



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

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Design Advice Request

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: May 22, 2020
To: Historic Landmarks Commission
From: Grace Jeffreys, Design / Historic Review Team
503-823-7840, grace.jeffreys@portlandoregon.gov
Re: EA 20-128167 DA – 234 SE Grand
Design Advice Request Meeting – June 1, 2020

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request meeting scheduled on June 1, 2020. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This will be a second DAR for a proposed 8-story, 130,000 SF cross-laminated timber office building with ground level retail, and with loading and below-grade parking accessed off SE Pine. The half-block site is situated at the north end of the East Portland / Grand Avenue Historic District and is also in the Central Eastside Subdistrict of the Central City Plan District. The first DAR was held on February 24, 2020 (EA 20-106146 DA).

II. DEVELOPMENT TEAM BIO

Architect	Robert Thompson TVA
Owner's Representative	Lamont Smith Sturgeon Development
Project Valuation	\$ 30,000,000

III. FUTURE HISTORIC RESOURCE REVIEW APPROVAL CRITERIA: (see attached matrix)

- Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines
- Design Guidelines for East Portland/Grand Avenue Historic District Zone

IV. POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS

No potential Modifications identified.

V. STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED DAR DISCUSSION TOPICS

Staff advise you consider the following areas for discussion on June 1, 2020. Notes from the Summary memo from the first DAR are shown in *italics*. A blank guideline matrix is attached.

1. MACRO

- a. **Increase compatibility.** *Because the proposal is larger than typical historical resources in the district, there is a greater need to enhance compatibility rather than increase differentiation.*

Options A – D alt provided show a further break down of the massing both horizontally and vertically, a lowering of the base, different options for grouping the windows bays, and a change in cladding material to all brick.

- b. **Provide contextual studies.** *Scaled context studies of resources in the district are needed to show the building's relationship to its surrounding historical context.*

See pages C.12 and C.13.

- c. **Break down the overall massing.** *The overall massing of the building needs to be further broken down using volumetric shifts.*

Several massing alternatives to the full-block, 8-story building massing shown at DAR #1 have been provided with both horizontal and vertical volumetric shifts.

Horizontal massing.

- Options A, B and C all have wider piers at the ends of the block, which contributes to the expression that the building is a singular full block in width. This effect is amplified by quoins, also provided only at the block corners.
- Options A alt, D and D alt have eliminated the wider block corner piers, providing an expression of two separate building masses, each with their own symmetry, better reflecting the smaller massing of the historic buildings in the district. ***If the corner quoining is used, it should be consistent with this expression, and either be used at the corner of each building mass, or not be used at all.***

Vertical massing. This section focuses on the treatment of the overall massing only. See sections below for further discussion about how the main entry and the windows and bays are treated.

- Option A alt breaks the block into two 6-story masses with a 2-story penthouse stepped back from the three street frontages. A two-bay wide central recess separates the two masses. ***This approach creates two side by side identical building masses separated by a recess, which would be uncommon in this district. It may be that this approach would be better served by eliminating the recess, and treating the two masses differently, as two ¼ block 6-story buildings.***
- Option D breaks the block into a wider 6-story mass and a narrower 7-story mass, making the penthouse 2-stories at the south and 1-story at the south. A two-bay wide recess separates the two masses and connects to the penthouse. An additional mid-grey mass has been added behind the two front masses. ***It is unclear how the double recess helps the building respond to the district, as the nearby historic buildings are treated more as strong, simple volumes. It would be stronger if the further recess was brought forward; however, the return at the penthouse would also need further study and resolution.***
- Option D alt also breaks the block into a wider 6-story mass and a narrower 7-story mass, making the penthouse 2-stories at the south and 1-story at the south. A narrower one-bay wide recess separates the two masses and connects to the penthouse. ***The recess is narrow, and another approach to study might be to eliminate the recess altogether.***

Overall, while Option A may provide lower massing at the south as seen from the pedestrian point of view, the two side by side identical building masses it creates separated by a recess would be uncommon in this district. Options D and D alt offer more opportunity for true variation in the massing along the frontage in response to the district.

- d. **Reduce scale of base.** *Look at breaking down the height and scale of the base to respond to the more finely grained, pedestrian scaled base.*

The base expression has been reduced to one story and the canopies have been dropped to the transom level to create a more pedestrian scale along the frontages.

- Options A-D use precast at the base with brick above, and Options A alt and D alt bring the brick down to the base. ***Given the scale of the building and the need for compatibility, bringing the brick to the base would add richness and a human scaled texture to the ground level.***

- e. **Main Entry.**

- In Option D, the main entry has a layered recess, which reduces the prominence of the entry and creates confusion at entry. ***Bringing the deeper recess forward would reduce this effect and add greater prominence to the entry.***
- In Option D alt, the main entry appears to be at the base of a narrow one bay vertical recess. ***The main entry would be better placed at the center of one of the two front building masses.***

- f. **More compatible windows and glazing treatment.** *Look at precedent buildings in the district for examples of how to treat larger glazed openings and vertical grouping of windows.*

Metal and brick spandrel panels have been added at the floor levels in response to the Commission's earlier concerns. The brick spandrels are used to add an additional layer of vertical grouping to the window bays and to express the top row of windows. This appears to be a useful tool to balance the proportionality of the building masses.

In Option D, on the 6-story mass, the brick spandrels add an additional layer of vertical grouping to the window bays and express the top row of windows. ***Adding the brick spandrel below the top row windows of the 7-story mass would create a stronger expression of the building top.***

- g. **Penthouse treatment.** *While a setback of the top floors are not typical treatments in the district, the Commission felt that in this case, a setback of the upper floor or floors could help reduce the overall scale of the proposal.*

All Options are 8-stories, so the penthouse expression varies from 1- to 2-stories depending on the treatment of the masses below. ***Cladding the penthouse cladding in a similar manner to the rest of the building, both in material and window treatment, would help it read as more integral to the building design.***

- h. **North and South Elevations.**

There are different treatments of the side walls. Some options show a recess in the middle of the elevation (Exhibit C.76) and some do not (Exhibit C.85). ***Staff believes the solid option (Exhibit C.85) provides a better response to the district.***

- i. **Rear/ east elevation.** *The Commission appreciated the mid-block setback that creates the opportunity for windows, reduces the amount of blank facade, and adds articulation and depth to this large rear wall.*

At the first DAR, there was mixed feedback on the success of the cladding and windows. While typical side walls have smaller, punched windows openings and simplified cladding treatment (brick), some commissioners noted that the balance between the two solid sides was helpful, and a vertical expression of windows might be successful here. ***Given this is a modern office building and the massing has been stepped back to provide a “lightwell” condition, staff are comfortable supporting more glazing within the lightwell area if the side areas remain more solid (no drawing has been provided of this condition).***

- j. **Design expression.** *The Commission appreciated the use of a Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) structural system and the intent to expose this system; however, some struggled with how to provide visibility of the CLT while ensuring the exterior is compatible with historic buildings in the district, with mostly punched openings.*

To address these concerns, and be more compatible rather than differentiated, spandrels were added at the floor levels, brick generally replaced the pre-cast (except at the base in some options) and a deep punch was added to the window bays.

2. MID

- a. **Ground Floor Activation.** *The Commission was very supportive of the full activation offered along SE Grand by pushing service uses towards the east and was appreciative of the placement of parking below-grade.*

While it is unclear in these revised plans, ***the Commission encouraged maximizing active uses, adding entries on Pine and Ash and adding a more active use where the bike parking is located along Ash.***

3. MICRO

- a. **Storefront treatment.** *A ground level precedent study is needed to show how storefront treatment fits in the HD. Consider pilaster and windows widths, and transom expression*
*For all Options, at the first DAR, the Commission noted the widths of piers appeared very heavy and wide. **Are the widths of the piers still a concern, given the reduced scale at the base?***
- b. **Canopies.** *Canopies can help bring a finer scale and are needed at a minimum at very entry.*

Option D provides considerable canopy coverage along SE Grand. ***Canopy coverage should also wrap along Ash and Pine to provide scale and protect pedestrians along these frontages too.***

Attachments:

Drawings dated May 18, 202
Applicant's Criteria matrix
Summary from first DAR (EA 20-106146 DA), March 9, 2020