



# City of Portland Design Commission

## Design Advice Request

### SUMMARY MEMO

**Date:** July 22, 2019  
**To:** Allison Rouse, ZGF Architects  
**From:** Benjamin Nielsen, Design Review  
(503) 823-7812, [benjamin.nielsen@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:benjamin.nielsen@portlandoregon.gov)  
**Re:** EA 19-137711 DA – OMSI Central City Master Plan  
Design Advice Request Commission Summary Memo – June 6, 2019

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. Following, is a summary of the comments provided by the Design Commission at the June 6, 2019 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/record/11686822>.

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 June 6, 2019. 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 land use review application, public notification and a Final Decision] 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 second Design Advice Request.

*Encl:*  
Summary Memo

*Cc:* Design Commission  
Respondents

**Executive Summary.** Commissioners pushed for the development team to revisit the proposed open space framework and design it so that it becomes the “organizing factor” for buildings rather than fragmented spaces. They also noted that the proposed framework and street system was very OMSI-focused to the detriment of the riverfront, east-west connections, and non-peak hour activities.

**Commissioners Present.** *Jessica Molinar, Sam Rodriguez, Zari Santner, Don Vallaster.*

**Summary of Comments.** Following is a general summary of Commission comments by master plan tenet.

## **VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

1. Commissioners stated that the proposed vision and principles make a lot of sense.

## **RESPONSE TO CONTEXT**

### **1. Relationship to Central Eastside.**

- a. Commissioners stated that they did not yet see a clear connection from the OMSI district to the rest of the Central Eastside and Innovation Quadrant. Providing active, flexible/adaptable ground level spaces along “new” Water Ave, with high ceilings “tall enough to drive a truck into” could help to tie the district into the Central Eastside. Commissioners also noted that these “maker spaces” are part of the OMSI tradition, as well.

### **2. Relationship to Innovation Quadrant**

- a. One Commissioner reminded the development team to consider open space amenities through the lens of people who will be working in Innovation Quadrant-type jobs in the district.

## **OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Street hierarchy and street design.**

- a. The Commission stated that the street network appeared to lack a clear hierarchy. They noted that the proposed streets are more or less the same design with similar qualities and activities. If certain streets are intended to be more family-friendly and pedestrian-oriented, the idea was not yet reflected in the street designs.
- b. Commissioners noted that the combined street and open space pattern is very oriented towards OMSI rather than embracing the other major amenity of the site, which is the Willamette River. The orientation towards OMSI also led to making the other major open spaces becoming peripheral. Commissioners stated that the focus should be more on the public spaces and the river to benefit the community that will be working and living in the district.
- c. Commissioners supported the proposal to route the new loop road past OMSI’s back of house area, stating that the loading area is fairly confined and that the rest of the OMSI façade had the opportunity to be more parklike.

### **2. Open spaces.**

- a. Commissioners thought the proposed series of open spaces along the river make sense, but they questioned if the interior open spaces will be as successful. One Commissioner stated that the interior open spaces were not small enough to be

considered part of the street and were also not large enough to be used as well-functioning open spaces. Another thought they looked arbitrary. The Commission stated that the open space network should be more of an organizing factor for the buildings, rather than left over fragments.

- b. Commissioners stated that the plan needs more east-west penetration with access to the river. The Commission said that these penetrations could pass under buildings with larger footprints. Connections to the community to the east were also found to be important, and the Commission asked for additional study of how east-west connections through the site could be achieved. One Commissioner noted that there is a fantastic opportunity to express the east-west connection through the Bull Run.
- c. Responding to the plan's need to accommodate large groups of people on a periodic basis, the Commission cautioned that if the proposed parks and open spaces are not well used at all times of the day, they will be abused. Commissioners asked the development team to show how the spaces will be programmed and used during normal periods and not just the peak periods.
- d. Regarding the proposed plaza at Tract B, some Commissioners expressed concerns about how the plaza is cut off from development at Tract E by the new loop street. There was discussion about whether creating a woonerf on the loop street would help and about moving development in Tract E to abut the plaza. On the other sides of the plaza, Commissioners thought that some activation at the ground floor and proposed roof deck at OMSI could help activate the plaza.
- e. Commissioners stated that the proposed open space on Tract C between the building and streetcar station did not appear to be a safe or great place. Even if it is only a pathway to bring people into the district, it still needs to be a fantastic place.

### **3. Green Loop.**

- a. Commissioners said that directing the Green Loop through the site, rather than past it at the south end, could be beneficial to the district, depending on its design.
- b. Commissioners asked the development team to explore developing a Loop option that is more integrated into the district and more than a bike/ped bridge.

## **PEDESTRIAN REALM**

### **1. Along “New” Water Ave.**

- a. Commissioners touched briefly on a general lack of on-street parking and stated that providing on-street parking along the west side of “new” Water Ave would be beneficial to both businesses and the pedestrian realm.
- b. Commissioners debated the merits of locating the bicycle track on either the east or west side of Water Ave. They expressed concern that, while locating the bike track on the west side would give bikes better access to the site, placing them on that side might make it difficult for adjacent development to thrive—that they may end up being vacant for a long time or that blank walls would face the street. Locating the bike track on the west side also creates conflicts with parking and service entries that need to be more carefully considered.

### **2. Along the riverfront.**

- a. Commissioners noted that the focus of development tends to be on the east side of OMSI and asked the development team to explore how to activate the river side of the district, as well, and “truly take advantage” of the riverfront.

### **3. Parking access.**

- a. Commissioners touched on this topic and stated that parking entries should be consolidated. This would improve the pedestrian realm and reduce conflicts with bikes along “new” Water Ave.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. Commissioners said that the proposed sewage treatment facility should be moved away from the transit stations and suggested locating it closer to OMSI.
2. There was little discussion of other infrastructure at the first DAR.

## **Exhibit List**

- A. Applicant’s Submittals
  1. Pre-Application Submittal, dated 03/21/2019 and received 03/25/2019
  2. Drawing Set, 03/25/2019
  3. “Exhibit A” – Ownership and Zoning, 03/25/2019
  4. “Exhibit B” – Project Description
  5. Revised Drawings, 04/24/2019
  6. Shadow Study, 04/24/2019
  7. Drawings from TAC #6, 04/26/2019
  8. Drawing Set for Design Commission, 05/23/2019
- B. Zoning Map
- C. Drawings
  1. See Exhibit A.8
- 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. Bureau of Environmental Services (pre-application conference response)
  2. Bureau of Transportation (pre-application conference response)
- F. Public Testimony  
No testimony was received.
- G. Other
  1. Application form
  2. TAC Meeting #6 Agenda, 04/24/2019
  3. Email re: improvements to posting boards, 05/16/2019
  4. Draft Staff Memo to Design Commission, dated 05/31/2019
  5. Master Plan Approval Criteria matrix, 05/31/2019
  6. Staff Memo to Design Commission, 06/04/2019
  7. Staff Presentation to Design Commission, 06/06/2019
  8. Applicant’s Presentation to Design Commission, 06/06/2019