City of Portland
Design Commission

Design Advice Request

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: **7/27/2020**

To: **Portland Design Commission**

From: **Tanya Paglia, Design Review**
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Re: **EA 20-158166 DAR – SW Park Apartments**
Design Advice Request Memo – 8/6/2020

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request meeting scheduled on 8/6/2020. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Design Advice Request meeting for a proposed eleven-story affordable housing apartment building with 89 residential units. The structure will be prefabricated, composed of modular units with a stucco panel exterior. The proposed building will be set into the sloping site with the main entry lobby at existing sidewalk grade on SW Park Avenue with a 12' deep entry plaza wrapping the corner of SW Park Avenue and SW Clifton St. The 6,000 SF site is currently developed with two older, two-story single-family homes that will be deconstructed. The site is located at the northeast corner of SW Park Ave and SW Clifton S and is directly across U.S. HWY I-405 from Portland State University and the North Park Blocks, accessed via the Park Avenue Bridge. The site is part of a small dead-end location with steep topography that rises almost vertically to the south and west approximately 100 to 150 feet away to enclose this residential pocket.

Key components of the project include:

Zoning.	RM4d, Residential Multi-Dwelling 4 with a Design Overlay
Height.	94' proposed. 100' allowed.
FAR.	5.6:1 proposed. 4:1 base, 7:1 max allowed (including a 3:1 Deeper Housing Affordability bonus).
Ground	Main lobby, lounge, amenity space, fitness
Upper Levels.	10 levels of apartments above, including 89 units.
Lot coverage:	*63% proposed. 85% allowed.*
Auto Parking.	None
Loading.	1 type "B" space is proposed. 1 type "B" space is required (at least 18' long, 9' wide, and have a clearance of 10'.
Amenities.	Outdoor plaza at rear of building, amenity room, fitness, lounge on first floor, potential roof deck.

Exception to Oriel Window Standards

Maximum: 12' maximum width for each projecting window element.

Proposed: 18' width for projecting bay on SW Park Ave.

Note: The Land Use Review will be a Staff Level Type II with the Commission serving as the appeal body. Thus, this project will not come before you unless it is appealed.

II. DEVELOPMENT TEAM BIO

Architect	Ralph Tahran | Tahran Architecture & Planning
Owner's Representative	Rowan Rystadt | Park Ave PSU LLC
Project Valuation	$6,000,000

III. FUTURE APPROVAL CRITERIA: (see attached matrix)

- Community Design Guidelines

IV. STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED DAR DISCUSSION TOPICS

Staff advise you consider the following among your discussion items on 8/6/2020:

1. **Pedestrian Experience.**

   The pedestrian experience of the site includes a prominent corner entry plaza at grade with the sidewalk as well as a sunken courtyard which sits below the sidewalk along the northern frontage. It also includes an open-air loading zone along the eastern frontage. The ground floor program includes multiple active uses for building occupants such as a lobby lounge, amenity room, and fitness room. Indoor and outdoor activity is blended by a large entry plaza at the corner and a sunken courtyard adjacent to the amenity room that can extend activity from inside the building to the exterior.

   Potential issues include:

   Exposed loading

   - The loading area character in the southeast corner of the site needs to be further fleshed out and evolved.
   - The loading area should contribute to a vibrant streetscape and be designed as a human-scale piazza with quality paving materials, landscaping and other features that contribute to making it a place appealing to pedestrians and not a space designed exclusively for vehicles.
   - The design of fencing and gates along the southern property line will be an important feature of this area.

   Sunken courtyard frontage

   - A large portion of the northern frontage along SW Clifton St will have a sunken courtyard adjacent to the sidewalk. Like the loading frontage, the interface of this edge needs to be fleshed out to be an element that contributes to the pedestrian experience.

   Solid blank wall at the ground floor lounge on the eastern elevation

   - The eastern frontage would benefit from a highly glazed lounge to promote views and activation as opposed to a solid, blank wall facing Park Ave.

Louvers at electrical room on north elevation

- More information is needed to understand the effect of the electrical room louvers at sidewalk level on the north elevation. Are there ways to buffer them using landscaping or other elements of the sunken courtyard?

Ground level generator

- A ground level generator might be included in the project. The ideal location would be the roof, but if on the ground, substantial screening will be essential.

Electrical vault placement

- As there is available open space on the site, PBOT has indicated that they may require the electrical vault be located on site rather than in the right of way. Efforts should be made to ensure it is not located in the entry plaza where it would take away from the quality of the pedestrian realm.

Refer to Guidelines: *P1 – Plan Area Character, E1 – The Pedestrian Network, E2: Stopping Places, E3: Sidewalk level of Buildings, E4: Corners that build active Intersections, E5 – Light, Wind, and Rain, D1: Outdoor Areas, D2: Main Entrances, D3: Landscape Features, D5: Crime Prevention, D7: Blending into the Neighborhood and D8: Interest, Quality and Composition.*

2. **Venting.**

- As of yet venting for this building has not been planned. Poorly integrated vents and louvers would take away from the cohesion and pedestrian experience of the building, thus attention to this at an early stage will help form a coherent composition.

Refer to Guidelines: *E3: Sidewalk level of Buildings, D7: Blending into the Neighborhood and D8: Interest, Quality and Composition*.

3. Balconies

- Given the residential nature of the immediate neighborhood, adding balconies would better reflect the building's use as a residential structure, which could otherwise be construed as an office building. Balconies would be an effective way to add a clearly residential sensibility to the building.
- Balconies can help create more lively and active façades by increasing activity and life on the building's exterior and providing outdoor areas where active uses can take place and signs of occupancy can take root, enriching the pedestrian experience for people passing by.
- Providing balconies could help in breaking down the building's mass and add additional human scale and articulation.
- Balconies would provide view opportunities both to and from the building for pedestrians, enhancing the visual connection between the building and neighborhood.

Refer to Guidelines: *P1 – Plan Area Character, P3 – Gateways, E1 – The Pedestrian Network, D5: Crime Prevention, D7: Blending into the Neighborhood and D8: Interest, Quality and Composition*.

4. Prefabricated Materials and Assembly.

- As one of the largest prefabricated buildings proposed in a design overlay zone, extensive information is needed to understand how the modules will come together including information on what will be built in the factory and what will be constructed on-site.
- Information on how joints/seams will come together is required and on how modules constructed off site will fit together with the ground floors built to accommodate sloping site conditions.

Refer to Guidelines: *P1 – Plan Area Character, P3 – Gateways, E3: Sidewalk level of Buildings, D7 – Blending into the Neighborhood and D8: Interest, Quality and Composition*.

5. **Context**.

The proposal is located at the base of the West Hills, will be part of the southern terminus of the Park Blocks and is located in close proximity to the future Green Loop. The site's placement also functions as a bridgehead location, a prominent gateway connecting the Park Blocks to the south via the Park Avenue bridge across I-405. Per *Guideline P1: Plan Area Character*, new development should blend into established areas by reflecting the architectural features and site design of the surrounding buildings, responding to views, topography and materials. Staff finds that the project responds to the context in various ways including:

- Acknowledging the bridge and Park Blocks by opening towards them with a prominent corner entrance - two-story cut-out corner entrance with large entry plaza wrapping to both of the building's two street frontages.
- A nine-story glass corner that carries up levels three through eleven facing Park Blocks and very visible from I-405.
- Exterior cladding being primarily stucco and glass.
- Carrying the scale of downtown and the Park Blocks across I-405 with an eleven-story building.
- Potential roof deck adding to the visual interest of the building from above, improving the "fifth elevation."

Staff would like to hear from the Commission if there are ways to enhance the response to context.

Refer to Guidelines: *P1 – Plan Area Character, P3 – Gateways, E1 – The Pedestrian Network, E2 – Stopping Places, E3 – The Sidewalk Level of Buildings, E4 – Corners that Build Active Intersections, D2 – Main Entrances, D7 – Blending into the Neighborhood, D8 – Interest, Quality, and Composition.*