



City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Development Services
Land Use Services

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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 29, 2016
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Staci Monroe, City Planner – Design/Historic Review Team
503-823-0624, staci.monroe@portlandoregon.gov
Re: May 5, 2016 Agenda Item - Design Advice Request
EA 16-130513 DA – Multnomah County Central Courthouse

Please find exhibits attached for the 1st Design Advice Request (DAR) for the new courthouse building for Multnomah County that will replace the existing facility at 1021 SW 4th Avenue. Two DARs are anticipated by the applicant given the complexities of the site, program and overall project. The new building will house multiple courts, offices for District Attorneys, Public Defenders, Sheriff, and support areas for staff, juries, defendants and the public.

The full-block site is bounded by SW 1st, Madison, Jefferson and Naito at the base of the Hawthorne Bridge. The project includes the new 17-story building on the currently vacant L-shaped portion of the block and renovations to the Jefferson Station building (Historic Landmark) at the southwest corner of the block. Alterations to the Jefferson Station building will be considered by the Landmarks Commission in late June.

PROPOSAL

- 17-story, 300' tall building exceeds the 200' maximum height allowed. This block, along with others in downtown, has been identified in the West Quadrant Plan (BPS, 2015) and the Central City Concept Plan (BPS, 2012) for additional height in future planning efforts. The Central City 2035 Plan (currently out for public review) will likely implement these recommendations; however, the effective date of this implementation is too late for the project, which must be under construction by the first quarter of 2017 to meet the requirements for State funding. Therefore, the County is seeking a legislative change to the current Zoning Code to increase the height on this block only to reflect the 325' height anticipated in the future. The Planning and Sustainability Commission reviewed the height amendment at their hearing on April 25, 2016, where they recommended approval to City Council. A hearing before Council will likely occur in the end of May or early June 2016.
- 10.8:1 FAR proposed (435,030 SF above-grade) – 9:1 base with up to 12:1 allowed with bonuses or transfers. Additional 1.8:1 FAR will be achieved from bonuses (not yet identified) and or transfer.
- No parking will be provided on site.
- Two driveways serving a secured sally port are proposed at the southeast corner with loading on the street along the Jefferson frontage.
- Outdoor spaces include the hardscaped entry plaza at the northwest corner and green open space across Madison to the north.
- Building exterior finishes include limestone, curtainwall (vision and spandrel), punched window openings, metal accents
- Modifications to ground floor windows, required building lines along SW 1st and Adjustment to loading

DAR DISCUSSION ITEMS - Staff has identified the following potential areas of discussion for the May 5th DAR:

1. **Ground Level** – The main entrance and public face of the building occurs along SW 1st wrapping the north edge. The remainder of the ground façade appears to be overly program driven with Jefferson as the loading/service frontage, Madison with a linear elevator/stair core and Naito with uses and activities needing the highest security. While the lobby entry sequence is grand and anchors the northwest corner, Staff does not believe that on balance it is greater than activation of the 3 other frontages, which Modifications to ground floor windows are needed.
 - a. Naito is identified as an Enhanced Pedestrian Street (Sheet C.11) yet is not designed with pedestrian amenities. Exploring other locations or levels (basement) for the sally-port, increasing glazing and adding some retail, even if small, would be ways to improve this frontage across from a major City park.
 - b. Madison is a Major Transit Priority Street and a part of the bridgehead. It could be improved by rotating the elevator/stair core so that it is more internal and not against an exterior wall. Windows at the east end could be lowered. Offices or the entry sequence could be extended or small retail added to serve visitors and building occupants.
 - c. Jefferson has the lowest street classification as a local service street. Regardless, it is still in a pedestrian environment that should have some response to its urban context. The entire façade of the new building along this street is inactive and opaque. An Adjustment is requested to not provide the 2 large loading bays on site, but rather one in the street. While no loadings bays are better than 2 loading bays, it is unclear how this ground level façade or others mentioned are an improvement without the loading on site.
2. **Overall massing and composition:**
 - a. Overall design is inspired from the composition and order of similar government buildings, foundations of the judicial system and bridgehead location with sweeping view to the east. While the parti is strong and the glazed east façade is elegant, the efforts put in the hierarchy of views of the mountain seem to be at the expense of the ground floor.
 - b. The courthouse will be built directly up against the east wall of the 3-story Jefferson Station (Historic Landmark) and some of the courthouse functions will occur within the building as well. Beyond the horizontal datum established by the top of Jefferson Station building that aligns with the 3rd level of the courthouse building (Sheets C.43 & C.44), should the relationship between the two buildings be stronger or more distinct, and connections more thoughtful (viewing garden with metal gate between buildings on SW 1st and solid wall on Jefferson)?
3. **Exterior materials** – Primary building finishes are limestone & curtain wall, both of which are durable and high quality finishes. Discussion could include size and orientation of the limestone panels and other materials under consideration for the punch window openings, metal accents, sally port doors, etc.
4. **Rooftop** – Given the bridgehead location and 300' height, the top of this building will be a dominant feature of the downtown skyline. As such, the rooftop elements should be thoughtfully designed to integrate these utilitarian features into the overall design. There are several recent and nearby examples of how this has been done successfully including First & Main and Park Avenue West Tower.
5. **Open Space Improvements** – The opposing bridgehead parcel to the north is indicated as new green open space associated with the project. Discussion items could include: extent of improvements (green, hardscape) intended uses (seating, passive), access and relationship to the courthouse (extension of landscape and plaza design language).

For this proposal, the design review criteria are the *Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines* (copies attached).

Please contact me at 503.823.0624 with any questions or concerns.

Attachments: Plans dated 5/5/16
Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines