

January 27, 2023

City of Portland
Bureau of Development Services – Land Use Services
Attention: Arthur Graves, Planner
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite # 5000
Portland, OR 97201

Re: **SkyView on 7th Apartments**
Response to 1/23/2023 Design Review Comments (LU 22-163683 DZM)
Project Number 2210364.01

Dear Art:

Thank you for your email dated January 23, 2023, providing comments on the design review application for the proposed development at 701-777 NE 7th Avenue. We have enclosed updated drawings and have supplied responses to the items identified by staff.

STAFF COMMENTS

This is in addition to the comments provided on 1.09.2023 and as a follow-up to our conversation this past Friday (1.20.2023). As with the previous comments, the majority of these comments go back to issues raised at the DAR that either don't appear to have been fully addressed or are still not fully meeting Guidelines.

Context

1. Balconies

- In the DAR Commissioners commented on the building's reading as a commercial office building vs a residential building. Commissioners suggested including recessed balconies as a way to provide outdoor area for residents while helping the building better identify as a residential building. Please integrate recessed balconies into the design for levels 2-13. Alternatively, please consider/explore Juliette balconies into the building design. If the contention is balconies have a disproportionate negative visual impact on the continuity of the building design, please include drawings supporting this. Also, if balconies cannot be added to help the building read as a residential building, please provide an alternative built response that can help address this aspect of the Commission's comment.*

Response: The DAR submittal included a continuous, shared balcony on the west façade of Level 15. In response to Commissioner comments, the design team reconfigured the 15th and the 14th floor units to have private recessed balconies. Although this reduced the overall unit count for the project, the additional balconies were incorporated to create a clear top for the building that reinforces the tripartite approach to the massing. It was also incorporated in a manner that further accentuates the vertical expression of the elevations, preserving the building's overall coherency. These changes are documented on Sheet APP.11 per your suggestion. The design team agreed with the Design Commission's recommendation to incorporate recessed balconies vs attached on the upper stories of the building and did not incorporate them on the lower floors for lack of meaningful views to outdoor space, and to avoid compromising the livability of the units. It is worth noting that the design provides tenants with access to an extensive outdoor space with the occupiable rooftop garden and community room with exceptional view access to Portland skyline and Mt. Hood.



The Design Commission also cautioned the design team to be careful when implementing balconies, as they could detract from the building's overall coherency. The applicant did not want to disregard either comment and agreed that placing recessed balconies on the lower levels would both interrupt the building's vertical continuity and would negatively impact the size and livability of the typical and market-rate units. Furthermore, it would also place many balconies in proximity to the noise of I-5 and I-84, reducing their functionality for residents. As a result, the applicant opted to add balconies to all 4 facades of Level 14 as it is sufficiently separated from the highways to minimize the road noise. The presence of balconies at the top levels of the building creates a residential appearance to the structure as a whole (particularly when viewed from a distance) that is compatible with other residential projects within and near the district, more so than Commercial Office projects that are immediately adjacent to the site. The targeted use of recessed balconies is consistent with several recent projects that range from no to minimal application of balconies as shown in the precedent imagery found on Sheet APP.12.

To ensure that the residential program of the building was reflected in its exterior character, great attention was given to developing an exterior fenestration pattern that communicated a discernment between Living Spaces and Bedroom Spaces while enhancing the vertical expression of the massing. The design team analyzed the context of other nearby residential and commercial buildings and took cues from recurring themes among them. The result was intentionality in the alignment and spacing of window typologies that accentuated the building's clear design concept of two white masses floating above the pedestrian realm. The rhythm of the vertically expressed punched openings set into the solid white massing serves to create a visual distinction from the nearby commercial office buildings. This analysis is presented on Sheet APP.12.

2. *Green Loop and Ground Floor Activation*

- Proposed ground floor uses along the Green Loop on NE 7th Ave were supported by the Commission. However, proposed uses (pool, fitness, spa) are successful provided the uses are visible from the pedestrian realm. Staff has concerns the proposed uses, which have inherent privacy issues, are not flexible and could fail causing the majority of the east frontage to be closed off to the public. Please show how these spaces are flexible and will continue to meet Guideline C9 - DEVELOP FLEXIBLE SIDEWALK-LEVEL SPACES. Please provide a hypothetical, yet realistic, revised ground floor plan illustrating how the ground floor could be reprogrammed if the pool, gym, etc. were to go away. Where would doors be located? Would the spaces require ramping? If so please show. (On Friday we had discussed the hypothetical reprogramming of the 7th street frontage with small shops with individual entrances off the street, etc.)*

Response: The ground floor's tall floor-to-floor height provides flexibility for conversion to other uses, including separate tenant spaces. Sheet APP.15 shows how this conversion could be achieved in the future, denoting retail spaces with separate entries. The entrances are depicted at locations that allow access from the NE 7th Avenue sidewalk without the need for ramps (i.e., the door locations are based on proposed finished floor elevations and the sloping topography of NE 7th Avenue).

- The Green Loop is addressed along NE 7th Ave but absent from NE Irving St. Please clarify how the Green Loop is being addressed on NE Irving St. As mentioned on Friday, staff is still concerned with the lack of response to the Green Loop along this frontage. Please consider the integration of amenities used on the east frontage to help address these comments: additional plantings, integrated seating, etc.*

Response: The potential Green Loop alignment along NE Irving Street is addressed through the active recreational use on the southeast corner of the building, which is consistent with the Design Commissioners' conclusion at the DAR hearing that the sport court use would help activate the NE 7th Avenue's Green Loop frontage. The view into

the bike storage area and dog washing station also plays off the Green Loop since users will include cyclists and dog walkers.

NE Irving Street is noted as a secondary street; to accommodate safer pedestrian travel, sidewalk width at the corner of NE Irving Street and NE 7th Avenue is increased significantly and by a smaller width along the entire length of the building, Sheet C.7 outlines these widths.

To provide additional greenery along NE Irving Street and complement the Green Loop, the applicant proposes to eliminate the art element from the south elevation and to install planters for vining plants and trailing plants on the wall west of the garage entry. See Sheets C.12 and C.18. Seating is not proposed along NE Irving Street due to the limited separation between the building wall and the property line. The proximity to the parking garage entry is also not conducive to seating due to passing vehicles and potentially a visual strobe and/or audible alarm when cars enter and exit.

3. *Green Loop and Vegetation*

- *Please continue to refine the proposed landscaping at the north-east corner to better address Commission comments regarding its success due to being undercover, recessed, etc. As discussed, sedums can be successful on a roof garden largely because there is no foot traffic, etc. staff has concerns with their success in this application because to the proposed programming/use of the stepped/seating area at the north-east corner.*

Response: Mackenzie landscape architects have examined potential species for this landscape area and concluded that sedums are appropriate at this location. As noted on Sheet C.25, the plants will be irrigated, and health will be monitored so replacements can be installed if dieback occurs.

- *As discussed, please consider integrating landscaping (and possibly seating) on the south elevation similar to what is shown on the east elevation (north-east corner) as a way to add continuity to the ground floor/pedestrian realm, and as a means to help address Commission comments on the “blank wall” aspect of the south elevation.*

Response: The functional needs of the building (e.g., electrical service, garage, loading area, etc.) limit opportunities to provide additional glazing along the south elevation. Sheet APP.13 provides an analysis of the portion of the south façade devoted to different functions. Please see the response above regarding the proposed additional landscaping on the south elevation. To provide continuity, the applicant also proposes similar landscaping on the north elevation. See Sheet C.12.

- *Please provide additional design/hierarchy clarity to the proposed main entrances: this could be accomplished through specific materials at the primary entrances, a change in awning height, unique lighting, unique awning soffit materials at the primary entrances, etc.*

Response: The recessed entries will have deeper soffits than the rest of the canopy areas and thus will be discernable as entry points. To provide further differentiation, the applicant now proposes a thicker canopy over the 2 main entrances that utilizes a blue/gray color scheme, with enhanced lighting, to contrast with the non-entry canopies. See Sheets C.12 and C.13.

Public Realm

1. Canopies and Weather Protection

- *Please clarify the hierarchy of canopies: i.e. along the elevations vs at entrances, etc. – see comments above.*

Response: Please see the response above.

2. South Elevation

- *As discussed on Friday, this elevation appears to not have changed significantly from what was presented at the DAR. Please respond to DAR Commissioner comments so the south elevation: is consistent with the east and north elevation (and not clearly the back-of-house elevation); includes less inactive, blank wall area; addresses the potential Green Loop. Per Commissioner comments, please provide additional active use area along this elevation.*

Response: Sheet APP.13 provides an analysis of the portion of the south façade devoted to different functions; refinement of the design increased the linear activation of the south façade by 15%. The functional needs of the building (e.g., electrical service, garage, loading area, etc.) limit opportunities to provide additional glazing along the south elevation. While in the past it may have been possible to hide some of these uses to the right-of-way (e.g., underground electrical vaults), PBOT's current policy of requiring transformers on-site rather than in the right-of-way results in a transformer room for buildings constructed at the site boundaries. The transformer room requires a rated enclosure, including the exterior wall, that precludes glazing, and while some additional glazing could be provided at the bicycle room, the resulting view would be of a structural column.

Compared to the DAR design, the current design is much more articulated with the introduction of a pedestrian sheltering canopy above the parking garage access and bicycle storage room. Pedestrians are shielded from the garage ventilation exhaust louver that is placed high and above the canopy and a transom accent material has been added above the garage opening to provide design continuity and articulation that aligns with the canopy wrapping around the SE corner of the building. Additionally, a steel planter with vertical vine trellis has been added to activate and soften the solid masonry wall of the transformer room paired with trailing plants above. As noted above, this has also been consistently applied to the northwest corner of the building with a similar condition.

- *Proposed Art and Water Feature: The proposed art piece on the south elevation visually reads as more of a sign than a work of art meeting Guideline A5-3 – Incorporate Works of Art. Similarly, the proposed glazing in front of the pool area does not meet the Water Feature Guideline (A5-4). If the proposal is not going through RACC (Regional Arts and Culture Council) both the art and water features will be reviewed on their merits regarding their associated Guidelines, which are not currently being met. As mentioned on Friday, please consider going through RACC. If RACC is not utilized, the art and water feature components should be integrated with the architecture of the building, proportionate to the size of the building, clearly visible within the pedestrian realm. As discussed - Please locate both along the proposed (preferred) Green Loop route (NE 7th Ave). Please provide specific designs for both for staff and ultimately the Commission to provide responses/feedback.*

Response: The applicant has not chosen to utilize RACC as the means to satisfy the Art guideline. Per staff's comments, the art feature on the south elevation has been removed, with plantings in its place as described above. The applicant instead proposes the use of decorative translucent glazing on the east elevation to satisfy Guideline A5-3 and A5-4. See Sheet APP.14. The proposed design concept incorporates the use and/or

combination of clear, translucent, textured, and possibly dynamically illuminated channel glass to create an artful installation that is differentiated from the prevalence of clear vision glazing on the NE 7th Ave ground floor elevation and engaging for pedestrians. This concept has been further developed based on Staff feedback and DAR comments but has yet to be finalized in order to allow for engagement with a consulting designer (i.e., glass and/or lighting artist and glazing manufacture(s)).

CONCLUSION

We appreciate your working with us on this project and providing guidance as we approach the Design Commission hearing.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thomas Peck', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas Peck
Design Director

Enclosure(s): Revised Design Review Drawing Set

c: Steve Master – Master Development, LLC
Brian Varricchione, Dietrich Wieland – Mackenzie