

2257 NW RALEIGH ST.
PORTLAND, OR 97210



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November 2, 2020

To; Portland Design Commission, Hannah Bryant, BDS
Re: EA 20-194404 DA

The PDNA Planning and Transportation Committee has reviewed the initial plans provided by the applicant for the Welby (formerly Lovejoy Square) ahead of its scheduled DAR. We are familiar with this site as we have reviewed two previous proposals by the applicant for this same location. We wish to state the applicant in each iteration has engaged the Committee early in the process and provided a high level of transparency and an openness to our input. In addition we have recently reviewed and voted to support the vacation requested on NW 14th Avenue provided all the proposed right of way enhancements are paid for and completed by the applicant as currently designed.

Since this is a DAR, we will provide some initial thoughts in a few key areas:

Program

- Mass timber construction: We applaud the innovation as it would be the tallest of its kind in Portland, but one wouldn't know it's a mass timber building because it's hidden behind the current facade treatment. Instead, it should be celebrated with larger windows that would allow the mass timber elements to be seen while achieving a more contextual facade
- We would prefer more office space to achieve greater mixed use at the site. This would also help differentiate the expression of the base of the building, creating a natural modulation at the level of the terrace at 13th and Kearney that creates the setback.
- We would like to see more variety in unit size and bedroom count to support more diversity and permanent residency to foster community. We also support the inclusion of affordable housing units at this site, particularly family-sized (2- and 3-bedroom units) units.

We appreciate these efforts in the Program:

- Mass timber high rise signifies dedication to sustainability
- Generous glazing ordered in a rational arrangement
- Next-level mechanized parking with electric outlet capability for charging
- Bike amenity space on the 14th Avenue ground floor and substantial bike parking
- COVID-influenced health initiatives--touchless elevator operation, enhanced ventilation
- Commitment to equity in all aspects of the building
- Restored cobblestone treatment on Kearney Street
- World-class bicycle facility and pedestrian safety upgrades on 14th Avenue (see our letter on support for 14th Ave vacation)



Public Realm

- Providing a setback from 13th Avenue is critical, and we would support an additional setback to respect the context of the nearby historic district.
- Terraces placed around the building are interesting but there is a missed opportunity to not have a more active program in the large space overlooking 13th Avenue. Currently it is proposed as a private terrace for only two units. A common amenity could be relocated to the level to allow for more activation of this large terrace and create a dialogue between it and 13th Avenue. This is especially important as we are losing a significant rooftop amenity when the existing building is replaced.
- The loading dock as proposed is designed as more of an elevated sidewalk, and we would encourage a more robust design.

Context

- Facade articulation is more a blend of cast iron and even a hint of modernism's cellular facades than the Pearl context and specifically 13th Avenue. The DC has set the precedent that the Pearl is an eclectic mix, but as this site is on 13th, we believe context should be addressed in a more narrow frame, taking direct cues from those buildings in the historic district and adjacent to it. Hacker's Pearl West and Mithun's Heartline building both do a good job of respecting context without pretending to be old buildings. We suggest the applicants look to those examples to address context.
- The floor plan with equal width units allows a rational larger format window array that is more in keeping with context
- The Kearney facade is too monolithic and needs more relief. We suggest perhaps differentiating the lower floors.

Materials

- The use of cement panels is not contextual. The fastening of the pieces may be challenging and detract from the appearance of a solid form.
- The window mullions must be thin and not clunky, and we emphasize the need for larger windows.
- Metal panels should be minimized. The system proposed should be able to allow for solid forms with punched glazing without "filler" material.
- We are unsure if use of wood facade pieces on the ground floor is an honest expression .

Respectfully,

David Dysert
Vice President / Planning & Transportation Co-Chair
Pearl District Neighborhood Association

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