



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

FROM CONCEPT TO CONSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 8, 2016
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Hillary Adam, Land Use Services
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Re: 15-273235 DA – PacWest Alterations
Design Advice Request Summary Memo February 18, 2016

Attached is a drawing set for the Design Advice Request for exterior alterations to the PacWest Building, including alterations to the ground floor at the northeast corner to create a covered open-air market within the building footprint, enclosing portions of existing exterior area as new interior floor area, removal of existing canopies and introduction of new canopies including a new large canopy at the 3rd floor of the east façade, alterations to paving, planters and seating at the ground level, and a new signage and lighting scheme. Floor area bonuses will have to be identified as the existing exceeds that allowed. The review criteria are the [Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines](#) (copies of the guidelines are included with this memo). Also attached, for reference, are the first and second floor plans for the original design.

Areas for discussion on February 18, 2016:

- **General Comments.** The existing building was designed by Skidmore Owings Merrill (SOM) in 1982 and features a restrained material palette and very coherent design. Staff has overarching concerns about the lack of acknowledgment of the existing conditions at this relatively iconic fixture of downtown Portland.
- **Curved Forms.** The applicant proposes enclosure of floor area which will result in the loss of some existing curved forms at the following locations: primary east entrance and recess, ground level retail space at northeast corner, egress stair at the south façade, and at the south side rooftop deck at levels 3 and 4. Staff notes that the existing ground level condition is primarily composed of glass storefronts atop bull-nosed granite stem walls. Infilling portions of the site with new floor area will require a delicate transition between the existing condition and the proposed. Staff notes that the drawings are somewhat unclear but seem to indicate, on the site plan and on some renderings, that the existing bull-nose stem walls will be obscured by a “bermed entry feature planting area”. Staff also notes that the applicant proposes to open the northeast corner of the building as well as the northeast corner of the southeast retail space with operable storefront systems. While this will help activity spill out to the public realm, staff notes that the existing northeast corner of the building is composed of curved glass storefront and the replacement system will result in a segmented curve with more visual interruptions than exist currently. Staff also notes that the existing building exceeds the allowable FAR; therefore any new floor area proposed will have to be earned through bonuses or transfers. Staff welcomes the Commissions’ opinions on the loss of curved forms at each location, the proposal to obscure the granite stem walls, and the operable storefront particularly at the northeast corner.
- **Privatization of Right-of-Way.** The subject property features an existing 53’ oblong granite planter partially located within the right-of-way, original to the 1982 SOM design, which is proposed to be removed. The current proposal includes new encroachments into the right-of-way including planters, benches, and café seating. Alternate paving patterns are also proposed to

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extend beyond the property line. The Design Commission has previously expressed concerns over privatization of the right-of-way. Staff notes that the amount of seating proposed at or in the right-of-way appears to be less than what currently exists, particularly on the east side and that the café seating, planters, and bench seating at the southeast corner of the building present a significant impediment to pedestrians. In addition, PBOT does not support alternate paving materials in the right-of-way, as the existing brick was installed as part of the comprehensive Bus Mall project. PBOT also noted that in order to gain approval for the raised planters and benches proposed in the right-of-way, a Revocable Encroachment Permit must be requested, and there is no guarantee of approval. Staff appreciates any comments regarding these aspects of the proposal.

- **Canopies.** The applicant proposes removal of existing canopies on the west and the north, believed to be original. New canopies are proposed at the west façade retail entries, at the proposed north side seating area, and at the east façade primary entrance, attached to the building above the 3rd level. No new canopy is proposed for the west façade primary entrance. Ultimately, there appears to be a loss in total amount of coverage. Staff welcomes the Commissions' opinions on the proposed canopy replacement, with regard to coverage, detailing, and locations, as well as the removal of original canopies.
- **Wood.** The applicant proposes to introduce wood as a new building material through benches, signage, trellises, the main canopy, and interior spaces in order to add warmth to the building. No wood currently exists as an exterior building material and would therefore be a foreign material among the existing palette, potentially disrupting the existing coherency. The Design Commission has previously expressed concerns about the use of exterior wood in high-traffic urban areas and noted concerns with regard to maintenance, weatherization, and vandalism. Staff has suggested the applicant consider alternatives and welcomes the Commissions' opinions of the proposed use of wood at the exterior.
- **Greenery.** The applicant proposes vertical landscape treatments including at the west façade primary entrance and at the north façade to continue up over the 3rd floor outdoor terraces via a trellis. The Design Commission has previously expressed concerns about vertical landscape elements with regard to their viability, long-term maintenance, and use as an architectural treatment. Staff appreciates any comments regarding the proposed vertical landscape elements, as well as landscape treatments at the ground level.
- **Signage.** Some of the proposed signs will likely be exempt from review if they remain below 32 square feet in area. However, some larger signs are proposed, including a large "M" on the north façade trellis. This sign would most likely require a Modification to increase the maximum allowed area above 100 square feet. Signage at or near the pedestrian level is rarely approved at greater than 50 square feet unless it is located in a special zone that encourages large signs like the Broadway corridor. Staff appreciates the Commission's comments regarding the appropriate size of signage, particularly at the ground level.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.