



City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Development Services
Inspection Services - Land Use Services
FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

Date: August 14, 2015
To: Portland Historic Landmarks Commission
From: Hillary Adam, Land Use Services
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Re: 15-197297 DA – The Grand Belmont
Design Advice Request Summary Memo August 24, 2015

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request of a new 15-story mixed-use building with ground floor commercial space, two levels of vehicle parking at levels 2 and 3, with 197 residential units on floors 4-14, and a penthouse common area. Exterior materials include brick, metal panel, aluminum storefront, fiberglass windows, and steel canopies. Modifications may be requested to reduce the dimensions of vehicle and bicycle parking spaces and ground floor windows on SE Yamhill Street.

Staff notes that a 3.5' right-of-way dedication will be required along SE Belmont.

The review criteria are the [Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines](#) and the [Design Guidelines of the East Portland/Grand Avenue Historic Design Zone](#) (copies of the guidelines are included with this memo).

Areas for discussion on August 24, 2015:

- **Compatibility with the District.** The guidelines acknowledge the Weatherly Building, one block to the north, as the tallest building and only skyscraper in the district. The proposed building is shown to be 159 feet tall, compared to the Weatherly at 175 feet. Staff has significant concerns that the proposed building, particularly with its broad face along Grand Avenue would appear to challenge the Weatherly, which has always had a primary significant presence in the Central Eastside. Staff has suggested that, in order to gain approval, in particular, for the height proposed, the building will have to genuflect much more toward the Weatherly; this could be done breaking up the Grand Avenue façade perhaps in modules equal to the width of the Weatherly, reducing the height of the building at the north end (and potentially the south for symmetry), and by developing a more traditional tripartite design and window patterns.

The East Portland/Grand Avenue guidelines (A6-1k) also suggest that the architectural character of the District must be considered, stating:

- The scale, form, proportion, and detailing of the new building should be compatible with adjacent historic buildings and the architectural character of the District;
- The relationship of voids to solids should be compatible;
- New buildings should maintain cornice and rooflines of adjacent historic buildings; and
- The height to width and length relationships of adjacent and nearby buildings should be used as a guide in determining compatibility.

Staff notes that the guidelines also state that “as a rule it is not intended that the height or bulk of buildings be kept below the floor area ratio and height limits permitted by the Central City Plan. The critical consideration is the compatibility of the scale, proportion and form of the new

building and the impact of such elements as shadows on the District's character." Staff is primarily concerned with the compatibility of the form and proportions of the building, specifically the relatively modern volumes lacking historic reference as well as the proportions of the building particularly when compared to the Weatherly (see sheet 14). Staff also notes concerns with the offset windows where a more regular pattern would be more compatible.

In addition, the guidelines (A6-1i) encourage primary central entries along Grand Avenue. While there are retail entries located along Grand, the primary entrance to the building is proposed to be located on a side elevation, facing SE Belmont. Staff suggests that the primary entrance be relocated to Grand in order to meet this guideline. The guidelines (A6-1o) indicate that awnings, canopies, and marquees should enhance the character-defining features of the building and should orient people to the building's main entry staff notes that because the main entry is on the side of the building and the canopy matches others on the building, this entry is relatively lost in the ground level façade.

- **Above-grade Parking.** Staff has serious concerns about the proposed two floors of vehicular parking at levels 2 and 3. The applicant has indicated that there are concerns with existing water table (about 20' below grade) which has resulted in the proposal for above-grade parking. Staff notes that visible above-grade parking along a streetcar line and major bus thoroughfare is particularly incongruous and that the above-grade parking adds to the overall bulk and height of the building. While some buildings in this area may have been designed as auto showrooms and may have even allowed vehicular access to upper levels, the proposal for above-grade parking does not enhance the character of the district, and instead detracts from this historic character.
- **Materials.** The primary exterior material is proposed to be brick. Staff supports the use of this material, but suggests that a different color may be more appropriate, particularly if the design is going to remain relatively modern. Additional materials include precast concrete, metal panel, fiberglass windows, aluminum storefront, and steel balconies and canopies. Again, the guidelines suggest that the proposed materials be visually compatible with adjacent buildings and the District's architectural character.
- **Ground Floor Windows Modification.** Section 33.140.230.B requires that at least 50% of the length and 25% of the ground floor wall area be windows or doors into active areas. This 50% of the length standard is not met along SE Yamhill therefore a Modification would be required. In order for a Modification to be approved, the proposal must meet the purpose of the standard and demonstrate that the guidelines are better met by the Modification. Currently staff does not believe that the guidelines are better met through the proposed reduction in ground floor windows into active areas., and welcomes the Commissions suggestions on how the guidelines could be better met.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.