



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

FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 3, 2015
To: ALEX YALE, YBA ARCHITECTS PC
From: Mark Walhood, City Planner
503-823-7806, mark.walhood@portlandoregon.gov
Re: 14-208933 DA – Front 17
Design Advice Request Summary Memo: January 15, 2015 Session

Thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to hold a second 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 January 15, 2015 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

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 January 15, 2015. 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. In your case, the Pre-Application Conference #EA 14-187603 PC is still valid through August 21st, 2015 (one year from original conference date).

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 January 15, 2015.

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

MASSING/BLOCK STRUCTURE/CONTEXT

- The idea of the single, smaller podium base with modulations/courtyards along both the south and north edges, in concert with the conceptual bike/ped-only trail in the Terminal ROW.
- The massing between the office and the podium building is successful, but further refinement and differentiation among the elevated podium courtyards is needed.
- Strengthening the relationship between the courtyard spaces/materials/design on both the north and south sides of the project could perhaps be one way to improve the legibility of the different apartment “buildings”. Right now the courtyard ‘walls’ at these breaks are relatively closed and solid in comparison to those elsewhere: a more open vs. closed character to these walls might be a way to visually create more separation between the buildings?

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

- Could the courtyards along Front Street, especially the westerly one across from the Riverscape Plaza, be designed to more directly relate to and access the sidewalk? This could capitalize on the great south-facing vista from atop the podium, and bring the elevated spaces into the urban realm and circulation network for the project.
- The architecture and retail tenant mix are important to the project success, but the experience of the users of the project is all about the place being experienced, including the scale, sense of enclosure, visual and pedestrian connections, and other aspects as experienced by typical future users, especially along the street. When developing your project, don’t forget about the ‘place’ as the third leg on your three-legged stool (Architecture, Place, Retail Tenants). The use of water features and landscaping, the design and layout of the ‘courts’ and the street-level place-making along Front still need work.
- As a raw idea the courtyards along Front are great, but they still need some work. Several thoughts and suggestions were shared:
 - Provide pedestrian access to one or both courtyards from grade?;
 - Is there a warmer/wood court and a colder/concrete court?;
 - “Maker” court versus retail court;
 - Distinct material and façade treatments from each other and/or versus adjacent buildings; and/or
 - Lighter, glassier volumes at the courtyard walls or ‘knuckles’ to help open up and make the courtyard spaces more appealing (feels a little closed off today, lesser character than primary retail frontages on either side).
- Don’t get too fussy or over-embellish the courtyard spaces and sidewalk extension areas: sometimes just a single generous bench or a bare paved plaza spaces is the best solution.

DESIGN REPETITION/DISTINCTIVENESS

- There is still too much similarity among the three apartment volumes above the podium base. Further differentiation of the buildings and adjacent courtyard spaces are still needed as a way to strengthen the overall character of the project. Several general suggestions and ideas were discussed:
 - Treating how the various buildings “land” at and adjacent to the courtyard spaces, with more differentiation in architectural treatment among the various locations and courts; and/or
 - Using distinctly concave versus convex building forms; and/or
 - Varying the building height, or color, or adding balconies, greater recesses, etc.; and/or
 - Bracketing a longer 200’ building in the center with two smaller volume buildings on either end;
- The exposed cuts and folds are an interesting design concept, but the smartness of the concept is diminished as it is replicated among multiple buildings. Repetitive building

designs, as with the project under construction across Front, come across over time as flat, suburban, and too obviously symbolic of limited budgets (even if that is not the case). Step back and re-think the architecture with this in mind.

- Make the buildings as simple as possible, but not any simpler.

ENTRY PLAZA

- The urban relationship between the office building and the south face of the podium/apartment building is successful, but think carefully about details of this space like curbing, tree and landscape grates, light fixtures, etc.

PARKING & ACCESS

- The tuck-under parking is still problematic. Surface parking is only likely to work if done as parallel parking on the on-site private 'street' (driveway). If what you really need is a seasonal winery yard then create a yard-like portion of the plaza that can be used for that purpose without a dedicated roadway and year-round driveway access.
- Bike access from the south side bike/ped-only trail is a nice concept. Be sure to distribute retail bike parking along Front within 50' of the entry doors.

MATERIALS

- Bring samples of the exterior materials, including a mock-up of the Okoskin material with fasteners applied to show the intended finish condition/appearance.
- The mesh material for the office building works well on the south volume, but is less successful when applied just to portions of the north volume. Work to clarify that diagram and further limit the mesh material. The edges and intersections of this material need careful consideration. Should the mesh be oriented vertically to show/hold less dirt? Cement board might work better behind the metal mesh than stucco, given likely penetration concerns with stucco.
- Could the mesh application on the office building and greenwalls feel more open, and porous, like the stair towers at the EcoTrust Building? Right now it feels a little meshy and jail-like, and could be opened/loosened up.
- Any metal material must have a substantial, identified gauge on your plans, including any information on backing or stiffeners, if provided. 24 or even 20 gauge is too thin without substantial foam backing or stiffeners.

OTHER COMMENTS

- The retail aspect has the potential to create a dynamic and activated 'node', but there is still something missing in the proposal to make the retail frontage special. The dynamism and place-making potential of the retail frontage along Front needs further refinement and something special to make it come alive.
- Research and incorporate the surrounding bikeways and other bike planning efforts of the City when putting together your bike and pedestrian access plan. What is the most direct and likely usable pathway to the waterfront to the east, the Pearl District to the south, or the Upshur Warehouse District to the west?
- Can the retailers be thematically linked to strengthen the experience of place? Is there a "maker" court and a retail court? Are restaurants targeted for specific locations to occupy and enrich sidewalk space with outdoor seating? Can smaller spaces be part of the retail plan?
- Verify the minimum height for the fence along the railroad and keep the design relatively open as proposed. One Commissioner felt that the 4' fence was too low for children/safety, but others liked the open nature of the low fence versus something taller.
- Please also revisit the issues in the first DAR summary memo from the 11/20/14 session, as many of these comments continue to apply but are not repeated here.

GENERAL/OTHER STAFF NOTES:

- *Portland Transportation has prepared a detailed response to issues and questions raised by the applicant regarding private use of the public right-of-way and the street vacation process, access to Front Avenue, street improvements and dedications required, the steps necessary to propose alternative right-of-way configurations, etc. Please refer to this document on related PBOT issues and work directly with Jenny Tower prior to application on the specifics.*

- *As discussed at the Pre-Application Conference, the regulations that apply to the site are those in effect on the day the application is submitted. Until the street vacation process is complete and shown on the Multnomah County Tax Map and Deed Records, you cannot capture the underlying FAR. Any and all private development shown in the public right-of-way at time of application is reviewed as nonstandard improvements in the right-of-way and are proposed at the sole risk of the applicant that a street vacation process will eventually be approved.*
- *Staff from both BDS and PBOT have urged the applicant to contain their private development within the existing property lines until such time as any proposed street vacation process is complete, before proceeding with the Design Review. The alternative path is time-consuming and risky in the event some issue comes up late in the street vacation process (e.g. at the final City Council hearing, or with neighbors who have not participated to date, etc.). If the project must be physically changed as a result of the outcome of the street vacation process after our Design Review decision, the Type III process must be started over, new fees paid, new completeness check, etc.*
- *The applicant is advised that nuisance species listed on the Portland Plant List are prohibited from being planted in City-required landscape areas (33.248.030.D.4). Virginia Creeper, along with Bamboo, Norway Maple and several other species, are prohibited nuisance plants. Virginia Creeper in particular has been approved in error recently on several projects but was recently flagged to all planners as a problem. Please note the following links:*
 - <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/article/128460> (BDS Landscaping Page); and
 - <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/34460?a=322280> (Portland Plant List).

Exhibit List

- A. Applicant's Submittals
 1. Original drawing set
 2. First revised drawing set for 11/20/14 DAR, received 11/4/14
 3. Second revised drawing set for 1/15/15 DAR, received 12/30/14
- 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
 - a. Original Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) response
 - b. Revised, detailed PBOT response
- F. Public Testimony
 1. *(none received at or prior to 11/20/14 or 1/15/15 DAR Sessions)*
- 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
 5. Summary Memorandum from 11/20/14 DAR
 6. Revised drawing set from applicant for special 12/11/14 meeting, showing two alternative massing schemes which are not shown in A exhibits above
 7. Memo from staff to Design Commission with discussion points for 1/15/15 session, dated 1/5/15
 8. E-mail correspondence between applicant and staff regarding superblock regulations and with summary of outstanding PBOT issues, 1/9/15-1/12/15, including tax map printout
 9. Commission 'cheat sheet' for 1/15/15 session
 10. Staff PowerPoint for 1/15/15 session