



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

FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

Amanda Fritz, Commissioner  
Paul L. Scarlett, Director  
Phone: (503) 823-7300  
Fax: (503) 823-5630  
TTY: (503) 823-6868  
[www.portlandoregon.gov/bds](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds)

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** December 1, 2014  
**To:** ALEX YALE, YBA ARCHITECTS PC  
**From:** Mark Walhood, City Planner  
503-823-7806, [mark.walhood@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mark.walhood@portlandoregon.gov)  
**Re:** 14-208933 DA – Front 17  
Design Advice Request Summary Memo: November 20, 2014 Session

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to hold a Design Advice Request regarding your project. I hope you find it informative and valuable as you continue with your project development. Attached is a summary of the comments provided by the Design Commission at the November 20, 2014 Design Advice Request. This summary was generated from notes taken at the public meeting and a subsequent review of the public meeting recordings. To review those recordings, please visit:

[http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/webdrawer/search/rec?sm\\_class=uri\\_7547&count&rows=50](http://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/webdrawer/search/rec?sm_class=uri_7547&count&rows=50)

These Design Commission comments are intended to guide you in further design exploration of your project. These comments may also inform City staff when giving guidance over the course of future related land use reviews. It should be understood that these comments address the project as presented on November 20, 2014. As the project design evolves, the comments, too, may evolve or may no longer be pertinent.

Design Advice Requests are not intended to substitute for other Code-required land use or legislative procedures. Please keep in mind that the formal Type III land use review process [which includes a pre-application, a land use review application, public notification, a Staff Report and a public hearing] must be followed once the Design Advice Request meetings are complete, if formal approval for specific elements of your project is desired.

Please continue to coordinate with me as you prepare your formal land use application, or if you desire another Design Advice Request meeting with the Commission.

*Encl:*  
Summary Memo

*Cc:* Design Commission  
Respondents

This memo summarizes **Design Commission** design direction provided on November 20, 2014.

Commissioners in attendance on November 20, 2014: Guenevere Milius, David Wark, David Keltner, Jeffrey Simpson, and Benjamin Kaiser (Tad Savinar absent).

### **DESIGN CONCEPT**

- Commissioners were generally pleased with the initial design concept of a layered inner core of wood framed by an industrial-like metal skin, including the formal articulation of this idea within and between buildings.
- Looking back at the site history, and using that information as part of the initial design development, is a very successful approach and Commission applauds the work you have done in this area.
- **The office building does not appear to be as refined or clear in initial concept as the other buildings. Give this smaller building the same careful advance consideration, integrating it with the overall project in an understandable, specific, legible way.**
- The scale and size of the ground floor retail space is a welcome aspect to the project, as the neighborhood really needs a successful retail node. The amount of retail is significant enough, and close enough together, to create a pedestrian neighborhood draw, adding energy and life to the Riverscape area.
- The design is generally heading in the right direction, but there is a risk that there may be too much going on with different materials, breaks and undulations: look at the next fine-grained levels of detail and be disciplined and careful not to go overboard.

### **MASSING/BLOCK STRUCTURE/CONTEXT**

- **The three apartment buildings are too similar in their design, skin/materials, and massing, and should be more distinct to avoid the sense of repeating buildings. Three nearly look-alike apartment volumes are not likely to be approved, as recent examples of the type (and historic precedents) are not viewed favorably by Design Commission. Further work needs to be done to differentiate the different apartment “buildings”.**
- Study the railroad-facing conditions of buildings further to the south that have been approved by Design Commission for ideas on how to treat the ‘back’ side along the railway. Design Commission has wrestled with this project on other recent cases (the Abigail was mentioned– NE corner of NW 13<sup>th</sup> & Raleigh (LU 13-189059 DZM)).
- **Integration with the surrounding block structure, especially with Riverscape Lots 11 & 12 across the street to the east, should be further explored to ensure a tight contextual fit between the project and its’ neighbors.**
- **The large podium of the larger building is a challenge, and needs further study and refinement. If there is a solid 350’+-long ground floor wall along NW Front Avenue it needs to be an intentional part of the design, and not just a visual/pedestrian barrier.**
- The podium needs to be explained and understood in the context of the larger central city if continued in future versions of the project: explain how and why this works in context if the podium concept carries forward.
- A 1.5 acre ‘block’ is not in keeping with the central city pattern.
- Termination of vistas from across NW Front Avenue, breaking up the ‘block’ structure, and intentional alignment versus mis-alignment should all be carefully considered in refining the building massing & structure. Buildings should address their unique site and location in context, not repeat the same form three times over.
- The train noise is unlikely to be fully mitigated for by the tall podium wall. Consider at least one break through the building, perhaps creating an ‘alley’ of sorts that ends at the tracks: this could be a location for smaller-scale retail or live-work units. As other projects in the Pearl have shown, the train need not result in a tall wall along the railroad frontage.
- The tall retail spaces on the ground floor are nice, but the overall building design, proportions and integration with the surrounding context are the key issues in the design guidelines.

- The taller back side of the podium facing the rail tracks is still highly visible and should relate to its surroundings. Consider the entirety of building volumes and materials along the back side – there is a choppy, incoherent aspect to the change from concrete to brick to green walls along the back edge in the current version.
- The railroad needs to be invited in and considered carefully at the visible areas, especially at the west edge of the on-site driveway ‘street’. The railway edge needs thoughtful consideration and incorporation into the experience.

### PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

- **Carefully consider the depth and design of the building ‘breaks’ at the podium, in order to create a dynamic and interesting streetscape. A long building wall (podium base) is only going to work if the resulting pedestrian environment is well-considered and cohesive.**
- Commissioner Kaiser raised the idea of a new street projecting into the site, perhaps as a continuation of the courtyard across the street. Bringing the pedestrian experience at ground level further into the site should be explored.

### PARKING

- **The project goes from urban to suburban with the addition of exposed surface parking: consider ways to contain or better integrate and screen the proposed parking, especially the three ‘stranded’ spaces on their own closest to NW Front Avenue.**
- Treating the vehicle entry area as a street is the best approach, with strong, urban, active edges on both sides to tie the project together. Right now the vehicle entry area feels suburban, in contrast to the rest of the project.
- **The tuck-under parking is also problematic.** The whole back edge along the rail tracks at the parking needs to be re-done.
- Bike parking should be accentuated in the project. A differentiated, separate entrance to the large bike parking room would be a great amenity and design feature for future residents. Indoor bike parking is a big draw for many prospective office tenants: consider this feature of the office use carefully.

### MATERIALS

- **Materials look generally strong, with the zinc and custom profile metal siding looking especially promising.**
- **There is still some ambiguity on how the materials are being applied. There should be a purpose beyond the sculptural for the materials changes: can it relate more directly to the massing and overall design? The material shifts and folding/interlocking forms could be yet clearer, simpler and more powerful.**
- **Ceraclad and other composite products should be used sparingly, and utilize concealed fasteners whenever possible. With exposed fasteners, all details, finishes, and specific fastener placement (ie. within individual panels) need careful consideration with enlarged details in the drawing package.**

### OTHER COMMENTS

- Consider, show and tell the story of how residents access car parking, bike parking, and services like trash and recycling with your application. Access pathways to parking, trash and other site services should be convenient, legible, and direct.
- Greenwalls are notoriously hard to maintain, and need to work architecturally on their own even without the plants. Fine details of the growing medium, plant species and needs over time, support structures, background surface and irrigation all need to be explored and refined for green walls to be approvable.

### Exhibit List

- A. Applicant’s Submittals
  1. Original drawing set
  2. First revised drawing set for 11/20/14 DAR, received 11/4/14

- B. Zoning Map
- C. Drawings
  - 1. *(Final version prior to 1/15/15 Second DAR to be filed as C Exhibits – first DAR comments made in response to Exhibit A.2, above)*
- D. Notification
  - 1. Posting instructions and notices as sent to applicant, including DAR process handout
  - 2. Applicant's statement certifying posting
- E. Service Bureau Comments
  - 1. BES response and information about eco-roof program
  - 2. PBOT response
- F. Public Testimony
  - 1. *(none received at or prior to 11/20/14 DAR)*
- G. Other
  - 1. Application form and receipt
  - 2. Memo from staff to Design Commission with discussion points for 11/20/14 session, dated 11/12/14
  - 3. Commission 'cheat sheet' for 11/20/14 session
  - 4. Staff PowerPoint for 11/20/14 session