



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

FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** June 26, 2014  
**To:** Portland Design Commission  
**From:** Hillary Adam, Development Review  
503-823-3581  
**Re:** 14-161053 DA – The Woods  
Design Advice Request Memo July 10, 2014

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request of “The Woods”, a proposed 6-story mixed-use building at the NE corner of N Williams Avenue and N Fargo Street. The proposal includes 50 residential units, 2,700 square feet of commercial space, 19 parking spaces (13 are required) and 1 loading space contained within the building. The building is essentially a courtyard apartment building set atop a podium with tiered outdoor terraces ascending the central court with apartment access provided via an elevator core and open-air walkways. The central concept of the building is to recall the natural landscape of the Northwest, specifically forested canyons and dappled light of the forest, through integrated vertical landscaping and stormwater management, use of materials, and varying window patterns.

Staff notes the following potential topics of discussion:

- **Interior Courtyard Space.** While physically separated from the public realm, this area has the potential to impact the public realm, depending on the level of activity generated by the outdoor spaces at upper levels and the viability of the proposed green walls. Staff notes that the width of the courtyard and walkways, as well as the program for the amenity spaces at each level will have an impact of the vitality of each of these spaces. Staff is concerned that the courtyard and surrounding walkways are too narrow, and that the storage lockers and narrow roof deck along Williams Avenue on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level are a missed opportunity to truly enliven this space and allow it to have a positive impact on the pedestrian realm below.
- **Ground Floor Program.** Staff has concerns about the ground floor program, particularly on the west half. With 50 units proposed, 13 parking spaces and one loading space are required. Locating the parking at the west end of the building would reduce conflicts with pedestrians using the building and may provide an opportunity for maximizing mechanical parking, which is limited at its current location in the center of the building. In addition, staff does not believe that the long-term bicycle parking is sufficient in its design for the needs of the building, particularly along this bicycle-intense corridor.
- **Exterior Material Quality.** The proposed exterior materials include smooth concrete, metal siding, bamboo siding, living wall systems, and VPI vinyl windows. Staff appreciates the Commission’s comments related to expectations for material quality, particularly regarding minimum gauge or other strengthening measures for the metal panel, extent of metal panel and bamboo at the ground floor, and concrete finish.
- **Transparency.** The applicant has noted that the intent behind the varying window patterns is intended to recall the dappled light of the forest. Staff believes that this concept could meet

the *Interest, Quality, and Composition* guideline, potentially with a bit more regularization; however, there is a concern that the windows could become too regularized throughout the design and construction process, resulting in a loss of interest. It is clear that the windows are proposed to be horizontal due to the bowing nature of the exterior walls; however, staff wonders if vertical windows would be more effective, per the concept.

In addition, staff notes that the concept of the building suggests that full display of its stormwater management function may be appropriate by providing a means by which the green walls and the cistern at Williams Avenue could have a stronger visual connection between each other and with the pedestrian realm.

- **Blank Wall Areas.** Staff notes there are fairly large areas of blank façade on the south elevation, adjacent to the pedestrian realm, at the parking garage, as well as the west façade, which will potentially be concealed by a large building at some point in the future. Staff is especially concerned that the metal-clad garage façade will be targeted for graffiti and welcomes suggestions for enlivening this area.

While the review procedure for this proposal will be a Type II land use review (already submitted), and will not appear before the Design Commission except in the event of an appeal, the Commission's comments will directly influence staff's decision.

The review criteria are the Community Design Guidelines (copies of the guidelines are included with this memo).

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.