



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

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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 10, 2018
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Benjamin Nielsen, Land Use Review, 503-823-7812
Re: EA 18-159309 DA – *Block 216*
Staff Memo for the August 16, 2018 Design Advice Request Meeting

You should have received, separately, a drawing set for the Design Advice Request for a proposed new mixed-use retail, office, hotel, and residential condominium building, occupying a full block at 900-936 SW Washington St in the West End Subdistrict of the Central City Plan District. This is the second DAR for the proposal, and the first time the Commission has seen this proposal. The project can be summarized as:

- **35-story** (increased from 33), **approximately 455'-7" tall** (up from 428'-10"), and **approximately 801,500 SF mixed use building** (up from 750,000 SF).
 - Approximately 10,400 SF of retail space is proposed at the ground floor.
 - Hotel uses will be found on the ground floor, second floor, and floors 9-18.
 - Office uses will be found on the ground floor and floors 3-8. These uses open onto roof terraces on the east side of the building.
 - 138 residential units will be found on floors 21-35.
 - Shared amenity uses, including fitness, pool, spa, and restaurant will be found on floors 19 & 20.
- The proposed building is **massed as a terraced podium and tower**. The tower will occupy the western half of the block.
- **Four floors of structured parking are proposed under the building**. Access is currently proposed from mid-block off SW Washington St.

Development Team:

Architects: Phil Beyl, Jesse Emory, & Kyle Andersen, GBD Architects Inc
Developer: Brian Owendoff, BMO Commercial Real Estate LLC
Project Valuation: \$235,000,000

This project will be subject to the revised Central City Plan District code standards, which became effective on July 9, 2018. As a reminder, some important new aspects of this code to consider:

- **FAR can increase** above the allowed base 9:1 + bonus 3:1 with additional transfers from other properties.
- **Max "bonus height" = 460'**. Projections above the bonus height limit are prohibited. The proposal may meet this standard; however, it is not clear if the proposed maintenance crane extends above the height limit.
- Bonus height on this site may only be earned if it meets a new **shadow standard for shadow cast on O'Bryant Square**. Shadows are limited to 50% at noon on 3/21, 6/21, and 9/21, 75% at noon on 12/21, and 75% at noon on 3/21, 6/21, and 9/21. The proposal currently meets this standard.

- The **Ground Floor Windows Standard** requires only 40% of wall area between 2'-10' above grade on each façade to be glazed.
- **Bird-Safe Exterior Glazing standards** apply within the first 60' above grade and within the first 15' of any part of the building above an adjacent eco-roof, roof garden, or other landscaped area.
- The **Ground Floor Active Use standard** applies along all four street frontages.
- **Eco-roofs must cover 100% of building roof area** with an allowance for up to 40% of the roof area to be covered with mech. equipment, stairwells/elevator enclosures, skylights, or uncovered common outdoor areas. This standard is not met.
- The building must be **registered for a green building certification program**. This applies at the time of permit.
- The **Required Building Lines standard** applies along SW 9th Ave. Specifically:
 - The **building must be set back at least 12' from the street lot line along at least 75% of the length lot line**.
 - **At least 50% of this area must be landscaped** with ground cover and shrubs. One tree for every 400 SF of setback area is also required.
 - This standard is not met with the proposed ground floor plan.
 - This standard implements the Green Loop connection between the South Park Blocks and the North Park Blocks. Director Park and O'Bryant Square are important nodes along this route as well.

Suggested DAR Discussion Items.

Executive summary: Additional development and detailing of the proposal has been undertaken since the first DAR on June 7, 2018; however, design responses to many of the larger-scale concerns the commission expressed are still lacking. Specifically, these are concerns about response to the context of surrounding landmark buildings, simplification of the tower massing, and the design of SW 9th Ave in the context of the Green Loop and the requested modification to provide none of the required setbacks along that street.

A. Context.

1. Relationship with surrounding landmark structures. As a reminder, there are four landmark structures which line three of the four block faces across from the subject site: the Pittock Block across SW Washington, the Stevens Building and the Woodlark Building across SW 9th, and the Galleria (Olds, Wortman & King Department Store) across SW Alder. The landmark Governor (Seward) Hotel lies kitty-corner to the southwest from the site.
 - a) The Commission stated at the last DAR that “the building needs to be more responsive to the context of the landmark structures” and that references to basalt, crystals, the Gorge, and organic forms were not appropriate or contextual “given the stately context of surrounding buildings.” Too much emphasis on crystalline forms, without sufficient incorporation of the landmark context, are being used to derive the form and articulation of the podium. Any crystalline/basaltic references may be more appropriately reserved for the landscaping concept on the terraces and, to some extent, the tower.
 - b) Excepting the terracing on the east half of the podium (which steps down to O'Bryant Square), the overall podium mass should be more consistent in its height and have a more-consistent horizontal datum at its base, separating the upper stories of the podium from the ground floor, to better relate to the surrounding masonry landmark structures. Horizontal spandrels used elsewhere on the podium and window shapes should have more regularity to them, as well. The podium's form and windows should not be so expressive of singular programmatic elements on the building's interior and need not respond so directly to landmark buildings across the street from each block face.

- c) The proposed cast concrete framing elements at the podium, along with the tall, narrow window shapes echo the facade of the Bank of California tower across O'Bryant Square and The Galleria building in materiality while retaining a character unique to the site, adding to the overall architectural character of the Midtown Park Blocks.
2. Relationship with Green Loop.
- a) A full modification to the Green Loop setback standard (aka: Required Building Line Standard) is still requested. Mitigation options to meet the purpose of the Green Loop within the right-of-way of SW 9th Ave is shown on sheets C.51-C.80, with additional studies on sheets C.119-C.124.
 - b) The purpose statement for the Required Building Lines standard aims for designs that create "diverse street character, promoting active uses, pedestrian movement, and opportunities for stopping and gathering."
 - c) The adopted Central City 2035 plan includes a volume on implementation of the Green Loop. It states: "The Green Loop concept is a linear park that invites residents, employees, and visitors to experience Portland's Central City in an entirely new way," and envisions the Green Loop as a "signature 21st century place, completely unique to Portland." Key objectives include promoting exercise, connecting and creating parks, supporting businesses, adding "park-like pedestrian pathways through the Central City," encouraging biking and active transportation, and featuring large canopy trees and state of the art stormwater management facilities that will increase habitat opportunities for native species.
 - d) At the last DAR, the Commission said the design of SW 9th Ave would need to be a precedent block for the Green Loop and needed to address the goals of the loop even if the required setbacks and landscaping aren't provided. The Commission also recommended incorporating some of the "grittiness" of today's 9th Ave into the food hall.
 - e) The development team and representatives from the City's planning and infrastructure bureaus convened a brief "charrette" on August 7, 2018, to discuss design implementation of the Green Loop throughout the city and with a particular focus on the segment of SW 9th Ave adjacent to the site. While no formal agreements were made, those in attendance discussed the likely character of the street, including the concept of a curbside street, removing at least one of the parking lanes, a shared vehicle/bike lane, the likelihood that bike vs pedestrian conflicts were more likely than bike/ped vs car, the desire for larger trees, and the need to determine streetscape elements that are common to the entire Green Loop versus those that are distinct to each segment and unique to each block. The development team also presented additional design studies, which are unfortunately not included in the drawing packet sent for the DAR on August 16, 2018. (I will ask for and forward any additional studies I receive before the DAR to you.)
 - f) The proposed ground floor design along SW 9th Ave includes six, 20'-long operable windows opening onto the sidewalk. These may afford an opportunity to incorporate some of the existing street's "grittiness" and allow the smells and sounds from the interior to flow outside to the street. The exact nature of the interface between interior and exterior, however, is not yet defined. A design and floor plan that allows for food vendors to sell directly to customers on the sidewalk as well as inside the food hall would help to reinforce the vision and objectives of the Green Loop. Additionally, since none of the required setback is proposed, consideration of the floor plan and programming within the food hall and how pedestrians can move through the space should be considered, too.

- g) The proposed design of SW 9th Ave, which currently shows street trees adjacent to the site, benches, unique paving, and suspended lighting (or other material) is not yet sufficient to make up for the loss of 1800 SF of setback area for pedestrian and landscape use, which is the amount that would need to be provided on the subject site to meet the Required Building Lines standard. Design studies shown on sheet C.120 begin to offer more space to the pedestrian realm, but are still insufficient. Additional planting and larger trees should also be considered.

3. Relationship with O'Bryant Square.

- a) The proposal retains the terraced podium, which steps down towards O'Bryant Square. Commissioners found this concept to be the right move to help support the square, though a more regularized massing would help it to relate better to the surrounding built context (as described above). The proposal also retains the tower location on the west side of the block, helping to keep shadow off the square.
- b) The ground floor food hall program helps to support the square, though the parking garage entry has moved closer to the corner.
- c) A chamfered corner or other small setback area at the northeast corner of the building could help the building open more towards the park and help address the required setback along SW 9th Ave.
- d) A mechanical mezzanine is proposed above the ground floor food hall facing the square. A taller ground floor or active space above it would better support the square.

4. West End and Midtown Blocks character.

- a) The general scale of massing of the proposed tower, which is about one-half block wide, fits in well with the scale of other relatively new towers in the Midtown Blocks area—the Fox Tower and Park Ave West—and the West End--Indigo. The approved 11W tower needs to be included in this wider area context analysis, however.
- b) The building's three lobbies all face NW 10th Ave. This is an unusual situation for the west end. The residential or office lobby may better support the area context by facing SW Alder St; however, this may result in a smaller retail space at the southwest corner of the block.

B. Pedestrian Realm.

- 1. Enlarged elevations and perspective studies of the ground floor can be found on sheets C.95-C.103.
- 2. Large areas of glazing and canopies are generally provided along all four facades. Ground floor spaces also generally appear to have good floor-to-ceiling height. Stairs have been mostly moved away from the exterior facades.
- 3. Ground floor openings along the east elevation/food hall will help to support a vibrant pedestrian realm along SW 9th. See Green Loop discussion above, too.
- 4. The combination of the parking garage entry and hotel drop-off on the north elevation will not meet guidelines relating to the pedestrian realm and active ground floor space. The hotel drop-off area should be fully enclosed within the building behind active ground level uses rather than creating an additional hole in the ground floor.
- 5. The loading and service area on the south elevation is still much too large, occupying nearly 70' of the south elevation.

6. The proposed building is very monumental in size, even at the ground floor. However, the east and west elevations, in particular, do a good job at articulating the building at a more pedestrian scale, with canopies, window mullions, and extension of precast concrete pilasters from the upper stories of the podium.

C. Quality & Permanence.

1. Proposed precast concrete material at the podium is very high-quality material. Assumed curtain wall on the tower should also be of high-quality.
2. The overall building massing is still overburdened with many massing moves and shifts and needs to be simplified.
 - a) The vertically-oriented precast concrete columns set up a strong podium design vocabulary; however, the podium massing should be more regularized, with the exception of the terracing, to better relate to the area context (see above) and to better anchor and support the tower. Patterning on the podium should also be simplified and rationalized to create a more coherent expression. Interior program should not drive exterior patterning.
 - b) Terracing on the east half of the podium should be more regularized and simplified.
 - c) The Commission stated at the last DAR that the tower's massing moves should be significant but limited in number. The tower design is largely unchanged since the last DAR, so the Commission should reiterate the importance of simplifying the massing.
3. Ground floor coherency around all four facades is lacking. The ground floor expressions on the east and west elevations are the strongest. The north and south ground floor facades should incorporate the same design language, though perhaps allowing for breaks where the tower touches down into the podium, such as at the hotel entry on the north elevation.
4. The top of the tower may benefit from some sculpting. Materials used at the top should be the same or similar to those used across the rest of the tower.

D. Potential Modifications

1. Tandem/stacked parking – to allow some stacked parking spaces to be provided for resident use without an attendant. Staff would likely recommend support for the modification request.
2. Long-term bike parking – to allow vertically-mounted bike parking to be spaced at 18" and staggered vertically. Staff would likely recommend support for the modification request with the provision that a few ground-mounted racks be provided for those with mobility limitations.
3. Green Loop building setback/Required Building Line – to allow no setback along SW 9th Ave. Staff would not yet recommend support for the modification. See discussion above.
4. Ecoroof – to allow no ecoroof on the tower. Staff may recommend support for the modification with additional evidence as to why they will not function well on the tower.

Approval Criteria

The Design Review approval criteria for this site are the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Attachments: Drawing Package, sent separately

Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines Matrix (blank, for your use)

Design Advice Request Summary Memo from June 7, 2018 DAR

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