



## Design Advice Request

### DISCUSSION MEMO

**Date:** August 29, 2019  
**To:** Portland Design Commission  
**From:** Benjamin Nielsen, Design / Historic Review Team  
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**Re:** EA 19-137711 DA – OMSI Central City Master Plan  
Design Advice Request Memo – September 5, 2019

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request meeting scheduled on September 5, 2019. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

#### I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Design Advice Request for a proposed Central City Master Plan (CCMP) located in the area around the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) in the Central Eastside Subdistrict of the Central City Plan District. The proposed CCMP area comprises 18.53 acres along the Willamette River, bound approximately by the SE Mill St to the north, the Tilikum Crossing bridge to the south, and SE Water Ave and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks to the east.

#### II. DEVELOPMENT TEAM BIO

<b>Applicant</b>	Allison Rouse, ZGF Architects
<b>Owner's Representative</b>	Ken Wilson, OMSI
<b>Project Valuation</b>	Not Available

**III. FUTURE CENTRAL CITY MASTER PLAN REVIEW APPROVAL CRITERIA:** PZC 33.510.255.H Approval Criteria, which includes the goals and policies of the Central City 2035 Plan, the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines, and the Central Eastside design guidelines. (See attached matrix.)

#### IV. POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS

Future modifications may be required to:

1. The Required Building Lines standards in PZC 33.510.215 to support the development patterns shown in the current draft of the master plan. These standards require that development in EX zones either extend to the street lot line along at least 75% of the lot line or extend to within 12' of the street lot line and provide an extension of the sidewalk committed to active uses, such as sidewalk cafes, vendor stands, or developed as "stopping places." Development along the existing alignment of SE Water Ave and along SE 2<sup>nd</sup> Place must

either (1) extend to the street lot line along at least 75% of the street lot line or be setback and landscaped with either 50% of the area in ground cover and shrubs (at 6 to 12 feet setback) or (2) 80% with ground cover and shrubs (12 feet or greater setback) and contain 1 tree/400 SF of setback area. With the urban-scale development proposed, modifications to this standard to allow for hardscape rather than landscape may make the most sense, if the approval criteria can be met.

2. Trail standards are specified in PZC 33.475.440.E and would need to be modified through a future River Review to allow for trails wider than 16 feet or placement of trails cantilevering over the riverbank.

## V. STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED DAR DISCUSSION TOPICS

Staff advise you consider the following among your discussion items on September 5, 2019:

### VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. **Purpose.** Statements providing the vision for the master plan area and guiding principles for its development will help to address some of the Central City 2035 goals and policies related to approval criterion 33.510.255.H.1 and will help to establish a baseline for evaluating the master plan proposal against the Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and Central Eastside guidelines found in approval criterion 33.510.255.H.2.
2. **Stated Vision and Goals of OMSI Master Plan.** (These can be found on pages 5 through 7 of the drawing package.)
  - a. The master plan will be stronger once more emphasis is placed on “foster[ing] exploration” and expanding OMSI’s interactive, educational programming throughout the site. A shorter way to say this is that OMSI’s “soul” should pervade the district. The Public Realm Plan (page 22) indicates that public art, exhibits, active play and interpretation will be components of the public space program. As further refinement to the master plan is made, these character-defining programmatic elements should permeate the site and be clearly described in the documents.

### RESPONSE TO CONTEXT

#### 1. DAR 1 Comments.

- a. Commissioners said they did not yet see a clear connection from the OMSI district to the rest of the Central Eastside and Innovation Quadrant, recommended tall ground floors to allow for active/flexible ground level spaces along “new” Water Ave, and reminded the development team to consider open space amenities through the lens of people who will be working in IQ-type jobs in the district.
  - i. The New Water Ave street section shows a tall ground floor, though additional active use frontage should be proposed.
  - ii. Most resident/worker-focused amenities are focused on the “central spine” between the transit station and the south end of the OMSI front plaza. During programmed events, the riverfront plaza could also provide amenities for that population.

#### 2. Landmark Context.

- a. Tract H diagrams appear to show the removal of the landmark PGE substation building. This would require a Type IV Demolition Review, with a recommendation by the Landmarks Commission and approval by City Council. Staff and the Landmarks Commission would be unlikely to recommend approval. Rather, the building should be integrated into a proposed development and open space plan. Exterior alterations to the building could be considered through Historic Resource Review.

### 3. Transit Station Area.

- a. Ground floor active use area proposed near the transit stations is similar to that shown at DAR 1. Development should be clearly focused on the transit stations in this area, with active uses to further develop this transit station context.

### 4. Willamette River.

- a. The habitat restoration and educational components at the north end of the site continue to provide the best response to the riverfront context.
- b. The proposal needs to embrace the river at its south end more than it currently does.

### 5. OMSI – Buildings and Program.

- a. Development and programming at OMSI's east and west plazas should be bold in expressing OMSI's character and programming. Interactive, educational, and artistic installations, both temporary and permanent, should be used to help activate these areas and define the character of the district.

## OPEN SPACE FRAMEWORK

1. **Open Space Requirements.** The proposed open spaces appear to exceed the minimum 20% open space requirement in PZC 33.510.255.K. Staff has not yet fully evaluated the proposal for conformance to all open space requirements.

### 2. DAR 1 Comments.

- a. Commissioners said the proposed street network lacked a clear hierarchy and had more or less the same design.
  - i. Street sections are shown on pages 11-15.
  - ii. These more-clearly show a hierarchy among the street types—particularly New Water Ave.
- b. Commissioners said the street and open space pattern was very oriented towards OMSI rather than embracing the riverfront, and that this OMSI-orientation also made other major open spaces peripheral.

### 3. Development Parti and Open Space Framework.

- a. The development team has diagrammed a parti (page 10) to help organize the development. The three north-south connections are very strong and natural organizing elements, deriving from constraints of the river on the west and the railroad on the east. Major nodes lie along the “central spine” at the south and north ends of the site and at the OMSI plaza. These nodes are mirrored along the riverfront. East-west linkages connect between the nodes and north-south corridors.
  - i. The parti is conceptually strong and works well with the existing conditions of the site. The three north-south corridors each have their own distinct character that should be expressed clearly in proposed development. The parti also provides direction as to where additional emphasis and refinement of open spaces in the proposed master plan is needed.
  - ii. The parti is not as clearly expressed in the open space and street layout and proposed development pattern as it could be. Floor plates at the ground level are much larger and should be reduced in size to create more east-west connections, increasing visual and physical permeability through the site. Street and pedestrian connections at the south side of the site are much more curvilinear and create internally-focused open space and development rather than focusing open space and development towards the riverfront.

- iii. The transit plaza at the south end of the spine is one of the major nodes in the parti and an intersection with the Green Loop, though the illustrative plans show this as a mostly transitory space. Regardless of the Green Loop's actual route through or past the site, this node should be a well-integrated, active pocket park/plaza on the route.
  - iv. Consider how habitat corridors could be threaded through the site to help increase connections to the riverfront and influence the focus of development.
  - v. An internal connection has been added through Tract E, connecting the internal plaza on the block to the south plaza at Tract B. This connection gives the proposed internal plaza's placement more meaning in the overall framework.
- b. South Plaza at Tract B.
- i. This now has more detail about its potential programming (pages 23-25), most of which are compelling; however, the illustrative plan and programming suggest that the plaza will be primarily a large hardscaped surface. While this will serve periodic large functions well, consideration needs to be given to how the plaza will function on a daily basis. The edges of the plaza, in particular, become very important if space is left in the middle for larger gatherings, and the edges need further programming, along with adjacent interior programming, to create a successful plaza.
  - ii. The focal point of the plaza should be the river itself, rather than treating the river more as an edge. A plaza design with an amphitheater-like or tiered space that descends to the river and routes the pedestrian/bike trail into the site around the plaza could provide physical space to descend closer to the river itself, rather than maintaining a high bank.
  - iii. Additional enclosure to the space should be provided with trees, and differentiation should be made between the plaza area and the bike/pedestrian trail with trees and other landscape elements.
  - iv. As at the northern habitat area, the plaza should also be infused with an OMSI character (and, by extension, a Central Eastside/Innovation Quadrant character), with educational/interactive installations and a landscape design that derives from OMSI's mission and the vision for the district.

## DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

1. **Development Tracts.** For the land use review, a clear demarcation between the open spaces and the development tracts will be needed to meet 33.510.255.G.2.a.(7). Page 37 suggests that these boundaries are flexible.
2. **Building Envelope/Massing Concepts**
  - a. Neither the podiums nor the tower concepts promote the regular visual permeability that typical development on a rectilinear grid produces. While the kinks and bends in the tower envelopes will allow for the passage of light and air, they may still result in a walled-off development pattern when viewed from downtown or the Central Eastside.
  - b. The development pattern also proposes varying heights in the north-south direction and a sloping down of building heights towards the river; however, there does not appear to be a mechanism proposed to limit heights in either manner. If these are desirable development patterns, the proposed building envelopes should be expressed accordingly.
3. **Street vacations.** OMSI is currently exploring vacating portions of SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Place and other portions of the "old old" SW Water Ave right-of-way at the northwest corner "curve" of Tract F. (SW Water Ave used to turn and run south down the SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Place ROW.) This would open more area to potential development, if approved.

## PEDESTRIAN REALM

### 1. DAR 1 Comments.

- a. Commissioners noted that the focus of development tended to be on the east side of the OMSI and asked how the proposal could activate the river side of the site and take advantage of the riverfront.
- b. Commissioners also said that parking and loading entries should be consolidated and expressed concern about conflicts with bikes along “new” Water Ave. Commissioners also said that parking or loading space should be provided on the west side of “new” Water Ave to help both businesses and the pedestrian realm.

### 2. Relationship of Open Spaces and Development. (A site “active frontage, parking & service access” diagram is shown on page 32.)

- a. Locations of proposed active floor area are similar to those shown at the first DAR, though the “primary active frontage” has been more focused onto the central spine, the south plaza, and the transit station area.
- b. Staff still has concerns about activation around the edges of the south plaza, in particular, especially given its large size and prominence on the site.
- c. Temporary structures are proposed to help activate the riverside. Due to River overlay standards, nearly all uses proposed along the river, whether permanent or temporary, will need to be located outside of the 50-foot setback area. These temporary uses are unlikely to activate the river in a significant way. Consideration should be given to incorporating interactive educational or artistic installations on the river side of OMSI to bring more focus to the riverfront.
- d. The curvature of the new Loop Road and the diagonal of the central spine introduces unusually-shaped floor plates. Staff has concerns that these will be developed, ultimately, with more-rectilinear forms, creating additional unprogrammed, left over open space (such as that shown on the illustrative plan at Tract C).

## INFRASTRUCTURE

1. **Streets** are diagrammed on pages 11-15.
2. **Utility infrastructure zones** are briefly discussed on page 53.

## Attachments

DAR 1 Summary Notes

CCMP Approval Criteria Matrix