



City of Portland Design Commission

Design Advice Request

SUMMARY MEMO

Mailed: November 6, 2020
Date: November 4, 2020
To: John Wright, Wright Architecture
From: Tim Heron, Design Review
503-823-7726, tim.heron@portlandoregon.gov
Re: EA 20-184494 DA – 1208 N Jessup Street/ Minnesota Places
Design Advice Request Commission Summary Memo – October 15, 2020

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. Following, is a summary of the comments provided by the Design Commission at the **October 15, 2020** 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: <https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/13953906>.

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 **February 6, 2020**. 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 2 land use review process [which includes a land use review application, public notification and a Final Decision] 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 Type 2 Land Use Review Application.

Encl:
Summary Memo

Cc: Design Commission
Respondents

Commissioners Present.

Chair Livingston, Vice Chair Rodriguez, Commissioner McCarter, Commissioner Molinar, Commissioner Vallaster, Commissioner Santner, and Commissioner Robinson.

Executive Summary

- The Commission was unanimous that the proposal's massing and scale responds well to the context and the desired character of the North Interstate Plan District.
- The final exterior material selection will be critical and can be driven by the most-appropriate for the factory-controlled construction environment of the modular units.
- A darker color palette is appropriate, but not as dark as proposed. Two-tone shifts would be appropriate, subtly accenting the massing that wraps the building.
- The MPP construction type is a great solution for modular construction, however, serious concerns regarding the individualized use of MPP for the exposed colonnade elements.

Summary of Comments. Following is a general summary of Commission comments by design tenet.

CONTEXT / QUALITY & PERMANENCE

1. Context: Regional, Neighborhood, Block

2. Massing, parti and setbacks: H-plan, projecting pattern, interior vs street setbacks

- The Commission agreed this is a rapidly changing area of the City, and the need for medium-high density infill is critical for Portland Housing goals.
 - The project's program of 100% affordable housing at 60% Medium Family Income and using the Portland Housing Bureau North/ Northeast Housing Strategy to attract local families, is particularly admirable.
- The Commission was unanimous that the proposal's massing and scale responds well to the context and the desired character of the North Interstate Plan District, particularly the eastern edge, adjacent to the I-5 freeway.
 - Specifically, Commissioners commented that the height of 85' along the I-5 corridor, the modular construction type, and the residential scale expressed by the individually stacked units, all combined to form a contextually responsive and cohesive composition.
 - The H-plan design, with deep setbacks from interior property lines, and narrow setbacks along the street frontages with deeply recessed entry courtyards presents a contextually responsive ground level design at all building frontages.
 - One Commissioner noted that the inspiration from basalt rock formations incorporated into the façade breaks up the building massing successfully.
 - Another Commissioner noted this is not the first five plus story building and is part of a trend of taller projects for this area.
- One Commissioner commented there are many interesting things that work great with the single-family home context of the area, particularly the massing and scale, which are almost smaller than single family residential, as individual rooms are expressed on the façade versus the entire house.

- Another Commissioner commented that the modular construction design was admirable, and likely the future of affordable housing given the inherent efficiencies of factory-built units, and their ability to be quickly assembled on site.
- A majority of Commissioners were supportive of the contrasting colonnade wood color and narrow proportions used at the common areas and the ground floor to the darker color of the building body and modular, square expression of the residential units.
- Commissioners agreed that the building design would be less imposing if the color was not so dark, particularly as the adjacent quarter block building that was recently approved [N Jessup and Montana], will be a much lighter shade of color.
 - Commissioners agreed that a darker palette would be appropriate, possibly two tones, but not as dark as represented in the DAR proposal.
 - A lighter grey or white palette would be particularly inappropriate adjacent to the I-5 freeway due to pollution and dirt from vehicles.
 - Two colors and/ or two materials with different textures could be a good idea [facing elevations contrasting with underside or returns] but be careful of not creating a plaid appearance.
- Commissioners all agreed the use of indoor/ outdoor common spaces dispersed throughout the upper levels – facing different directions at different levels – was a fantastic program element, particularly the colonnade expression that ties these common areas for the residents to the ground floor colonnade at the street edge.
 - One Commissioner noted that an additional community room space within the building would be an improvement architecturally, was well as the additional common space considering the number of families.
- Commission was concerned that the height of the first floor was too compressed at 12' from finished first floor to finished second floor, particularly given the evenly stacked and ordered modular units above at 10' finished floor to finished floor each.
 - The proportions of the ground floor should be different to create a stronger building base, and because it will not be the same modular construction above.
 - An additional 12" to 24" of height is critical [i.e. 13' to 14' first floor height], for a contextually responsive base to this 8-story multi-dwelling building.

3. Materials and skin expression

- a. Metal or Stucco, color, window/ wall ratio**
- b. Vents and other mechanical wall penetrations**

Exterior Material

- Commissioners agreed that the modular construction typology should decide the best exterior material choice [metal, stucco or cementitious paneling were mentioned], but the color and texture of the material would be critical to meeting the context of the area.
- The majority of Commissioners were supportive of a metal clad system, provided the detailing, texture and color are successfully resolved.
 - Several Commissioners noted that metal may be a more satisfying material for modular construction considering its factory assembly, low maintenance and longevity.

- One Commissioner noted, as there would be a lot of flashing required anyway for the modular construction, the metal flashing should be a substantial gauge to ensure a non-wavy appearance.
- Regarding color, Commissioners suggested that a subtle shift in colors or pattern could be successful, such as a pattern shift from ribbed to flat.
- One Commissioner noted that a cementitious or stucco system would be a much better fit to context. Metal cladding systems exist all over town, and in this context, metal cladding is more difficult to justify.

Mass Plywood Panel

- Commissioners had many observations of the Mass Plywood Panel [MPP] material and were unanimous in support of using MPP for the structural component of the modular construction.
 - One Commissioner did express concern that while a great material structurally, it may not be as exciting a material to live within if the plywood finish was intended to be the living units' interior finish.
- One Commissioner highlighted that the exterior joints of the modular construction where the units come together and align, will need a high level of forgiveness built into the detail to ensure the crispness of the modular construction appearance is maintained after assembly.
 - The finished detail needs to look tight; as detailed for the DAR, the upper connection appears more resolved than the lower connection.
 - Considering the flashing detailing carefully. As several Commissioners supported the use of a metal skin, then the flashing must also be a substantial gauge to avoid a flimsy appearance.
- Commissioners were very concerned with the use of the MPP at exterior locations such as the ground floor colonnade and the upper level common areas. Commissioner comments included:
 - The MPP product would need considerable waterproofing and likely require an injected treatment to ensure durability over time.
 - Several Commissioners were concerned about the products exposure to moisture, particularly at the ground level, as well as maintenance overtime at the upper level common area expression of the colonnade. The knife plate detail shown for the ground level would be critical. Maintenance at the upper levels will be challenging.
 - One Commissioner recommended that any exterior application should require full scale testing – blasted with water, light and heat to simulate weathering over a number of years before committing to this product as an exposed feature to the building.
- Other Commissioners supported using a different material for the colonnade feature, perhaps also wood, but not MPP, to maintain the contrasting colonnade appearance to the modular units and the visual connection to the common spaces above, while still using a wood material as the main structural component of the building.
- A majority of the Commission expressed concern that the colonnade feature may be too densely spaced, and too deep, creating limited viewing opportunities and a fortress-like expression, particularly at the outdoor courtyard areas of the site.
 - A minority of the Commission thoughts the colonnade was not a critical feature of the design, not critical to the overall coherency, and could be eliminated from the design.
 - One Commissioner noted the colonnade allows interesting and changing views as you walk toward the building along the adjacent sidewalks.

Windows

- Commission was unanimous that the building pattern, proportion and vertical orientation of the windows on the building façades is working very well and achieves a coherent composition.
- Commissioners all agreed that the building, and the future occupants, would benefit from additional window area. Commissioners were generally open to either enlarging existing windows – maintaining the verticality or adding an additional window type.
 - Commissioners agreed that a maximum 30% window-to-wall ratio would be appropriate for this development.
 - Commissioners all agreed that introducing a horizontal window system would take away from the building coherency.
 - Some Commissioners also commented that the location of some windows and the interior layout could be reconsidered to improve the light entering the deeper portion of the units.
 - One Commissioner's concern was that without the addition of new window area or type, the proposal may appear more institutional than residential.

Vents

- Commissioners agreed that all vents [dryer, kitchen, bathroom, HVAC] should be vented to the roof and/ or at building façade return-elevations, not at the property line facing façades.

PUBLIC REALM

4. Ground floor activation

- a. Active uses at street front**
- b. Outdoor area requirements**

- The Commission agreed the use of indoor/ outdoor common areas within the upper building levels as well as outdoor areas around the first-floor plan, was a successful design solution, particularly considering the number of two- and three-bedroom family units in the program.
 - As stated above for Context, one Commissioner noted that an additional community room space within the building would be an improvement considering the number of families, as well as architecturally.
 - Commissioners agreed the entry plaza is gracious and ample.
- Several Commissioners commented that the pedestrian network works well, and the extent of landscaping and ground floor trees and vegetation will make it very attractive, having a soft, organic and calming effect.
- The Commission agreed the NW corner bedroom unit facing N. Jessup Street should be relocated to the west façade, facing the interior landscaped setback area.
 - Another Commissioner suggested this NW corner unit could be laid out differently, switching the bedroom frontage with the living room, allowing the window to remain facing N. Jessup Street.
- Commissioners are excited about the potential sidewalk improvements that incorporate a checkerboard pattern of landscaping and sidewalk area around the site's two frontages.
 - The applicant will need to work closely with PBOT regarding the pattern, and whether or not a non-standard improvement in the ROW will be required as a part of the Design Review application.

- One Commissioner suggested the finely pixelated paving pattern needs to be simplified for practical reasons: pedestrians understanding what is pavement and what is landscape; small fragment planters being likely to be trampled, and the need for larger planters around trees for reasons of adequate soil volume and access to air and rainfall.
- The majority of Commissioners agreed the vocabulary of wood fins in the upper common room areas are great and relate to the street level use of the wood fins for the colonnade.
 - The depth and number of colonnade fins could be reordered, thinned, and/ or reduced in depth to create a better hierarchy along the ground floor adjacent to active open spaces such as at the main entrances and courtyards.
 - A minority of the Commission thought the ground floor colonnade is unnecessarily additive, and the design could be successful without this element.
- Commissioners agreed that additional canopies can be incorporated into the design, however they must be carefully integrated with the ground floor colonnade to not detract from the coherency of the building.

5. Loading access

- a. Curb-cut access and relocate/ flip w bike room**
- b. Consider Adjustment to Loading**

- The majority of Commissioners supported the proposed loading location, mid-block facing N Minnesota. The proposed design supports more eyes on the street and the plaza by virtue of the bike parking use and south east access to the rear courtyard and entry to the building.
 - One Commissioner noted an opportunity to provide loading at the south end, open or partially covered, combining it with the bike parking and rear courtyard access. This would open up more active use area along the N Minnesota Avenue frontage for office and/ or indoor common space for the residents.
- Commissioners would support an Adjustment to loading provided PBOT supports the required loading analysis.

Exhibit List

- A. Applicant's Narrative & Drawings
 - 1. August 28, 2020 Submittal
 - 2. September 21, 2020 Revised Submittal
- B. Zoning Map (attached)
- C. Drawings [some attached]
 - 1. COVER SHEET
 - 2. PROJECT NARRATIVE [attached]
 - 3. CONTENTS
 - 4. ZONING CONTEXT – VICINITY
 - 5. ZONING CONTEXT - HEIGHT & MASS
 - 6. ZONING CONTEXT - PLAN DISTRICT
 - 7. MASSING – CONCEPT
 - 8. MASSING – ARTICULATION
 - 9. MASSING - GROUND FLOOR
 - 10. MASSING - STACKING
 - 11. MASSING - ORIENTATION
 - 12. MASSING - VIEW CORRIDORS
 - 13. NE PERSPECTIVE
 - 14. SE PERSPECTIVE
 - 15. I-5 PERSPECTIVE
 - 16. GROUND FLOOR & SITE PLAN
 - 17. FLOOR PLANS LEVELS 2 & 3
 - 18. FLOOR PLANS LEVELS 4 & 5
 - 19. FLOOR PLANS LEVELS 6 & 7
 - 20. FLOOR PLAN LEVEL 8 & ROOF PLAN
 - 21. BUILDING ELEVATIONS
 - 22. BUILDING ELEVATIONS
 - 23. LANDSCAPING - SITE PLAN
 - 24. LANDSCAPING - ELEVATIONS
 - 25. LANDSCAPING - ENTRY COURTYARD
 - 26. LANDSCAPING - WEST SETBACK
 - 27. LANDSCAPING - STREET FRONTAGE
 - 28. LANDSCAPING - STREET CORNER
 - 29. LANDSCAPING - STORMWATER GARDEN
 - 30. ENTRY COURTYARD PERSPECTIVE
 - 31. STREET CORNER PERSPECTIVE
 - 32. STORMWATER GARDEN PERSPECTIVE
 - 33. EXTERIOR MATERIALS
 - 34. SECTION DETAILS
 - 35. CONTEXT TENET
 - 36. PUBLIC REALM TENET
 - 37. QUALITY & PERMANENCE TENET
 - 38. SITE SURVEY
 - 39. CIVIL SITE PLAN
 - 40. UTILITY PLAN
 - 41. CIVIL DETAILS
 - 42. CIVIL DETAILS
 - 43. CIVIL DETAILS
- D. Notification

1. Posting instructions sent to applicant, includes general information on DAR process
 2. Posting notice as sent to applicant
 3. Applicant's statement certifying posting
- E. Service Bureau Comments
1. PBOT Response 10-8-20
- F. Public Testimony – no comments submitted.
- G. Other
1. Application form
 2. October 5, 2020 Design Commission Memo and Attachments
- H. Hearing October 15, 2020
1. Staff PPT Presentation
 2. Attendee Testifier Sheet
 3. Applicant PPT Presentation



ZONING

NORTH INTERSTATE PLAN DISTRICT



Site



Historic Landmark

File No.	EA 20 - 184494 DA
1/4 Section	2429
Scale	1 inch = 200 feet
State ID	1N1E15CC 12800
Exhibit	B Sep 03, 2020

PROJECT NARRATIVE



Proposed redevelopment of a 1/4 block, 10,000 SF site adjacent to the I-5 Freeway in the North Interstate Plan District. The proposal includes approximately 72 residential units in a new 54,000 SF, 8-story building. 100% of the units will be offered at 60% Average Median Income (AMI), and are proposed as a mix of three-, two- and one-bedroom apartments. The site currently contains a single-family house built in 1942 and a duplex from 1978. All stormwater to be disposed of on site through the use of on-site swales and drywells.

The project team is dedicated to the creation of new, permanent affordable housing units that are close to existing high-capacity transit and other urban amenities. The project is receiving OHCS LIFT Rental NOFA funding (2020 LIFT Rental NOFA Winner), 4% Low-Income Tax Credits, Metro Transit Oriented Development Grant, and Oregon Multifamily Energy Program funding.

Per the Community Design Guidelines, this site offers a unique opportunity for large-scale development along the freeway edge, and is within close proximity to the Killingsworth lighttrail station and Portland Community College. The new building will have two street frontages each having distinctive character; the North being a typical residential street with a mix of building types, while the East faces a sound wall and the I-5 trench. The ground floor is oriented to match the two street conditions with the main entrance, common areas and office facing N Jessup, whereas utilities, the loading dock and bicycle parking will be located along N Minnesota.

The building is being designed as a Type IV C mass timber structure utilizing mass plywood panels (MPP). The project will also be built using modular construction, minimizing neighborhood impacts by decreasing on-site disruption.