



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

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** April 8 , 2016  
**To:** KEITH NIELSEN, GENSLER ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN & PLANNING  
WORLDWIDE  
**From:** Hillary Adam, Land Use Services  
503-823-3581 / [hillary.adam@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:hillary.adam@portlandoregon.gov)  
**Re:** 15-273235 DA – PacWest Alterations  
Design Advice Request Summary Memo February 18, 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 February 18, 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/webdrawer/search/rec?sm\\_class=uri\\_7547&count&rows=50](http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/webdrawer/search/rec?sm_class=uri_7547&count&rows=50)

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 February 18, 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 February 18, 2016.

Commissioners in attendance on February 18, 2016: David Wark, Tad Savinar, Don Vallaster, Julie Livingston

### **General Comments.**

- **Generally, the Commission acknowledged the significance of the building and noted that it is likely to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places after its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. As such, respecting the architectural integrity of the building, its iconic curves, and its restrained material palette is critical.**
- One Commissioner noted that, as Stewart Brand said, the second thirty years is the most dangerous period for any building and we're in that second thirty years with this building, so we have to be mindful of the proposed changes and not compromise its integrity.
- A couple Commissioners made comments regarding the clarity of the drawing packet. It should have page numbers, be in booklet form, have scaled drawings, a north arrow, and should include all important details. They stated that going forward; it would be good to have the existing condition on one side with the proposed condition on the other.

### **Compatibility of Design.**

- One Commissioner agreed that the building has always been a bit of an ice queen (kind of cold and not very approachable), but the proposed moves seem to tart it up. He noted that the black steel, wood, and the dangly things at the front entrance do not seem to make sense. He liked the openness of the glass on the east side but the proposed forms are out of character with the building; they are diminishing, not enhancing the building.
- One Commissioner acknowledged the difficulty of the project due to the significance of the building. She stated a hope that the proposed work would not be undone in 20 years in an effort to list the building and suggested that therefore the proposed work needs to be worthy of the building. She understood the desire to put clear glass and open up the entry so that the building has the entry it wants and deserves. She noted that the proposed material choices (steel, wood) are difficult to reconcile with the existing palette as they are very much the preferred palette of contemporary construction, rather than of the era of the building.
- One Commissioner noted that he supported the proposed changes on the interior but was less supportive of the proposed exterior changes. He noted that every building the Commission sees has weathered steel, native grasses, and green walls. He stated that he cannot support steel at the base or projections into the right-of-way. He noted that the canopy looks tacked on and unrelated to the building. He noted that he could maybe accept the third version for the east entry that shows the curve to be recreated in a narrower opening, but was less open to a squared-off entry. He noted that alternate paving in the brick and black metal planters are non-starters. He noted that the approach needs to be more timeless than what is currently proposed.
- One Commissioner stated that he agreed with the goals in terms of pursuit of a stronger connection between the building and the street and vibrant retail, but noted that the goal of preserving and enhancing the PacWest iconic design is being compromised. He noted that due to the building's destiny of National Register listing, the applicant should refer to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, which provide clear guidelines on how to approach additions and changes to historic buildings. He noted that if this building is treated as a historic building, the SOI Standards are the template for making decisions. He noted that the first step is to identify the character defining features – the aluminum, the curve, the glass, the bullnose granite, the glass canopy, so with regard to form and materials, that should be your source for decision making. He noted that the applicant indicated that all decisions should mean something and stated that the meaning for decision-making lies with the existing building. He noted that marrying that with the desire to create stronger connections and vibrant retail without forsaking one for the other is the trick to making something special unforgettable, but right now it is just like everything we see all of the time. He suggested embracing the quirkiness of this 1980s building and make people see it in a new way.
- One Commissioner suggested that if any of the existing canopy is removed then it should be stored somewhere.

- The Commission was supportive of the proposed change to introduce clear glazing in the vertical wall on the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue elevation. One Commissioner said that he was interested in seeing more glass and lightness.
- With regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor glass enclosure of floor area, the Commission suggested that the new glazed walls should not engage the columns, but rather be constructed behind them. One Commissioner noted that with the existing building pattern, those are freestanding columns with the glass set way back, so it is more appropriate to keep them as freestanding columns with the glass not engaging them.

### **Curved Forms.**

- One Commissioner stated that she was having a really hard time with the proposed changes to the curves. She noted that the proposed changes to the east entrance could be supportable but changes to any of the four major corners of the building would be much more difficult to support. She noted that she would not support the removal of the curved glass at the northeast corner for a folding window wall.
- One Commissioner noted that the proposed orthogonal revision to the east entrance recess is distinct from the original, but wondered if it was too distinct. He wondered if the curve could be replicated but with the aluminum treated in a way that distinguishes itself from the original condition. He noted that if you're sympathetic to the form with curves and you can differentiate it with material that could be a good way to go.
- A couple Commissioners stated that the thing they like about the concave curves on the east is that they iris down the aperture to the entrance. One Commissioner stated that he thought the existing concave curves at the east recess were strong, not subtle.
- One Commissioner stated that he did not mind the squared off corners at the east entrance.
- One Commissioner noted that you do not see curved glass anymore. He noted that a major tenet of historic preservation is that any intervention can be reversible so any proposed changes should embrace the existing context of the building but allow the possibility to be changed back.
- The Commission was open to operable storefronts at the northeast retail space as long as the curved corner remains intact. One Commissioner commented that the facets kill the operable storefronts at the curve. Another Commissioner suggested that perhaps the glazing could remain fixed to table height and then be operable above at either side of the corner.

### **Privatization of Right-of-Way.**

- The Commission was not supportive of paving or other elements projecting into the right-of-way beyond the extent of the existing condition.
- One Commissioner noted that these streets are paved in brick and granite; this is not a temporary place; this is blocks from the museum and the park blocks.

### **Canopies.**

- One Commissioner stated that while the existing canopies are very much part of the building's architecture, canopies tend to change over time and could be returned relatively easily if necessary for listing on the National Register.
- One Commissioner noted that removing 100% of the canopies is not the right approach. He wondered if something could be done that makes them new again such as adding lighting. He wondered how you balance their removal with preservation of the existing character.
- One Commissioner noted that the curved canopies kind of echo the old curved bus stop shelters, but they may not be the most successful part of this building.
- Another Commissioner suggested that perhaps you could keep the form, but remove the curved glass and just have a sheet of glass so it would be less hulking, but lighter and more airy.
- One Commissioner noted that the existing canopies may be just too low, but if they are going to be changed it does not make sense to propose black canopies because it makes it darker; you would want it to be as light as possible, so glass makes the most sense.
- With regard to the proposed retail canopies, one Commissioner noted that wood was not the correct solution and wondered if the vertical element was necessary or if there could be a more minimal approach.

- One Commissioner noted that the proposed east canopy is solid and has a darkening effect. He noted that there is an existing material language of aluminum and glass so the most neutral materials that can be introduced are glass or aluminum (maybe of a slightly different color).
- Another Commissioner stated that the proposed east canopy is too big for the building. Another Commissioner wondered if it had to be up that high and if it could be lowered.
- Another Commissioner stated that it did not seem like it has to be that wide. They noted that the size of the proposed canopy could be diminished either through its transparency, color, or size itself.
- One Commissioner wondered if the canopy could be an elliptical shape that did not extend to the edges.

#### **Materials.**

- The Commission stated that wood and black steel are not compatible materials for this building. They suggested looking to the existing palette for inspiration.
- The Commission noted that if the proposed planters were granite, they would be more tied in with the existing condition.

#### **Landscaping.**

- The Commission suggested that the proposed landscaped berms do not work with the existing context of an urban building with a granite base, suggesting that they seem rather suburban.
- One Commissioner stated that the landscaping seems too casual, particularly the vertical elements.
- The Commission was not supportive of vertical landscaping elements (green walls).

#### **Public Comments.**

- Iain MacKenzie, DCoMoMo, on February 17, 2016, wrote with strong concerns regarding the proposed alterations. He noted the loss of character-defining curves at the east entrance for a small gain in floor area as undesirable, and noted that creating a strong connection between the interior and exterior should not come at the expense of the curved glass storefront. He noted the restrained palette of glass and aluminum and stated that the proposed wood and green walls has very different qualities and noted that removal of original canopies for something relatively ephemeral would be regrettable. He suggested additional study of the existing building by the applicants.
- John Russell, original owner, developer, and leasing agent of the building when first constructed, provided oral and written testimony (Ex. G-6), noting that in 1990 the Wall Street Journal named it one of the top ten towers in the U.S. He indicated hope that the building would be added to the National Register when it turns 50 years old and suggested the Design Commission should approach the review the same way the Landmarks Commission would and respect the original designer and design. He noted that Hugh Stubbins, was selected through a competition over other prominent architects including Philip Johnson and Minoru Yamasaki, due to his passion for creating a building that is successful at the ground level. He noted that the building had lost the ground level vitality that it had when it first opened, but stated that the problem is not with the architecture, but rather due to prior indifferent, but well-meaning asset managers. He noted that he is excited by the proposed changes to the interior and the outdoor decks, but objects to the proposed exterior changes. He does believe that Stubbins would propose such changes to the exterior as they are not compatible with the building. He stated that the proposed changes to the entrances do not match the power and simplicity of Stubbins' design. He also noted that eliminating the awnings reduces the amount of rain protection for pedestrians. He closed by stating that Stubbins design deserves more respect than the current proposal shows.

#### **Exhibit List**

- A. Applicant's Submittals
  1. Original drawing set, Schematic Design 2
  2. Original Drawing Set, Schematic Design 3
  3. Large Schematic Plans

4. Site Plan
- B. Zoning Map
- C. Drawings
  1. Drawing Set for February 18, 2016 hearing
- D. Notification
  1. Posting instructions sent to applicant
  2. Posting notice as sent to applicant
  3. Applicant's statement certifying posting
  4. General information on DAR process included with e-mailed posting/notice
- E. Service Bureau Comments
  1. Portland Bureau of Transportation
  2. Portland Bureau of Environmental Services
- F. Public Testimony
  1. Iain MacKenzie, DoCoMoMo, on February 17, 2016, wrote with concerns regarding the proposed changes.
- G. Other
  1. Application form
  2. Staff Memo to Design Commission, dated February 8, 2016
  3. Staff Presentation, dated February 18, 2016
  4. Applicant Presentation, dated February 18, 2016
  5. Testifier Sign-In sheet for February 18, 2016
  6. John Russell, written comments, received February 18, 2016
  7. DAR summary, dated April 8, 2016