the circulation system used by pedestrians.</p> | | <p>Functionality of courtyard space given dimensional/program constraints – excessive water/landscaping?</p> | |
| <p>D2. Main Entrances. Make the main entrances to houses and buildings prominent, interesting, pedestrian accessible, and transit-oriented.</p> | | <p>Lobby access in recessed courtyard – not visible from N. Williams.</p> | |
| <p>D3. Landscape Features. Enhance site and building design through appropriate placement, scale, and variety of landscape features.</p> | | <p>Detail the Verawall and better resolve design detail.</p> | |
| <p>D4. Parking Areas and Garages. Integrate parking in a manner that is attractive and complementary to the site and its surroundings. Locate parking in a manner that minimizes negative impacts on the community and its pedestrians. Design parking garage exteriors to visually respect and integrate with adjacent buildings and environment.</p> | | <p>Church parking – operational concerns, cooperative agreement issues. Loading space is awkward, forward egress – PBOT?</p> | |
| <p>D5. Crime Prevention. Use site design and building orientation to reduce the likelihood of crime through the design and placement of windows, entries, active ground level uses, and outdoor areas.</p> | <p>Active ground floor.</p> | <p>More eyes on courtyard from balconies above.</p> | |

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| <p>D6. Architectural Integrity. Respect the original character of buildings when making modifications that affect the exterior. Make additions compatible in scale, color, details, material proportion, and character with the existing building.</p> | | <p>NA</p> | |
| <p>D7. Blending into the Neighborhood. Reduce the impact of new development on established neighborhoods by incorporating elements of nearby, quality buildings such as building details, massing, proportions, and materials.</p> | | <p>Reference local architectural language how? Concerns with excessive fiber-cement panel use.</p> | |
| <p>D8. Interest, Quality, and Composition. All parts of a building should be interesting to view, of long lasting quality, and designed to form a cohesive composition.</p> | <p>The upper story volumes are strong as a predominate compositional element yet could be simplified.</p> | <p>The ground floor relationship in courtyard needs more study.</p> | <p>No too much fiber-cement panel. Window & storefront systems?</p> |

The review standards and criteria are the Albina Community Plan (Chapter 33.505) and the Community Design Guidelines (above). Please contact me with any questions or concerns – Jeff Mitchem, 503.823.7011 | jeffrey.mitchem@portlandoregon.gov.