



**City of Portland, Oregon**  
**Bureau of Development Services**  
**Land Use Services**

1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 5000  
Portland, Oregon 97201  
503-823-7300  
Fax 503-823-5630  
TTY 503-823-6868  
[www.portlandonline.com/bds](http://www.portlandonline.com/bds)

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** August 5, 2013  
**To:** Design Commission  
**From:** Hillary Adam, City Planner II – Urban Design  
503-823-3581, [Hillary.Adam@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:Hillary.Adam@portlandoregon.gov)  
**Re:** August 15, 2013 Appeal Hearing  
LU 13-131079 DZM – 115 N Cook

Dear Design Commissioners:

Please find exhibits attached for the Appeal hearing for 115 N Cook Street. This memo is to alert you to outstanding issues that guided staff to deny the proposal and provide an outline for discussion at the Appeal hearing on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

### Background

The applicant participated in an optional Pre-Application conference in November 2012, at which time several potential issues were raised and staff provided guidance on possible modification requests and improvements to the design to ensure that the Community Design Guidelines were met. The applicant made formal application for the project on March 21, 2013 and before and since that time has had several meetings and phone conversations with staff with the aim of reaching consensus on approvability of the proposed design. The Notice of Proposal was issued June 4<sup>th</sup>, and staff received four letters, primarily in opposition. One letter of support was received prior to submittal of the application and was also considered.

### Neighborhood Concerns

The letters received from the neighborhood and interested parties discussed the following:

- Support for at-grade parking rather than a pedestrian plaza on the north side;
- Preference for a building that conforms to the FAR limits without the use of landmark transfer;
- Support for requested setback and transit street main entrance modifications;
- Suggestion for a cover at the south courtyards;
- Reduction in number of proposed materials and an increase in their quality;
- Concern with the organization and arrangement of exterior materials;
- Lack of compatibility with the surrounding older neighborhood;
- Need for close consideration of the exterior materials, and how they might be able to soften the building's mass;
- Suggestion to reduce the height by one full story;
- Concern that the proposal lacks a scale and material palette which respects Albina's history and should use nearby historic multi-dwelling buildings as a reference;
- Concern that the façade and material changes lack a continuous rhythm;
- Suggestion for an open courtyard, rather than surface parking, which would allow greater pedestrian movement; suggestion that perhaps the south building could be divided to provide a better connection;
- Preference for historic principles, such as smaller masses and inset windows, to be applied to this building;
- Concern that the scale of the building does not fit with Albina, with its continuous expanses, lack of hierarchy, and a busy appearance;

- Concern that the vertical bays, material changes and varying windows appear chaotic – advocate simplicity;
- Suggestion that the material changes should coincide with massing moves;
- Applaud public courtyards, commercial materials, and limited use of fiber cement panels;
- Concerns with vinyl windows and flush mounting to the façade;
- Preference that the views into the commercial spaces stay unobstructed;
- Concern that the proposed building will present the same issues as other similar buildings in the neighborhood.

### **Staff Decision**

Staff shares many of these same concerns and has noted that the following Community Design Guidelines are not met:

P2 - Historic and Conservation Districts

D7 – Blending into the Neighborhood

D8 – Interest, Quality and Composition

Staff notes that while the project is not within a historic or conservation district, the guidelines state that *nearness* to such a district must be considered. Staff does not advocate for a replication of historic or traditional buildings, but suggests that some of the qualities of these building can be incorporated in order to lessen the impact of such a large structure on the surrounding neighborhood. One example would be to recess windows within the plane of the wall to create a pattern of solids and voids, create shadow lines, and provide some dimension and texture to the overall mass of the building.

Staff also has significant concerns with the overall composition of exterior materials and the number of different window types and patterns, and agrees with the neighborhood that the façade appears to lack a consistent logic with regard to treatment of specific materials and how they interact with each other. For instance, the exterior material changes between fiber cement board and metal panel in the same plane at several locations, such as the center block of the south wing and at the intersection of the south wing with the other wings, as well as on the west and east wings where the metal panel acts as a frame for the fiber cement panel. In addition, staff does not consider the fiber cement panel to be a secondary material, as it makes up a significant percentage of the exterior materials, specifically, 62% of the Williams façade, 61% of the Vancouver façade, 67% of the Ivy façade, and 41% of the Cook façade.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.