



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

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** January 13, 2017  
**To:** Portland Historic Landmarks Commission  
**From:** Hillary Adam, Land Use Services  
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**Re:** 16-274595 DA – Block 33  
Design Advice Request Memo January 23, 2017

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request of a new mixed-use building in the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. The proposed building is a full-block development that includes five levels of residential units and four levels of office space over a ground floor retail market and below-grade parking. The building is proposed to be 125' tall, which is prohibited under current zoning which limits height on this site to 100'. No Modifications or Adjustments are yet identified. Proposed exterior materials include brick, aluminum curtain wall, aluminum storefront, and metal panel.

The applicable review criteria are dependent on when the applicant submits a land use application. If the applicant intends to construct a 125' tall building, as is shown in the attached drawings, then the approval criteria will be the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines which are expected to be adopted and in effect within the next couple months. However, if the applicant submits a land use application prior to February 1, 2017, as they have indicated they desire to do, the applicable approval criteria would be the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and the River District Design Guidelines. *Please note: If a land use application is submitted by February 1, 2017) or any time prior to the effective of the Comprehensive Plan, the building cannot exceed a height of 100'. Copies of all potentially applicable guidelines are included with this memo.*

Areas for discussion on January 23, 2017:

- **Compatibility with the District.** As is noted in the paragraph above, the building is currently proposed at a height of 125'. This height is currently prohibited at the proposal's site, where the zoning allows for a maximum height of 100'. The applicant anticipates that the maximum allowable height will be revised to 125' with the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed heights for this area will be considered by City Council later this spring with the ultimately-approved heights expected to become effective in early 2018. While the drawings clearly show that the applicant intends to construct a building at 125' tall, they have also indicated they want to submit for a Type III Historic Resource Review before February 1, 2017.

Therefore, the Commission can expect that the future Historic Resource Review will attempt to maximize the height allowances on the site. Since we do not have drawings for a shorter building, we can only consider the compatibility of the presented building with the historic district. Staff has concerns with the proposed scale of the building relative to the adjacent historic buildings in the district which are generally between 1-4 stories with the 7-story Mason-Ehrman Building half a block north. The district also has an 8-story (2001) building and a 15-story (2003) building. In addition, the 9-story Grove Hotel addition was approved in November 2015 in a split decision. Staff notes that the newer buildings which exceed the height of the historic Mason-Ehrman Building, each have a footprint of less than a ½-block. In comparison, the proposed building

intends to occupy the full block for the full ten floors. In addition, the manner in which the volume massing is broken up and the street-facing façades are articulated are a distinct departure from the historic styles found in the district. Staff contends that the proposed scale of the building, with regard to its massing and exterior articulation will have a significant impact to the district. NC/J – D1, D2, D3, D5, D6

- **Materials.** The proposed materials include brick, aluminum curtain wall, aluminum storefront, and metal panel. Staff supports the use of brick as a primary material as this is commonly found in the district and helps to enhance that character. Staff does have concerns with the proposed glass curtain wall as this is specifically discouraged in the proposed New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District Design Guidelines, and is not found within the district. The proposed use of this material is a stark break from the traditional material palette and will serve to draw attention to this new large building, thereby overwhelming the historic district context. NC/J – D6
  
- **Ground Level Treatment.** In general, staff is supportive of the repetitive storefront articulation, set within brick frames, at the ground level, noting that these can be fine-tuned with human-scaled detailing. Again, staff has concerns with the proposed curtain wall glazing, which is proposed at the north half of the building. Staff notes that the proposed ground level plan indicates that the garage access and loading will be located in the center of the NW Davis Street frontage, which is the preferred location for PBOT and BDS staff. The ground level appears to feature entry doors at every recessed storefront at the south half of the building, which indicates that the ground level would be well activated, however, more clarification is needed to understand if all of these doors would be operational, as this area was previously described as a “market”. In addition, at the northwest corner, the ground level of the building is eroded to provide an outdoor eating area for a proposed restaurant space. While this may meet some Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines, the eroded corner is not characteristic of the historic district. Lastly, there is also a proposed “courtyard” at the NW Couch frontage which was previously described as a “beer garden”; this area appears to be a screened-in area with a two-story “decorative metal gate” enclosure. This type of open area is not characteristic of the district except in the case of the Simon Façade which serves as a screen for retail activities behind, but is encouraged in the new guidelines to be redeveloped. NC/J – A6, D4, D6

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.